Remarks

for

H.E. Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya

Under-Secretary-General
and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries,
Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States

At Thematic Discussion 1: Sustainable transport at the heart of Sustainable Development Goals

Saturday, 26 November 2016, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM
Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
Mr. Mahmoud Mohieldin, Senior Vice President of the 2030 Agenda, UN Relations and Partnerships at the World Bank,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank Mr. Mohieldin and the World Bank for organizing this thematic discussion and for inviting me to be on this panel. Although there is no transport related separate goal in the SDGs, sustainable transport plays a crucial role in achieving most of the SDGs including eradicating poverty, providing health and education, facilitating economic transformation and building resilience. Therefore, transport is really an enabling and cross-cutting issue for all of us and especially for those countries LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, which are way behind others in the overall level of their national development and prosperity.

I would firstly like to give you a couple of perspectives. We all know that there are about 1.2 billion vehicles around the world, but it is also astonishing to know that about 1 billion people have no access to transport as well. It is important for us to look at the two things together where there is good access to transportation and where there is no access. Where access to transportation is poor, we need to build more transportation. Where there are more vehicles, then we have to make them more efficient. We need to find ways of greening the current transportation modality and enhance the use of the public transportation.

In this regard, infrastructure building has to be a high priority where people are not connected with either cities or each other and where people are well connected, more efficient use of the transportation system has to be encouraged. There is an advantage of doing so because we now have a benefit of knowing what has worked, what has not worked, what is polluting, what is not polluting, what is
inclusive, and what is not inclusive. Therefore, it is important for these countries, especially the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, who have a big challenge of connectivity and a big deficit of transportation development to leapfrog while promoting equity and sustainability at the same time.

Another important issue that has been raised is the urban-rural divide. In countries especially LDCs, there is a huge urban-rural divide and people pay less attention to the rural poor women in terms of transportation services. It is important for us to think about how our talk of sustainable transport can cater to the interests of these countries and people and ensure that leaving no one behind is translated into action.

LLDCs face unique connectivity challenges related to sustainable transport. The LLDCs have spoken a lot about the importance of collaboration and regional cooperation and integration. The issue of transit is very important to them as they pay more than double what the coastal countries pay for doing trade with other countries. Therefore, there is a premium on collaboration within these countries and especially with the transit neighbours. They have to ensure that less number of documents are required, transportation costs are kept low and that there is no monopoly in the transportation business. There is also need to develop multi-modal transport systems in LLDCs.

For SIDS, a very big challenge is that agglomeration economy cannot be achieved due to their remoteness and small size. The aviation industry plays a crucial role in SIDS and it is important for us to deliberate on the rules, regulations and capacity constraints to facilitate the development of sustainable transport for them.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that sustainable transport is important for us all, but particularly important for countries in special situations. These countries
need strengthened partnership to ensure investment, right policies, institutions and legal mechanisms which can enhance their transportation efficiency, and transportation safety related issues, and help them leapfrog many of the development issues and challenges that other countries are facing. Sustainability related practices and technologies are crucial for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. There is need for both the hard physical infrastructure, and the soft infrastructure, which includes policies, legal and regulatory frameworks and institutions, as well as a high level of investment from international community. Leaving no one behind and transformative change are fundamental principles of the SDGs, and we must effective delivery in the countries in special situations.

I thank you for your kind attention.