

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

Intergovernmental Twelfth Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Forum in Asia

**28-31 October 2019
Hanoi, Viet Nam**

Theme: Achieving Smart and Resilient Cities through Low-Carbon and Intelligent Transport System

1. BACKGROUND

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all the United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a mutual plan of action for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. The Agenda outlined the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets designed to balance the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development that calls for action by all member countries for 15 years (2015-2030)¹. Subsequently, the New Urban Agenda was adopted by member countries on 20 October 2016², as a new framework and common roadmap that guides how our cities should be planned and managed to best promote sustainable urbanization for the 20 years. As the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 provided the opportunity for integrated action to prevent and reduce existing disaster risks in cities and communities³, the Paris Climate Agreement of COP 21 aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development, and called upon for intensify actions and investments in a sustainable and low-carbon future to limit the average global temperature rise well below 1.5 degree Celsius⁴. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda called for a new initiative to ensure sufficient investment in sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including transport, communication, water and sanitation and energy, in all countries.⁵ All these international agendas and frameworks highlighted the importance of safe, resilient and sustainable urban development.

Cities are growing fast in pace in the developing counties. Rapid population growth, unplanned urbanization and high motorization growth are putting unprecedented pressure on many developing cities of Asia. Most of these cities face common social, economic and environmental challenges such as traffic congestion, air and noise pollution, GHG emissions, road accidents and fatalities, safety and security issues, insufficient infrastructure and financial resources, among others. The risk of these cities is further compounded as the magnitude and frequency of natural disasters and extreme weather events are increasing in recent decades. Major cities which are located near rivers and oceans for better connectivity are also becoming increasingly vulnerable due to sea level rise and climate change impacts. These risk are linked to increasingly severe and complex shocks to the economic, social, political and ecological systems of the cities that support the sustainable development, a major concern for city leaders and government authorities. Many developing cities are facing challenges to sustainable development in the form of limited capacities in knowledge, skills, technology, institutions and finance. According to recent report published by UN, in Asia and the Pacific region 5,139 natural disasters occurred between 1970 and 2014 period, which is around 43% of the total disasters experienced globally⁶. In between 1970 and 2016 in average 43,000 people killed

¹<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf> (The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, September 2015)

² http://nua.unhabitat.org/uploads/DraftOutcomeDocumentofHabitatIII_en.pdf (New Urban Agenda, October 2016)

³ https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

⁴ https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris_nov_2015/application/pdf/paris_agreement_english_.pdf

⁵ http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_69_313.pdf

⁶ <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/apdr2015-full.pdf>

annually due to natural disaster and US\$1.15 trillion in economic damage⁷. Most of the least developing countries and the small island developing states are disproportionately affected by these disasters.

The concepts of ‘smart, resilient and sustainable cities’ have emerged as a popular discourse in the world to address the existing and future urban issues. Although there is a wide variation of definitions on smart city, however the basic concept of the smart city is to make cities safer, improve citizen’s welfare and enhance the quality of life of city dweller using new and advance technologies and big data such as Artificial Intelligent (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Intelligent Transportation System (ITS), Global Positioning System (GPS), automatic translation apps and sensor networks by extensively networking people, infrastructures and services. The ultimate goal of the smart city is to make the city safer, economically vibrant, social protective and environmentally sustainable by improving city’s transportation system, energy distribution, improvement of air and water quality, waste and sanitation management, better healthcare, education facilities and government services using digital data, smart application and smart solutions. Similarly, resilient cities have the capacity to reduce vulnerability to disaster risk and extreme climate events to respond in a fast, efficient and creative ways, and have the ability to adapt well for changing circumstances in order to increase long-term sustainability. Resilient cities further contribute toward the implementation and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are fundamental for achieving the 2030 Agenda. The general perception is that a sustainable city is one which provides the highest quality of life together with the lowest environmental footprint, whilst ensuring the needs of future generations are not compromised.

Sustainable and low-carbon transportation provide environment friendly infrastructure and services that offers safe and secure access for both persons and goods while reducing short and long term negative impacts on the local and global environment. Sustainable transport contribute towards many SDGs, particularly those related to poverty alleviation, food security, access to clean water, health, education, and employment opportunities, gender equality, infrastructure and energy, safe and sustainable cities and human settlements, sustainable consumption and production, and climate change. The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) held on 9-18 July 2018 further acknowledged the importance of the sustainable and resilient societies, and forty-six countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) on their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Almost all VNR addressed the SDG 11, showcasing strategies, programmes and policies put in place to make cities and human settlements more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable⁸. More than 80% of VNRs referred to the role of sustainable transport in achieving the SDGs, and 36% of VNRs acknowledged the need for sustainable transport but fell short of offering any concrete evidence and policy measures to demonstrate their commitment to achieve it⁹. To this regards, the 12th EST Forum also aims to enhance regional input to 2020 HLPF process.

Introducing appropriate policies, integrated urban and land use planning, high-quality and well-planned city infrastructures, state-of-the art technologies, better institutions, and innovative financing mechanism can fundamentally improve all levels of social, economic and environmental resilience in cities and communities. Well managed, low-carbon public transport system and robust and resilient transport infrastructures and services significantly improve the air quality, road safety and urban mobility options. Innovative public transport system, dedicated cycling and walkway facilities, optimizing road networks, well-managed city parking and transit-oriented development (ToD) and transit activated urban development, are central to smart and resilient cities. Advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligent (AI), Intelligent

⁷ https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/1_Disaster%20Report%202017%20Low%20res.pdf

⁸ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/210732018_VNRs_Synthesis_compilation_11118_FS_BB_Format_FINAL_cover.pdf

⁹ <http://www.slocat.net/news/1992>

Transport Systems (ITS), Internet of Things (IoT), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and big data also play key role to monitor and improve public transportation services provide smart traffic and mobility management solutions, whereas blockchain ensures easy coordination, trustworthy data sharing, and enables more efficient and cost-saving business operations for transportation and logistics ecosystem.

