



PRESS RELEASE

ASIAN COUNTRIES CALL FOR ACTIONS TO ATTAIN 10-YEAR GOALS FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

BANGKOK, THAILAND, 24 August 2010 - At the **Fifth Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Forum in Asia**, policymakers and senior officials from transport and environment authorities from 22 countries across Asia agreed on the **Bangkok 2020 Declaration** which provides sustainable transport goals for the next decade – 2010-2020. The Forum was co-organized by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) of the Kingdom of Thailand, Ministry of the Environment of the Government of Japan, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), and United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), from 23 to 25 August 2010 in Bangkok, Thailand.

“The Asian-Pacific transport sector plays a central role in achieving the region’s objectives for sustainable development. Successful adoption of the *Bangkok Declaration* is a clear sign of the renewed interest and commitment of Asian countries towards working for a promising decade of sustainable actions and measures for achieving safe, secure, affordable and efficient, people and environment-friendly transport in rapidly urbanizing Asia. Currently, 1.6 billion people, or 40 per cent of Asians, live in urban areas and by 2030, the majority (about 2.7 billion) will live in cities and towns with a phenomenal increase in demand for urban transport. The *Bangkok Declaration* comes at the right juncture, and it is a historic moment for the Asian EST Initiative,” said Kazunobu Onogawa, Director of UNCRD.

Urban transport represents one of the fastest growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global climate change. Transport-related carbon dioxide emissions are expected to increase 57 per cent worldwide during the period 2005-2030. Any serious effort to mitigate GHG emissions will have to address the transport sector and, in particular, measures to reduce the increase in private motorized vehicles.

The benefits from improved transport have mainly affected populations in coastal areas in Asia. The lack of adequate transport services in rural areas negatively affects rural economic development and has often led to greater migration to cities. There remains a need for a substantial transport task in order to reach large populations in deeper remote and rural areas as well as landlocked countries to encourage inclusive prosperity.

“Basic transport infrastructure facilities and services are still lacking or inadequate in many developing countries (both in urban and rural areas) across the world, making it difficult for the poor, including women, youth, and children, to access basic services, including those related to health and education facilities, and for workers to have access to jobs. And rural areas lack adequate rural transport infrastructure which perpetuates poverty, and poses constraints on the marketing of agricultural produce

and other income-generating opportunities, thus hampering efforts to achieve the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). I welcome the approach of the Regional EST Forum in Asia that brings together policymakers and senior officials in environment and transport to address these issues in an integrated way," said Luis Alberto Ferrate Felice, Chair of CSD-18 and Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Guatemala in reference to the outcome of the 18th Session of Commission on Sustainable Development. "Climate is a multiplier of existing environmental and social problems, which we should take into account as one of the greatest limitations in sustainable transport," he added.

More than half of the world's traffic fatalities occur in Asia, even though only one in five of the world's motor vehicles are registered there. Most of such fatalities are related to vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, children, and cyclists, due to poorly designed streets that lack the necessary safety infrastructure such as exclusive pedestrian and bicycle lanes, safe street crossings, and curb ramps for the disabled.

"The provision of quality transport services is intimately linked to economic performance and social equity. Asian countries need strong political will to support a socially sustainable transport system that includes investments to particularly support the barrier free mobility and access needs of society's most vulnerable groups, including low-income families, women, the elderly, and persons with physical disabilities. Road safety needs to be a primary guiding principle for transport planning and development," said Saugata Roy, Minister of State for Urban Development, India, while introducing India's multi-billion dollar worth Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission.

Environmentally sustainable transport represents a paradigm shift away from existing policies and practices that have placed private motorized vehicles ahead of people. UNCRD has sought to define EST as an alternative to uncontrolled motorization and its related problems and as a complementary package of public transport, quality footpaths and cycle ways, vehicle control measures, clean fuels, and road safety programmes along with a set of technologies and practices that encompasses international best practices in accessibility, mobility, affordability, fuel economy and safety.

