

BACK TO BETTER MOBILITY : ACCELERATING SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT IN THE NEXT DECADE OF ACTION

15 OCTOBER 13.30 - 15.00 OM BEIJING CST

The side event was organised by the International Union of Railways (UIC), International Association of Public Transport (UITP), UN Habitat and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability - and showcased forward-looking transport solutions, collaborative initiatives and innovations to accelerate COVID-19 recovery strategies to support achievement of SDGs 11.2 (expanding public transport) and 9.1 (developing quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient sustainable transport infrastructure).

The SDGs recognise that access to adequate, reliable and safe public transport is a basic urban need. SDG 11.2 aims that all citizens will have access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems by 2030 by expanding public transport. In doing so, special attention must be given to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

On the occasion of the event, UN-Habitat and its partners came together to discuss how the world is making public transport more accessible. The “[Progress Report on SDG 11.2](#)”, launched during the side event, brings together transport data collected by UN-Habitat and UITP to provide a snapshot of how the world is progressing against SDG target 11.2 and examines the main lessons learned as the world approaches the halfway point to delivering on the [Post-2015 agenda](#). It also provides a set of key recommendations to support implementation through improved monitoring and reporting for SDG target 11.2.

“Overall, it is estimated that only half of the world’s population has convenient access to public transport but with wide regional variations. Our data show that Africa is the region with the lowest level of access to public transport with only one in three people with access to public transport,” said Stefanie Holzwarth, Sustainable Mobility Specialist at UN-Habitat.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, public transport has been hit hard in terms of ridership levels, while it continued to provide an essential service for people who most needed affordable and safe transport, including frontline health care workers. Evidence has illustrated that with the correct safety and hygiene measures in place, public transport is COVID-safe.

“Public transport has to become an essential part of a green recovery. It is now time to rebuild trust in public transport and give it the attention in policy and investment decision that it deserves,” said Philip Turner, Head of Sustainable Development at UITP.

“Today’s event offers a unique opportunity for us all to recognise this and to declare our support for a World Public Transport Day. If we continue to nurture public transport, it will draw people into cities and create a better, more

sustainable environment and economy. Only with commitment from policy makers, industries and citizens, can public transport and its workers, continue to bring cities to life,” he added.

Marc Guigon, Director of passenger Department at the International Union of railways, presented the ‘new normal’ study for global railways, setting out a series of practical recommendations for railway stakeholders to make the most of a changing mobility context. “We must reflect upon the consequences of the evolution of mobility after the pandemic, there is only a short window of opportunity for rail to invest by 2030”.

The session also brought together a diverse panel from local governments and rail/public transport authorities, operators and renowned international organisations. Speakers highlighted how cities, regions and public authorities have been hit hard by COVID-19 but remain at the forefront of tackling the health and the climate emergency as well as implementing the SDG11.2.

Noel Hechanova, representing the ICLEI Member Ilo Ilo City, Philippines, highlighted the city's strategies and actions to reduce car dependency and enhance accessibility. With an urban population of around 500,000 inhabitants, this rapidly growing city is experiencing increasing traffic congestion and air pollution. Data shows that private car and motorcycle sales are increasing rapidly. Therefore, the city has shared how they are planning to reduce car dependency by improving public transport through optimization of the routes and regulating para-transit while creating cycling primary and secondary infrastructures alongside repurposing and improving public spaces and sidewalks for first- and last-mile connectivity.

Elisabetta Tromellini from the FNM Group in Milan, Italy, highlighted the critical importance of bringing together key stakeholders across the sustainable transport sector in order to share best practice solutions so as to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. In this context, she presented the how the UITP Sustainable Development Committee has been played a leading role in establishing voluntary initiatives and organising partners to strengthen Covid recovery strategies in the public transport sector in support of Goal 17.

Marta Subira i Roca, the President of FGC - the regional railway company which operates in Catalonia, Spain - highlighted the central role in how sustainability governs everything the company does, from internal decision making to the provision of its transport and leisure services. She highlighted that by putting people first and making them the company's number one priority, it means that the company is focused on providing safe and sustainable means of transportation that will safeguard the future for the region.

Edwins Mukabanah, Vice President – UITP Africa and Chairman – Federation of Public Transport Sector, Kenya, also highlighted that although the pandemic has changed the ways in which we move around, it has not impacted the dedication and sense of community within our sector. He highlighted that as we look towards a brighter future,

we need to keep investing, developing and innovating. If we do that and continue to nurture sustainable transport, it will create better, more inclusive, safer, resilient and accessible cities.

Finally, Sunzhe Cao, UIC Member & Research Associate at the China Academy of Railway Sciences Corporation Limited, shared the collaborative work she has been involved in with the Global Rail Sustainability taskforce. “We can imagine a bright 2030 where rail and public transport has helped to transform cities and the way we travel, but it needs the support of policy makers and national governments as well as investors”. She also shared news of the success of the China-Europe Express, a thriving international freight link, where for the first time, “non-stop” rapid customs clearance has been achieved, opening up 73 operating routes, and reaching more than 170 cities in 23 European countries.

The session concluded with speakers highlighting their one key messages for leaders that will be present in Glasgow for the climate talks just a few weeks after the Conference. The message was clear and unanimous – if we are to address the climate emergency and reduce emissions from the transport sector, rail and public transport solutions must play a central role in every national climate strategy.