Considering large scale requirements of investment in transport infrastructure development, public-private-partnerships (PPP) can offer alternatives in which governments and private companies assume co-responsibility and co-ownership for the delivery of urban services, including transport infrastructure development. Partnerships can combine the advantages of the private sector (dynamism, access to financial resources and latest technologies, managerial efficiency, and entrepreneurial spirit, etc.) with social concerns and responsibility of the public sector (public health and better life, environmental awareness, local knowledge and job creation, etc.). Partnerships are indispensable for creating and financing adaptation measures towards resilient cities which in turn are more attractive for private investments. Partnerships can further provide win-win solutions both for the public utilities and private sector—if duly supported by appropriate policy frameworks. Such partnerships could lead to savings in government budgets, and the private sector, on the other hand, may use the opportunity to create sustainable business opportunities that could also serve as income generating avenues for the local communities. The public-private-partnerships could contribute in a number of areas – increased invest in public transit, transit orient development (TOD) and smart growth, increase in green space, more dedicated bicycling and walking infrastructure, emission reduction activities in urban areas which could in return help cities enhance sustainable business opportunities as well as making them resilient and sustainable. There has been increased call by the international community that the new transport infrastructure should be made climate and disaster resilient, through provision of adequate financing. The green climate fund or carbon finance, for instance, could be the possible resources for city governments for such developments in in addition of the government funding.

As part of the regional efforts towards the implementation of all international action agendas and frameworks including SDGs, the Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Forum in Asia has been providing the valuable inputs on regular basis. This year the Intergovernmental Twelfth Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Forum in Asia will be organized with the theme “*Achieving Smart and Resilient Cities through Low-Carbon and Intelligent Transport System*”, and will have a special focus on SDGs 11: *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*, among others.

With the above background, the Ministry of Transport of the Government of Viet Nam; Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, of the Government of Viet Nam; Ministry of Construction of the Government of Viet Nam, Ha Noi Municipal Government, Ministry of the Environment of the Government of Japan, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of the Government of Japan, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and United Nations Centre for Regional Development of Division for Sustainable Development Goals/United Nations Development of Economic and Social Affairs will be co-organizing the 12th Regional EST Forum in Asia from 28 to 31 October 2019 in Hanoi, Viet Nam.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the 12th Regional EST Forum in Asia are to:

- Discuss numerous environmentally sustainable transport policies, integrated urban and land use planning, sustainable infrastructures and services, state-of-the art technologies, institutional

measures, innovative financing mechanisms, and partnership arrangement in building safe, smart, resilient and sustainable cities and communities;

- Identify and discuss potential opportunities of improving existing and new infrastructures and services to improve road safety and urban mobility options, encouraging cycling and walkway facilities, optimizing road networks and managing city parking, and developing transit-oriented cities and communities;
- Discuss how Asian EST member countries can contribute towards the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development, in particular SDGs 11 through the implementation of advance technologies such as Artificial Intelligent (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Intelligent Transportation System (ITS), Global Positioning System (GPS), blockchain, big data, automatic translation apps, sensor networks and low-carbon transport solutions;
- Facilitate government, private sector and donor dialogue to explore possible investment opportunities in EST areas, including infrastructure development;
- Review and evaluate countries' progress, initiatives, achievements and best practices in addressing the Goals of the Bangkok 2020 Declaration (2010-2020); and
- Discuss strategy for moving beyond the Bangkok 2020 Declaration until 2030 aligning with the changing landscape of urban transport sector of Asia and with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development/SDGs.

3. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

The 12th Regional EST Forum in Asia is expected to be supported by various international organizations and donor agencies such as: Asian Development Bank (ADB), Bus World Academy, Department for International Development (DFID), Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute, Australia, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP), International Union of Railways (UIC), Research for Community Access Partnership (ReCAP), SAFER-Vehicle and Traffic Safety Centre, Wuppertal Institute, University of Gothenburg, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) (tbc), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Walk21, WRI India, the World Bank (WB) (tbc), among others.

4. GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

The geographic coverage of the Forum is encompass 25 countries in Northeast, Southeast, and South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Indonesia, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam) and Russian Federation. A number of Central Asian countries from ESCAP region are also expected to join the 12th Regional EST Forum in Asia.

5. PARTICIPANTS

Participation in the 12th Regional EST Forum in Asia is by invitation only. It is expected that approximately 400 participants, including senior government representatives from Asia and the Pacific countries, city mayors, international experts and resource persons, and others as listed below will be attending the conference.

- High-level government representatives and policy makers from the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Urban Development, the Ministry of Railways, and the Ministry of Health etc;
- Local participants including government officials from central, regional and local governments;
- Distinguished transport, environment and climate change experts and international resource persons;
- Representatives of relevant UN and international organizations, including international financial institutions, multi-lateral development banks and donor agencies; and
- Selected representatives of the private and business sectors, Academia, INGOs and NGOs etc.

Participation in the UN Forum is free of charge. A limited number of travel supports will be available on a priority basis for nominated government representatives from the developing countries. Unless otherwise stated in the official invitation, the participants are requested to kindly cover their own travel, accommodation, and all other incidental costs by their own organizations or through external sponsorships.

6. CONTACTS

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