



United Nations
**Sustainable
Transport
Conference**

14-16
OCTOBER
2021
Beijing



Side
Event

Summary

Rebuilding better: How can sustainable transport facilitate the creation of local circular economies?

Event Date: 15th October : 9am to 10:30am China Standard Time (BJT)

Green Hope Foundation's side event at the 2nd United Nations Global Conference on Sustainable Transport, moderated by Founder-President Ms. Kehkashan Basu, brought together five experts with unique focus areas to discuss "Rebuilding better: How can sustainable transport facilitate the creation of local circular economies?" and share their insights on the way forward in this regard.

The first speaker, Mr. Jinlei Feng, Programme Officer at the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) shared IRENA's report on bioenergy and spoke from the perspective of clean energy as an accelerator for sustainable transport systems and local circular economies. Mr. Feng highlighted the importance of the decarbonization of transport and how clean energy infrastructure can aid this transition. He also gave examples of how 'waste' energy, such as that from municipal solid waste, can be upcycled and utilized to power sustainable transport systems and in turn, create a circular economy.

The second speaker, Dr. Sreejith Balasubramanian, Senior Lecturer & Chair of the Research Committee at the Middlesex University Dubai, shared his research on the side event's topic, as well as the leadership role the United Arab Emirates has undertaken in transitioning to sustainable transport systems to create local circular economies through concrete actions. Dr. Balasubramanian described the role of inclusivity in sustainable transport systems, citing the UAE's initiatives to make its transport systems accessible to everyone. Finally, he spoke about the importance localized infrastructure for sustainable transport systems, citing UAE's example as a country where temperatures regularly reach 40-50°C.

The third speaker, Dr. Alexandre Milovanoff, Researcher & Postdoctoral Fellow at University of Toronto, spoke about adopting a systems-thinking approach towards transitioning to sustainable transport systems that would benefit the economy, society and environment. Dr. Milovanoff also highlighted the importance of recognizing how the transition to sustainable transport systems is a layered process, with myriad actors playing a role in its successful implementation. He cited the example of the private vehicle ecosystem to explain the various parts of this process, from lithium-ion batteries to power electric vehicles to accessible charging stations in busy urban environments.

The fourth speaker, Ms. Anshita Hegde, Chapter Head of Green Hope Foundation, India, emphasized how education is a critical factor in transitioning to sustainable transport systems, given that it allows the individual to offset their carbon footprint and make informed choices on moving towards sustainable transport. Additionally, Ms. Hegde stated that lack of financing and infrastructure are major challenges that prevents the successful adoption of sustainable transport systems and local circular economies, especially in rural communities and Least Developed Countries. In this context, she highlighted Green Hope Foundation's work in sustainable transport systems, citing the example of the solar-powered mobile libraries that are taking books to the doorstep of thousands of vulnerable children globally.

The final speaker, Ms. Erin Isabel, Outreach Officer of Green Hope Foundation, UAE/USA, echoed Dr. Balasubramanian's praise of the UAE as a leader in the transition to sustainable transport systems and the creation of local circular economies. She also emphasized how sustainable transport, while not having an SDG of its own, nevertheless plays a crucial role in the acceleration of several SDGs, namely Goals 3, 5, 8 and 9. In this regard, Ms. Isabel spoke about the interlinkages of gender and a safe and sustainable transport system that takes into account the unique needs of women and girls to enable them to travel without fearing for their lives.

Ultimately, the side event highlighted the importance of inclusivity, accessibility, financing, infrastructure and a shared values system that would help create sustainable transport systems and in turn, local circular economies globally.