Side Event of the HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Under the auspices of ECOSOC

Friday, 14 July 2023, 8:00 – 9:30 am, Conference Room 8, UN HQ, New York

Pathways to sustainable development: the nexus of energy, urban planning and transport in Asia and the Pacific

Concept Note

Introduction

Fragmented, shaped by personal choices and heavily reliant on fossil fuels, the transport sector is one of the most challenging sectors to be set on a low-carbon and sustainable pathway. More than 90 per cent of its energy is derived from oil products. To contain global warming at 1.5°C and reach net-zero carbon by 2050, transport CO₂ emissions need to decrease by a minimum of 3 per cent annually. Yet, they have grown at an annual average rate of almost 2 per cent between 1990 and 2021, more rapidly than in any other sector. Even if all mitigation commitments to decarbonize transport were fully implemented, global CO₂ emissions from transport would still increase by 16 percent by 2050 from 2015 levels.

In Asia and the Pacific, transport is responsible for 27 per cent of CO₂ emissions, higher than the global average. Urban transport demand is the highest in Asia and the Pacific, which contributed to 40 percent of transport activity in 2015, the largest share of all regions. These emissions are growing rapidly despite technological advances and low-carbon measures due to increasing transport demand resulting from population and economic growth.

If no swift action is taken, achieving SDGs 7 and 11 will become impossible. This challenge calls for urgent action beyond the boundaries of the transport sector to enable multi-sectoral collaboration and coordination. Hence, the proposed side event will explore how to set transport on a low-carbon pathway, and how urban planning and energy generation, distribution and consumption need to walk in lockstep with urban transport development.

With rapid urbanization continuing across Asia and the Pacific, strengthening urban planning processes is critical to ensure that the region’s cities – already key drivers of energy emissions – better manage urban growth and help lead the transition to low-carbon development. Integrated planning that considers more compact urban growth (rather than unplanned sprawl), accounts for mobility and transport options, and broadly leverages innovations in urban energy systems must become standard practice for the region’s cities.

The energy required to power transport across the Asia-Pacific region represents a significant and growing share of energy use. In 2020, transport was responsible for 18% of the region’s energy use, principally through the use of petroleum products. Hence the growth of the sector and its reliance
on fossil fuels presents a challenge for policymakers across the region seeking to decarbonize their economies. Transport is traditionally considered as one of the “hard to abate” sectors owing to its technological reliance on fossil fuel inputs, particularly in areas such as aviation, road and rail. Solutions are required to enhance the efficiency of transportation and to increase the level of renewable energy use. Developing viable low carbon transport systems requires a focus not only on technologies but also systems and infrastructure including public transport, rail and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

The side event is designed to explore the nexus of energy, urban planning and transport, linking SDGs 7 and 11. The outcomes will contribute to the development of other regional dialogues on energy, urban development and transport, including the Regional Cooperation Mechanism on Low Carbon Transport, the Asia-Pacific Climate Week and the 8th Asia-Pacific Urban Forum. These events will draw stakeholders from national governments and local authorities, civil society, city networks, academia, regional institutions, UN entities and multi-lateral development banks.

**Objectives**

- Exploring the nexus between energy, urban planning, transport, and the link to SDGs 7 and 11.
- Sharing strategies, ongoing initiatives, and specific examples for decarbonizing urban transport in Asia and the Pacific.
- Identifying how localization of the SDGs can contribute to more sustainable urban development, including decarbonization initiatives.
- Identifying fields of action for energy – including enhancing the efficiency and renewable energy contribution to freight and passenger transport through approaches such as mode shifting and electrification.
- Presenting areas of synergies and opportunities for multi-sectoral collaboration and coordination.

**Logistics and Administrative Matters**

- **Date and time:** Friday, July 14, 8:00 – 9:30 am (local time)
- **Format:** The side event will be conducted as an in-person event
- **Location:** Conference Room 8, UN Headquarters, New York City
- **Organization Name:** United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
- **Complete name of the contact person:** Katrin Luger (ESCAP Transport Division)
- **Contact official work e-mail:** katrin.luger@un.org
- **Cell phone:** +66-80-005-5242
- **For more detailed logistics information:** please refer to separate information note
## Agenda (event duration 90 mins) – tentative speakers are marked TBA

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>8:00–8:10</td>
<td><strong>Opening remarks</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana  &lt;br&gt;Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP  &lt;br&gt;<em>Energy, urban planning and transport in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</em></td>
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<td>8:10–8:20</td>
<td><strong>Opening remarks</strong>  &lt;br&gt;H. E. Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin  &lt;br&gt;Deputy Executive Secretary UNECE  &lt;br&gt;<em>UNECE’s policies, strategies and activities on sustainable transport, urban planning and energy</em></td>
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<td>8:20–8:40</td>
<td><strong>Keynote speech: the nexus between energy, urban planning and transport, and the link to SDGs 7 and 11</strong>  &lt;br&gt;TBA  &lt;br&gt;<em>Representative from US Department of Transportation  &lt;br&gt;US achievements, policies and strategies for transport decarbonization</em></td>
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<td>8:40–8:55</td>
<td><strong>Voice of the Member States</strong>  &lt;br&gt;H. E. Dr. Chayatan Phromsorn  &lt;br&gt;Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Transport Thailand  &lt;br&gt;<em>Thailand’s pathway to accelerate transport sector decarbonization and collaboration with ESCAP under the Regional Cooperation Mechanism for Low Carbon Transport</em></td>
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<td>8:55–9:25</td>
<td><strong>Panel Discussion “What can energy, urban planning and transport contribute beyond today’s commitments to deliver on SDGs 7 and 11?”</strong>  &lt;br&gt;<em>Moderator – Ms. Katrin Luger, ESCAP Transport Division</em>  &lt;br&gt;Ms. Norliza Hashim  &lt;br&gt;Chief Executive, Urbanice Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Cities and Community Well-Being, Malaysia  &lt;br&gt;<em>Urban planning and localization efforts to transition to low-carbon urban futures</em>  &lt;br&gt;H. E. Mr. Nelson S. Legacion  &lt;br&gt;Mayor, Naga City Government, Philippines  &lt;br&gt;<em>Naga City’s decarbonization experience across energy, urban planning and transport</em>  &lt;br&gt;Mr. Jens Hügel  &lt;br&gt;Senior Adviser, International Road Transport Union (IRU)  &lt;br&gt;<em>Decarbonization perspectives from the private sector – strategies for road transport</em>  &lt;br&gt;Ms. Heather Thompson  &lt;br&gt;Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP)  &lt;br&gt;<em>Advocacy perspectives on sustainable low-carbon transport</em></td>
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<td>9:25–9:30</td>
<td><strong>Closing by Moderator</strong></td>
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