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 the PLENARY SESSION

Sunday, 27 November 2016, 10:00-11:30
Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to speak at the first-ever Global Sustainable Transport Conference. The timing of this event is critical, as sustainable transport is one of the key enablers of sustainable development, and can play a catalytic role in achieving many of the SDGs. It is even more urgent for the most vulnerable countries including Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and therefore, I congratulate Turkmenistan and its leadership for hosting this conference. It is so fitting that it is taking place in a country which is committed to transforming itself from LLDCs into a land-linked country.

Despite the potential that sustainable transport has for development, the most vulnerable countries face major challenges in providing adequate access to affordable transport services and in advancing sustainable transport solutions.

Last year’s historic global agreements on the Sustainable Development Goals and on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognize the important role of sustainable transport in achieving sustainable development and the special needs of these countries. As we move on with the implementation of the new agenda, I wish to stress that these agreements can only be successful if we pay special attention to the vulnerable countries - LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. The Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs, the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs and the SAMOA Pathway for the SIDS, which are integral to SDGs, underscore the pivotal role of sustainable transport in the sustainable development of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.
All together the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS consist of 92 countries with a total of about 1.1 billion population. Adequate transport services are currently unavailable to most people particularly in rural areas. Rural poverty is particularly more prevalent in these countries. The transport infrastructure is inadequate in terms of both quality and quantity and is characterized by missing links. The SIDS, in particular, due to their remoteness and small size, are often underserved by transport providers, and their vulnerabilities are exacerbated by the growing impacts of climate change. And for LLDCs, transit cooperation, multimodal transport, development of transport corridors and efficient transit facilities play a disproportionately important role in bringing about transformation in these countries. They would like to turn themselves into land-linked countries with cooperation and support of all.

The LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS also face traffic-related air pollution and road fatalities and require solutions that integrate a range of initiatives relating to non-motorized transport, public transport, safer, cleaner and accessible transport. The scale of investment that is needed to meet the infrastructure gap and to ensure that transport systems are sustainable are high. They have difficulties securing the necessary investments and partnerships for successfully gearing towards sustainable transport.

Technology and best practices can play a big role in these countries to leapfrog into more reliable and sustainable transport solutions. It also requires a multi-pronged approach aimed at enhancing both the hard physical infrastructure, and the soft infrastructure which includes the policies, legal and regulatory frameworks and institutions. Therefore, they need support for policy development, accessing finance, new technologies, innovation, and capacity building. OHRLLS has been playing an advocacy and coordinating role in promoting regional and
global support on cooperation to promote the aspirations of these countries. Just last month OHRLLS in cooperation with DESA and the Government of Bolivia organized a high-level meeting on sustainable transport for LLDCs and the outcome document that was adopted at the end of the meeting underscores the need for international support on these specific areas that I have just highlighted.

As I conclude, countries in special situations cannot achieve sustainable transport related objectives and by extension, Sustainable Development Goals, without dedicated support and mechanisms at the global and regional levels. There is need for enhanced and strengthened global partnership both north-south and south-south cooperation to complement their national efforts and regional collaboration.

I hope that this conference will result in mutual learning and knowledge exchange, and provide a platform for forging partnerships and launching initiatives to advance sustainable transport objectives and outcome. Multi-stakeholder approach is key to accelerate progress. Leaving no one behind and transformative change are fundamental principles of the SDGs, and we must deliver them in these countries in special situations in a spirit of equity and solidarity.

I thank you for your kind attention.