

7TH SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Remarks by Mr. Amit Narang, Counsellor,
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[on behalf of India-Pakistan-Sri Lanka]

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Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements, Sustainable Transport

Mr. Co-Chair,

I have the honor to deliver these remarks on behalf of Pakistan, Sri Lanka and my own country India. We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Fiji on behalf of Group of 77 & China.

Mr. Co-Chair,

There is an inextricable link between economic development and sustainable urbanization and transportation. We, therefore, welcome the inclusion of these issues as part of our consideration towards Sustainable Development Goals.

Given the importance of these issues as part of both the SDGs and the larger post-2015 development agenda, we should consider sustainable urbanization, cities and transport holistically with an overarching focus on 'Infrastructure development' as an important deliverable. An infrastructure development goal could set targets on transport development, electricity/energy, water, ICT and Communication, and sustainable urbanization taking into account the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

In the context of this discussion, we would like to highlight the following 6 points:

First, various panelists and speakers have pointed to the large proportion of new urbanization which is happening in Asia and Africa. While this is true, we also need to remember that the developed world along with Latin America and the Caribbean is already 80% urban. Therefore, the challenge is to construct an approach which is relevant to the needs of both 'new' as well as 'old' urban settlements.

Second, our approach must be inclusive and broad enough to be of value to the challenge of creating and managing sustainable cities in *both* developing and developed

countries. Sustainable urbanization is by no means only a developing country issue. Existing and old urban settlements in developed countries have an equally important role to play through specific deliverables, especially by showcasing sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The foremost challenge in developing countries, which are experiencing rapid urbanization rates at very low per capita income levels, is to create functioning cities, able to provide their urban citizens with affordable access to better and adequate public services and job opportunities.

Cities in developed countries on the other hand have to take the lead in policy measures designed to lower their ecological footprints, investment in the production and use of renewable energy, renovation of infrastructure, retrofitting of buildings and improved efficiency in the use of energy, water and other resources.

Third, investments in cities and urban development must generate multiple results along several streams such as housing, basic infrastructure, sanitation, education, sustainable production and consumption, employment and transportation. We must not forget that cities have become nuclei of key economic processes, which are imperative in improving the overall living standards of all countries, irrespective of their level of development. In developing countries, the foremost need is for enhanced investment in infrastructure such as roads, water, sanitation, sewers, electricity, housing, and basic services such as public transportation, schools and affordable health-care.

Fourth, investments in public transportation need to be prioritized - in both new as well as old urban settlements. Multi-modal mass transit systems in developing economies are essential for better mobility of people at affordable costs while at the same time reducing impacts of air pollution, congestion and road traffic injuries. At the same time, urban settlements in developed countries also need to prioritize investments and policies designed to reduce private automobile dependence and promote greater use of public modes of transport.

Many developing countries have in fact already taken path-breaking initiatives to implement policies for sustainable cities through investments in public transportation. The mass conversion of the entire public transportation fleet in the city of New Delhi to natural gas, which resulted in a 70% reduction in carbon emissions while generating new economic activity and job opportunities, is only one such example. A similar success story

is the rapid construction of subway or Metro rail system also in New Delhi, which now ferries more than 2.3 million people every day and is slated to surpass over 400 km in route length by 2020. Sri Lanka has also planned a multi-modal national transportation system for the next three decade and around 68% of the population there uses public transportation. Finally, in the city of Lahore in Pakistan the initial phase of a mass transit system which commenced only in February 2013, has began ferrying around 0.2 million people a day. Such examples need to be emulated more widely.

Fifth, enhanced international financial and technological support to developing countries is essential in planning and developing public mass transit systems and creation of urban infrastructure. We need to creatively consider the important role ODA can play in this regard. Similarly, managing urban settlements could be substantively supported by new technologies, including ICT. These technologies must be accessible to developing countries at affordable costs.

Finally Mr. Co-Chair, our approach to sustainable urbanization must be situated in holistic economic development policies at the national level including in particular creating better rural infrastructure, raising agricultural productivity and raising income and employment opportunities in rural areas which would help in preventing reckless and unmanaged urbanization. A strong and proactive rural development strategy is therefore imperative to manage the challenge of urbanization.

I thank you.
