



— GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE —  
TRANSPORT CONFERENCE  
— ASHGABAT, 26-27 NOVEMBER 2016 —



**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT OPENING SESSION OF THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT  
CONFERENCE**

**Ashgabat, 26 November 2016**

**(as prepared for delivery)**

It is wonderful to be back in Ashgabat on my third visit to Turkmenistan.

I sincerely thank His Excellency, President Berdimuhamedov, for welcoming us and hosting this important Global Sustainable Transport Conference.

Without transport, we would not be here. We all understand its importance.

Global trade depends on the world's roads, rails, waterways and flight paths.

The transport sector itself is a huge source of jobs and an engine of economic growth.

Beyond economics, there is a human side.

We should all be concerned about people who do not have the access they deserve.

Sustainable transport is out of reach for too many rural communities.

Millions of persons with disabilities cannot use public transportation because it is inaccessible.

Older persons struggle to move from one place to the next.

Even where transport is available it may not be safe – especially for women and girls, who often rightly fear they may be attacked.

Sustainable transport has to answer to the needs of those who have the least.

When it does, we can bridge more than physical distances; we can come closer as one human family.

This Conference should confront the many challenges to sustainability when it comes to transport.

This sector is responsible for nearly a quarter of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. And that is expected to substantially increase in the future.

Without action on the transportation front, we will not be able to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius and as close to 1.5 as possible.

Transport also has significant public health impacts.

Road accidents claim about one and a quarter million lives every year. The vast majority – nine out of ten – are in developing countries.

Traffic in cities saps productivity

Transport also contributes to air pollution, which costs more than 3 million lives a year.

The answer to these problems is not less transport – it is sustainable transport.

We need more systems that are environmentally friendly, affordable and accessible. Technological advances can get us there.

Let me offer seven ideas.

First, we need a broad view that resolves interlocking problems of transport with an integrated policy framework. This has to align with the Sustainable Development goals. And it should take account of interactions between different modes of transport

Second, we must address the needs of vulnerable countries, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.

These countries need simplified border crossings and harmonized regional regulations and requirements.

Third, we should promote better transport systems in cities. That means improving public transport while promoting walking and cycling.

The new sharing economy is opening the way.

People can borrow a bike on one side of town and leave it on the other. They can rent a car using an app. Or they can share rides in the same vehicle that normally would take just one passenger.

Fourth, we have to make all transport systems safe and secure to reach the ambitious target set in the 2030 Agenda calling for access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all.

Fifth, we need to address the environmental impacts of transport in order to mitigate the impact on climate change and reduce local air pollution.

I call for bold and innovative steps in re-thinking transport systems, from design, to technology and consumption patterns.

There are many exciting developments – like electric cars, alternative fuels and new concepts for mass transit systems.

During my tenure as Secretary-General, I have been impressed by many creative approaches.

Three years ago, I rode on a bamboo bicycle made by women in Ghana. They gain a profit – and riders get a bike, which never damages the environment.

Last year, I took a solar taxi to work.

And just last week, I met again with the pilot of the Solar Impulse, Bertrand Piccard, who is flying this powered plane with nothing but renewable energy.

There are so many more ideas like these just waiting to be realized.

Sixth, we need financing.

It takes investments to see results.

That means mobilizing funds from a variety of sources and fostering North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. Public-private partnerships are indispensable.

Seventh, we have to mobilize all partners by putting people at the centre of transport planning – and by working together. Transport is team work.

With a broad coalition of governments, international organizations, businesses, civil society and communities, we can make sustainable transport a reality.

Two years ago, I formed a High-Level Advisory Group that brought together leaders from private sector companies, industry associations and local and national governments. They represented all modes of transport and the freight and passenger sectors.

I asked them for forward-looking recommendations on sustainable transport.

Last month, I received their final report.

It has one central message: that greater investment in greener, more sustainable transport systems is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

This is the final international conference that I will convene as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

For nearly ten years, I have travelled around the world to push for global progress.

So I am pleased to end my term by focusing on sustainable transport.

It is already improving lives around the world – and we are here to advance progress that can benefit generations to come.

I am confident that we have the resolve, commitment, imagination and creativity to transform our transport systems in a sustainable manner that will improve human wellbeing, enhance social progress and protect our planet Earth.

Thank you.