

Second Global Sustainable Transport Conference

Questions & Answers

1. What is the second Global Sustainable Transport Conference?

In response to General Assembly resolution 72/212 of 20 December 2017, entitled “Strengthening the links between all modes of transport to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals” and given the importance of sustainable transport for the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, the Secretary-General decided to convene the second Global Sustainable Transport Conference. It will be held from 14-16 October 2021 in Beijing, China. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Conference will be held in hybrid format with virtual and in-person participation. The Conference will bring together key stakeholders from Governments, UN system and other international organizations, the private sector, and civil society to discuss the integrated and cross-cutting nature of sustainable transport and its multiple roles in supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. It is a unique opportunity to focus attention on the opportunities, challenges and solutions towards achieving sustainable transport worldwide.

2. Who will attend?

Key stakeholders from Governments, UN system and other international organizations, the private sector, and civil society will attend the Conference to engage in a dialogue that emphasizes the integrated and cross-cutting nature of sustainable transport and its multiple roles in driving sustainable development and climate action worldwide. A maximum of 1000 participants is expected to participate in person while the rest will be following the Conference online via the dedicated Zoom platform and UN WebTV (<https://media.un.org/en/webtv>).

3. How is the Conference structured?

The Conference will be a three-day meeting (14-16 October 2021) featuring an opening and closing ceremony, three plenary sessions, a Ministers’ Forum, a Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Transport, a Forum on the Role of Business in advancing sustainable transport, as well as six thematic sessions. Side events sponsored by Member States, UN system entities and other eligible stakeholders on themes related to the Conference will be organized on the margins of the official meetings of the Conference.

4. What is the “hybrid” format? Who could attend in-person in Beijing?

The Conference will be held in a “hybrid” format with limited in-person participation in Beijing and virtual participation online. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the international travel restrictions in place, only those who are already present in China should apply for in-person participation, including diplomatic community, representatives of International Organizations and representatives of other stakeholders. Registration via the online system “INDICO” is required for all in-person participants and the deadline is 1 October 2021. All others are encouraged to participate the Conference via the zoom platform as well as UN webtv.

5. Can I travel to Beijing for the Conference? What is the quarantine requirement for conference participants?

For the latest information on quarantine requirements in China for international travelers, please check the website or contact the Chinese Embassy or the Consulate General in your home country. According to the current policy, all international travelers to China are subject to up to 21 days of mandatory quarantine upon arrival. All registered participants should comply with the host government's health measures and travel restrictions and are responsible for their own travel arrangements. The United Nations is not in a position to facilitate or assist with international or domestic travel for any registered participants.

6. How can Member States inscribe to the speakers' list for the plenary?

Detailed information for both in-person and virtual participants regarding guidance to inscription to the speakers' list will be included in an information note, which will be shared with the Permanent Missions and posted on the website shortly. Member States will be offered the opportunity to inscribe to deliver their statements in one of the three plenary sessions. To deliver their statements, Member States can choose between having them delivered in-person by a representative in Beijing; or by making a live virtual statement through the Zoom platform; or by submitting a pre-recorded statement to the Secretariat in advance.

7. Is there substantive background information for the Conference?

The Conference will be informed by an inter-agency report, prepared by UNDESA, in close collaboration with other UN agencies, including ICAO, ILO, IMO, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCAP, UNESCWA, UN-Habitat, UNIDO, UN-OHRLS, UNWTO, WHO and the World Bank. All three Forums and the six thematic sessions will also be informed by concept notes. The full programme, concept notes and other background documentation are available on the Conference website: <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/transport2021>. The inter-agency report is being finalized and will be made available shortly.

8. What does the Conference hope to achieve?

Apart from offering mutual learning and knowledge exchange, the Conference will provide a platform for identifying sustainable solutions and forging partnerships and launching initiatives to advance sustainable transport objectives. The Secretary-General would like to encourage Member States, UN system entities, civil society and the private sector to launch voluntary commitments, partnerships and initiatives that seek to raise ambition on sustainable transport and to share related information, including by registering them through the dedicated online platform on the Conference website: <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/transport2021/commitments>. Registered initiatives, which can be entered ahead of, or during the Conference, will be an important outcome of the Conference.

9. What will be the outcomes of the Conference?

The outcomes of the Conference will be a summary report of the Conference itself, a list of voluntary commitments made, as well as a concise, forward-looking, visionary statement calling for global action to further advance sustainable transport worldwide.

The draft of the non-negotiated forward looking statement is under preparation by the Secretariat, and will be shared with all Conference participants in due course. In the meantime, interested Member States and other stakeholders are welcome to bring to our attention any relevant reports/studies/statements/initiatives/commitments that they may deem appropriate, including key elements of their forthcoming statements/contributions for the Conference, so that these could be taken into account, as appropriate, as well as posted on the Conference website.

