

Baltic Sea Forum Lunch Event

on the occasion of the 53rd Session of the Commission for Social
Development

“Social Development and economical and environmental responsibility through Sustainable Transport”

11 February 1:00pm EST

German House, 871 UN Plaza, NY

H.E. Mr. **Heiko Thoms**, *Ambassador, Chargé d’Affaires of the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the UN*, opened the lunch event by introducing the guests and giving a brief overview of the work of the Baltic Sea Forum. He highlighted in particular the importance of sustainable transport for shaping and implementing the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #11 (“Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”¹).

Prof. **Kurt Bodewig**, *former Federal Minister for Transportation, Infrastructure and Housing in Germany, as well as Chairman of the Executive Board of the Baltic Sea Forum*, in addition to introducing the speakers and the work of the Baltic Sea Forum, emphasized that the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs is one of the most important global processes and that given an increasing transport volume, transport needs to be sustainable.

Nikhil Seth, *Director Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)* gave the keynote address. According to Mr. Seth, sustainable transport is a “subject whose time has come”. Sustainable Development cannot happen without safe and sustainable transport. No country has developed without transport and no country can benefit from globalization without transport. Yet, there are many problems, such as the impact of climate change, traffic injuries, equality and pollution (esp. air pollution) that require transport solutions. By increasing connectivity and trade routes, more goods can be transported, making transport more efficient. Cities can also function as a major agent of change. Additional solutions include: cooperation on PPPs, jurisdiction, effective funding and a change in people’s mindset to shift from motorized to non-motorized transport, from fuel to electric, from low-volume to mass transport. Mr. Seth warned that while the indicators for the SDGs are being worked on in the statistical commission, a large number of countries don’t have the capacity to measure progress on these indicators.

Jeffrey A. Brez, *Chief NGO Relations, Department of Public Information (DPI)*, illustrated the work of the DPI, such as holding regular briefings and maintaining the resource center. Furthermore, Mr. Brez praised the Bonn Declaration that was presented to the PGA in 2014 and made civil society come to voice. The conference was particularly successful in identifying strategies and partners for the post-2015

¹<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>

declaration, building consensus, as well as promoting advocacy with advocacy and the general. The conference was also successful in putting together government, civil society and business, which are all interconnected. For anyone interested in gaining a good understanding of sustainable transport, Mr Brez recommended SLoCaT's website www.slocat.net, which, in addition to providing the mission and objectives of SLoCaT, gives an overview of the challenges of and the Results Framework needed for promoting sustainable transport.

Gunnar Platz, *PLANCO Consulting: worldwide transport concepts*, emphasized that mobility is the “foundation of economic development”. Transportation doesn't just mean moving people from A to B: sustainable transportation takes into account the human factor (cooperation of the people) needed for the infrastructure to work. Another example is in maritime freight transport, where efficient customs clearance creates strong incentives for ship usage. For sustainable transport to be more effective, one needs increased financing and better cross-border communication. Additionally, integrating logistical centers into sustainable transport is at the heart of job creation.

Michael Kodransky, *Global Research Manager, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy*, cited the combination of the 6 targets from the SLoCaT Results Framework as well as the 13 SDGs issues that crosscut transport as key to achieving climate change goals by 2030. Mr. Kodransky introduced the rapid transit ratio developed by the ITDP (km of mass rapid of transit related to population), wherein France ranks highest. France provides an example of how to guide finance to a local level and how to execute land use planning (e.g. what density threshold are needed to make transit sustaining).

H.E. Mr. Karel J. G. van Oosterom, *Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the UN, Chair of Group of Friends on Sustainable Transport*, described how sustainable transport is one of the key drivers of economic development, particularly in connection with climate change. It is thus imperative to develop a more comprehensive understanding of sustainable transport. He introduced how sustainable transport is like a rubix cube with six sides:

1. Means (water, air, land, virtual),
2. Where (global, regional, national, local, individual),
3. What (people, goods, ideas),
4. Why important (economic/social development, environment),
5. Key player (public, private, business, UN, government),
6. Hardware/Software (cars to bikes; borders, waiting time)

When one was to change on thing on the rubix cube, one needs to change everything else too. It is thus important to have an integrated approach when deliberating matters of sustainable transport.

In the discussion following the speakers, **Daniela Bas**, *Director, Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) at UN-DESA*, highlighted the social dimension of

sustainable transport. There are 1.2 billion people in the youth who need access to transport. There are 1 billion people with disabilities that need accessible and usable transport. Sustainable Transport also means adapting to the demographic change in many countries that sees numbers of senior citizens rising. Ms. Bas pointed out that one cannot only look at the financial investment, but has to care more about accessibility of transportation, which in turn will benefit economic and financial investment.