

Statement of India
Fifth Session of the Committee on Transport of UNESCAP
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Agenda Item No. 3 (a) – Transport Connectivity for efficient and resilient supply chains

Madam Chair & Distinguished Delegates

COVID-19 and its consequences have shown that we live in an interconnected and interdependent world and therefore we need regional and global solidarity as these challenges cannot be overcome by any country alone.

2. Despite the remarkable socioeconomic progress that the world has witnessed over the past few decades, the geographic remoteness of LLDCs compounded by weak transit, transport and customs infrastructure, resource and capacity constraints and limited access to technology have prevented the effective integration of LLDCs into the global economic and trading system.

3. Efficient mobility of people is one of the key factors for the progress and prosperity of a society and a nation. In our neighbourhood, we have established the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) initiative to strengthen economic cooperation and transport connectivity of landlocked Nepal and Bhutan and give BBIN countries greater access to regional and global supply chains.

4. The world's longest highway tunnel – Atal Tunnel, was inaugurated by our Prime Minister on 3 October 2020. The 9.02 km long tunnel connects Manali to Lahaul-Spiti valley throughout the year. The Tunnel is built with ultra-modern specifications in the Pir Panjal range of Himalayas at an altitude of 10,000 feet from the mean sea level.

The tunnel will add to the existing supply chains and the farmers and horticulturalists from the region will have easy access to the bigger cities and markets.

5. The commencement of cargo services from Kolkata to Agartala in the north-eastern state of Tripura through Chattogram Port of Bangladesh, is a milestone in India-Bangladesh connectivity and economic partnership. These cost-effective, time-efficient and environment-friendly modes of connectivity will strengthen our supply chains and open up new opportunities for business in the region.

6. Indian Railways is developing Dedicated Freight Corridor of approximately 2800 km length (Double line Electrified section) with the purpose of creating a robust and efficient freight transportation system across the country. Approximately 500 km long section of Dedicated Freight Corridor is already operational and by June, 2022, the entire 2800 km long route will be made operational. Indian Railways is also developing high speed rail corridor of 508 km in the western states of Gujarat and Maharashtra.

7. To promote inland water transport in the country as an economical, environment friendly supplementary mode of transport to rail and road, 111 inland waterways were declared as 'National Waterways'.

8. India is adopting digital payment methods for transactions taking place in the transport department to strengthen the supply chain resilience and for passenger ticketing services to facilitate delivery of services to citizens.

9. With the rationalization of tax regime in the country and introduction of GST, the octroi has been abolished making inter-state transportation easier. The Government of India is also in the process of creating an eco-system for seamless road transport connectivity across the country.

10. India shares international community's desire for enhancing physical connectivity and believes that it should bring greater economic benefits to all in an equitable and balanced manner. India firmly believes that connectivity initiatives must be based on universally recognized international norms, good governance, rule of law, openness, transparency and equality. They must follow principles of financial responsibility and must be pursued in a manner that respects sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In light of this position, India has articulated its principled position on China's Belt & Road Initiative. It has also expressed its core concern on violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity by the so-called "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor". Any project that infringes the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation cannot be accepted. In view of the foregoing, the Committee is requested to recognize this position and refrain from including any reference to the BRI or so called "CPEC" in any outcome or related document of the meeting.

Thank you