10. What will be discussed?

All modes of transport—road, rail, aviation and waterborne—will be addressed, and recent scientific and technological advances deliberated. Some of the issues to be addressed at the Conference include sustainable transport, poverty eradication, livelihoods and economic recovery; sustainable transport and regional development; sustainable transport and connectivity; sustainable transport and green development; policies for sustainable transport; the role of science, technology, innovation and the private sector for sustainable transport; and sustainable transport and sustainable cities. The concerns of vulnerable groups, such as women, the youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the poor, and of many developing countries, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, will receive particular focus. Key transport objectives, such as access for all while leaving no one behind, green mobility, efficiency, safety and resilience will be discussed.

11. Will there be side events?

Side events sponsored by Member States, UN system entities and other eligible stakeholders on themes related to the Conference will be organized on the margins of the official meetings of the Conference. The side events will allow additional informal space for sharing experiences and provide alternative opportunities for dialogue. They will be coordinated and managed by the Conference Secretariat. Deadline for applications is 24 September 2021 - apply here: <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/transport2021/side>. A full list of approved side events and their connection details will be made available on the Conference website.

12. Why is an international Conference on sustainable transport necessary?

Presently, truly sustainable transport is more aspiration than reality and adequate sustainable transport systems are lacking in many parts of the world; while the economic, social, and environmental benefits can be large, many countries have yet

to transition to modes and technologies of transport which would make systems truly sustainable. A lack of transport options and mobility challenges frequently contribute to persistent poverty, inequality, and deprivations across the world increasing the risk of people being left behind. In addition, megatrends, including population growth and demographic shifts, epidemiological trends, globalization, urbanization, and digitalization, as well as related changing consumption patterns and growing trade policy uncertainty, pose many cross-cutting challenges as well as opportunities for achieving sustainable transport and development. In order to meet the increasing and changing transport demands while preserving the planet for current and future generations, we will have to change the way we plan, develop and use transport modes and systems, as well as the public space in which they operate, while taking into account the challenges and needs of vulnerable groups. Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic can provide valuable lessons in this regard. The Conference offers a unique opportunity for different stakeholders to discuss these issues and come up with innovative and viable solutions.

13. What is sustainable transport?

Transport enables the mobility of people and goods, enhancing economic growth and livelihoods while improving access to quality services, such as health, education and finance. It strengthens connectivity at all levels, helping integrate economies, improving social equity, enhancing rural-urban linkages and building resilience. At the same time, there is also recognition of negative environmental, social and health impacts. Close to a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions come from transport and these emissions are projected to grow substantially in the years to come, further exacerbating climate change. Other pollutants, most evidently in many urban centres, directly impact health; casualties and deaths from accidents are also on the rise. Increasing connectivity can be accompanied with increasing illicit flows of contraband. Without proactive measures, existing inequalities such as those due to disabilities, gender or remoteness can become even more entrenched. According to the report of the former Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Group, sustainable transport seeks to alleviate these negative impacts while "advancing economic and social development to benefit today's and future generations—in a manner that is safe, affordable, accessible, efficient, and resilient". Click here for more information on sustainable transport.

14. What is the link between Sustainable transport and the Sustainable Development Goals?

World leaders at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) unanimously agreed that transportation and mobility are central to sustainable development. This is also reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - while there is no single dedicated Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for transport, it is recognized as an enabler and necessary condition for achieving most, if not all, SDGs. Explicit references are, for example, found in target 3.6 ('by 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents'), target 9.1 ('develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support

economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all') and target 11.2 ('by 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport while paying special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons'). For more information on the SDGs, please visit the website: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

15. What is the connection between sustainable transport and climate change?

Despite its benefits, transport sector can generate trade-offs. The sector is, for example, a significant contributor to climate change generating a quarter of energy-related GHG emissions and a sixth of total emissions. Its contribution is projected to grow to one third by 2050 unless decisive measures are taken to decarbonize the transport sector - with different modes of transportation requiring different solutions. In turn, climate change and extreme weather events pose significant risks to transport systems and related supply chains, disrupting services and damaging or destroying infrastructure, thus increasing vulnerability to economic disruption and human loss. Hence the need to enhance the resilience of transport systems to climate change impacts. There is huge potential to mobilize the transport sector toward climate action to support the achievement of the Paris Agreement. There is also potential to reduce inequality and poverty across multiple dimensions if efforts to reduce transport emissions and build resilience of transport systems and infrastructure give special attention to the needs of vulnerable groups and countries. More recently, regarding climate action, there is reason to believe that we may be on the verge of some positive, long-lasting changes. In recent years, different commitments have been made by various stakeholders, including UN Member States, the UN system, civil society, and the private sector, to accelerate progress towards carbon neutrality with significant impacts for the transport sector. The upcoming COP26 will also feature the role of the transport sector (see: <https://ukcop26.org/transport/>). For more information on the Paris Agreement on climate change, please visit the website: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climatechange/>.