"Asian nations and cities can no longer afford to bypass the path of EST that offers great opportunity for co-benefits, including the reduction of GHG emissions, reduction of deaths and injuries from road accidents, and reduction of economic losses due to traffic congestions. There is a need for Asian cities to promote concerted efforts towards achieving efficient public transportation system such as BRT and MRT to meet the growing demand for mobility," said Suwit Khunkitti, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand.

"Current transport financing practices are unfit to meet 21st century needs," remarked Michael Replogle, Global Policy Director and Founder of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) while releasing the report, *A Paradigm Shift towards Sustainable Low Carbon Transport: Financing the Vision*, at the Forum. "Over 1 trillion dollars is spent annually by governments subsidizing motor fuels and spurring more use of cars," he said. "This comes at the expense of investments in more pressing human needs for modern bus rapid transit, streets safe for walking and cycling, quality public space, as well as health, housing, and education. New incentives are needed to spur smart investments."

Delivering a keynote presentation at the Forum, Dr. Bindu N. Lohani, Vice President of Asian Development Bank in Manila said, "Infrastructure is one of ADB's five core operational areas, with transport representing a large share. Since 1966, ADB has financed 35.6 billion dollars in transport investments, including 11.3 billion dollars between 2005 and 2009 alone. More importantly, we are

supporting development of sustainable transport through our Sustainable Transport Initiative. Helping our developing member countries shift to more accessible, safer, environmentally stable, and affordable systems of transport is essential to ensure sustainable economic growth and improved lives and livelihoods."

The Asian Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Initiative, which is a joint initiative of UNCRD and the Ministry of the Environment, Japan, aims to build a common understanding across Asia on the essential elements of EST and the need for an integrated approach at the local and national levels to deal with multi-sectoral environment and transport issues, including GHG emission reduction. Currently, participating countries include, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Darussalam, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

"I believe the outcome of the Fifth Regional EST Forum, will provide a significant opportunity and motivation for Asian countries in achieving environmentally sustainable transport within the next ten years. Japan's Ministry of the Environment has overcome serious environmental issues such as air pollution and addressed urban and lifestyle types of air pollution to this day using various strategies. Through these valuable experiences, I believe Japan can make a significant contribution to the efforts of Asian countries that are being faced with, or are about to face, problems similar to ours," said Sakihito Ozawa, Minister of the Environment, Japan.

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UNCRD was established in 1971 as a United Nations organization promoting regional development in developing and economies in transition in the Asian-Pacific region, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The Centre targets its programmes towards socially and environmentally sustainable development, focusing on the three key components of Human Security, Environment, and Disaster Management. The Centre, in close cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA), (i) provides advisory services, (ii) facilitates the exchange of information, experience, and teaching, and (iii) fosters collaboration and cooperation among national and international organizations through its training, research, and project activities (for more information see www.uncrd.or.jp).

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) of Thailand is a young ministry established in accordance with the Administrative Organization of the State Act B.E. 2534 amended in B.E. 2545. Its vision is "to return the natural environment to the Thai people and to work towards the incorporation of natural resources and the environment in the Government's national agenda as these provide the basis for social and economic development". The MONRE vision supports proactive integration of the administrative management of natural resources, environmental protection, and biological diversity, based on the principles of public participation and good governance. The powers and

duties of MONRE include the preservation, conservation, rehabilitation of natural resources and environment, management and sustainable use of resources, with active participation and support of the public and all stakeholders, as well as implementation of other government services (for more information see <http://warehouse.mnre.go.th/dnn/>).

Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan, restructured in 2001, has been responsible for the national environmental policy since its establishment in 1971. The mission of the Ministry ranges widely from planning and formulation of an Integrated Environmental Policy to Promote Global Environmental Conservation, to promoting Environmental Management, Waste and Recycle Management, and Nature Conservation and Environmental Health (for more information see www.env.go.jp/en).

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the regional development arm of the United Nations for the Asia-Pacific region. With a membership of sixty-two governments, it is the largest United Nations body serving the Asia-Pacific region with over 600 staff. Established in 1947 with its headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand, ESCAP carries out work in the areas of Macroeconomic Policy and Development, Statistics, Subregional Activities for Development, Trade and Investment, Transport, Environment and Sustainable Development, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction, and Social Development. (for more information see <http://www.unescap.org>).