



United Nations
**Sustainable
Transport
Conference**

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Press Release

Global transport at a crossroads: UN Conference to advance action on zero emission vehicles, boost economy and reduce inequalities

Move to sustainable transport can deliver savings of US\$70 trillion by 2050

Beijing, China, 14 October — To ensure the rapid development and deployment of new and innovative transport solutions to meet the climate crisis and spearhead action towards affordable and accessible transport for all, the UN Sustainable Transport Conference in Beijing, China, will begin today with government leaders, industry experts, and civil society groups charting a sustainable pathway forward.

While science shows that urgent action is needed to keep the 1.5°C temperature limit within reach to prevent greater climate impacts, the world is still grappling with COVID-19, which has disrupted global supply chains, reversed years of development progress and has pushed around 120 million people back into poverty. The UN Sustainable Transport Conference, taking place from 14 to 16 October will seek to provide concrete solutions for how we plan and design transport systems to ensure the pathway to achieving sustainable transport — transport that is safe, accessible, green and resilient — is at the scale and speed required.

While there is increasing recognition that sustainable transport can spur economic growth and protect the environment — global sales of electric vehicles grew from 1.3 million in 2015 to 5.1 million in 2018 — progress has been slow and unequal.

According to the World Bank, a transition to sustainable mobility could deliver savings of US\$70 trillion by 2050, when considering full transport costs, including vehicles, fuel, operational expenses, and losses due to congestion. Better access to roads could help Africa become self-sufficient in food and create a regional food market worth \$1 trillion by 2030.

“Efforts to accelerate the sustainable transformation of the transport sector are essential to reduce climate-causing emissions and improve the

lives and livelihoods of people everywhere,” said Liu Zhenmin, Under Secretary-General of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Conference Secretary-General. “The Sustainable Transport Conference in Beijing will sharpen our focus on transport, an area where global efforts can make a deep impact across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.”

While transport is a core driver for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and provides communities with an opportunity to access employment, health care services and attend schools, current systems of mobility present a number of challenges.

Transport is one of the single largest contributors to air and carbon pollution emissions globally, also accounting for about 64% of total oil consumption and 27% of all energy use. Over 1 billion people worldwide still lack adequate access to an all-weather road, especially in developing countries, including countries in special situations. In Africa, 450 million people, more than 70% of the total rural population, remain unconnected to transport infrastructure and systems. Whereas road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 29.

The UN Sustainable Transport Conference comes at a pivotal moment in the lead up to the Climate Change Conference in Glasgow. The Sustainable Transport Conference will provide an opportunity to stress the urgency of overhauling transport systems to respond to the climate crisis as well as the criticality of sustainable transport for spurring economic growth and empowering vulnerable populations through better access to healthcare, education, and jobs. Governments, businesses, and experts in the transport field will gather at the Conference to discuss the challenges and opportunities as well as solutions that exist to supercharge the transition to sustainable transport.

Countries, businesses and communities are using the power of technology and innovation to improve their transport systems and make them more sustainable. From the volocopter, an all-electric air taxi in Germany to electrified bus networks in China to the rapid sale growth of electric vehicles in the United States, a transport revolution has begun. The COVID-19 pandemic has also prompted many cities to build more bicycle lanes and G20 countries have committed over \$284 billion to the mobility industry.

However, the transition to sustainable transport in some places risks leaving many other countries and vulnerable communities behind. To ensure sustainable transport benefits everyone would require investments in technology and innovation, especially for developing countries. Enabling policy environments, measures that promote road safety infrastructure and proper city design planning would also be key to paving the way for sustainable transport globally.

All modes of transport — road, rail, aviation and waterborne — will be discussed at the Conference, which will be a hybrid of online and in-person events. It will consist of plenary sessions, a Ministers Forum, a Business Forum and a Science, Engineering and Technology Forum. Its six thematic sessions will include discussions on the contributions sustainable transport can make to economic recovery, creating livelihoods and to climate change mitigation. The Conference will culminate in new partnerships, commitments and initiatives to further advance sustainable transport.

Transport essential to achieve Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable transport, covered in several SDG targets, acts as a cross-cutting facilitator, critical for the achievement of many, if not all, of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This led to the first [UN Sustainable Transport Conference](#), held in 2016 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, and the Beijing Conference is expected to advance action to achieve the objectives of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Website: <https://www.un.org/transport2021>

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Link to the Interagency Report on Sustainable Transport:
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Media Contacts:

Sharon Birch, UN Department of Global Communications , T: +1 212-963-0564 / E: birchs@un.org

Dan Shepard, UN Department of Global Communications, T: +1 212-963-9495 / E: shepard@un.org

Louise Xi Li, United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (Beijing) T: +8610-8532 0725 / E: xi.li@un.org