

Final Summary Report: Retreat on Sustainable Transport and Post-2015 Development Framework

June 10-11 2013, Venue: Greentree Foundation Estate, New York

Format: Four sessions with speakers & commenters, followed by Q&A and discussion

Introduction

During the retreat it became clear that there was general agreement among the participants about the need to sustain momentum for Sustainable Transport (ST) created by the Rio+20 conference. This would become significantly more challenging if ST would not be covered within the post-2015 development framework. Therefore, it was felt that it is urgent to have a strategy that creates awareness and sends out one message on the key role of sustainable transport in realizing the post-2015 development agenda suggested in Rio+20 and the report of the SG's High Level Panel. A specific suggestion was made for a concrete goal on ST with accompanying targets. Ignoring the importance of sustainable transport would lead to less sustainable development world-wide, higher burden of logistics, safety issues, pollution costs, more GHGs, inequality and poverty.

Session 1 (June 10th): Setting the Stage

The Friends of Sustainable Transport (FoST) at the UN organized in the previous six months three lunch time discussion meetings with member states, each with a focus on different components of Sustainable Transport. The organizing Missions (Netherlands, Thailand and Kenya) UN-DESA and the Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport (SLoCaT) concluded from these meetings that a substantial number of delegations to the UN were clearly interested in the subject ST, in particular from the perspective of the post-2015 development agenda. The retreat at Greentree was meant to provide an opportunity to representatives of Member States and of the sustainable transport community to have an in-depth discussion on the place of ST in the post-2015 framework.

Nikhil Seth, UN-DESA, introduced the debate. While drawing the attention of the participants to the several reports which recently had come out on post-2015, like the report of the SG's High Level Panel (HLP), and the one by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, he reminded that the Rio+20 conference had framed the issue. The ST agenda should include all three elements - economic, social and environmental- of the Rio +20 agenda. Seth pointed out that ST plays an enabling role in all three areas of the Rio-+20 agenda, a point supported by many speakers during the seminar.

The question then is whether ST should be captured in a separate goal, or in several specific targets within other goals, or that it should find its place in the narrative which would bring the different post-2015 goals and targets together in a coherent post-2015 framework.

Seth also made the point that a joint forum within the UN, to discuss ST in a structured manner, is missing. In his view the time might have come to start discussing its establishment and functioning. This last point led in the later discussion to two concrete, alternative suggestions: a new UN-institution, UN Transport, or an institution outside of the UN like the International energy Agency (IEA).

SLoCAT background paper on Sustainable Transport and Post 2015

In the view of the author of the SLoCAT background paper, Cornie Huizenga, the most important problems of sustainable transport are limited access to transport services in both rural and urban areas,

and lack of sustainability. An example of the former is that for many of the urban residents, especially in Africa, the main mode of transport is walking, notwithstanding the extensive road construction that has taken place. Rural development is still being held back by poor road infrastructure, and the absence of reliable, affordable transport services to take agricultural produce to the market.

With the rapid motorization taking place across the globe air pollution, road crashes and traffic congestion are responsible for economic losses equivalent to 6 % or more of GDP. The key is to provide more inclusive access to transport – for instance by more public transport- that is more sustainable and offers the opportunity for a more low carbon growth path for the transport sector. At the moment transport is the sector where carbon emissions grow fastest. The Avoid + Shift + Improve (ASI) approach: Avoid unnecessary motorized transport + Shift to the most effective means of transport or communication + Improve the environmental footprint of transport provides a way forward to realize sustainable, low carbon transport.

In defining sustainable transport as part of the Sustainable Development Goals it is important to focus on indicators and targets, acknowledge institutional and governance challenges and to differentiate between region-specific challenges. Indicators on Avoid, Shift and Improve will vary by country according to current motorization rates. The ASI approach is not intended to deny developing countries the possibility to develop transport infrastructure and services. The ASI can help such countries to do so in a more sustainable manner. Supportive, well researched and analyzed data and a clear narrative are crucial to effectively communicate about the role transport can play in improving access and quality of life.

Session 2 (June 11th): Emerging Contours of Post- 2015 Development Framework

It was pointed out that a tremendous amount of money is invested in transport, which reflects the important role transport plays in many sectors. However, ST doesn't get as much attention in the post-2015 debate. Part of the problem was perhaps that participants the debate were until now mainly experts, using technical expressions which were difficult to understand for the general public.

Several suggestions were made to deal with this problem. One was a stronger emphasis on the contribution ST makes to poverty reduction and to bring about inclusive growth. Another was to link ST to one or more of the other subjects on the post-2015 agenda, which have very broad support. In this connection energy was mentioned, and also cities, which was described as one of the central and compelling themes in the Rio+20 conference.

One of the arguments in favor of a focus on cities was that urbanization was proceeding very fast, and it would be very difficult if not impossible to change the layout of a part of a city once it was built. Because of the dense population in cities it should be possible to develop an elaborate structure of affordable public transport. One participant argued that such transport should be of high quality. The trick was to lure people out of their cars, and to make public transport not the preserve of the poor, but a quality alternative. However, it was also pointed out that public transport was especially important for lower income countries and for countries with many younger people, and that the crucial link between regional and urban areas should be given due attention.

A third approach is to focus on “access”, as a key ingredient to grab people's attention for sustainable transport. Access to jobs, health and education expressed in clear targets would highlight the inclusion of sustainable transport.

A fourth approach is to focus on the fact that in the next 10 years, the globe will see an unprecedented growth in private cars; in those 10 years more cars will be built than in the previous 100 years. Much of this growth will be in developing countries, which so far lack proper road safety measures. Road safety might become the 5th leading cause of death, if not addressed properly.

Keynote Speech Amina J. Mohammed (Special Advisor on Post-2015 Development Planning)

Ms. Mohammed stressed that a paradigm shift is needed as the world's environment has changed significantly, compared to the timeframe in which the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) were created in 2000. The new post-2015 agenda needs five transformative shifts: (a) universalism; (b) putting sustainable development at the core; (c) inclusive economic growth; (d) governance building; and (e) global partnerships. Ms. Mohammed stressed that the High Level Panel report sets the stage for a people-centered development process as well as ambitious goals, which are three-dimensional (environment, economic and social). Sustainable transport touches on all of these three dimensions. Ms. Mohammed stressed the need to engage the private sector more in the implementation of the new development agenda. She also emphasized the gender aspect of sustainable development and sustainable transport.

In the question and answer session, participants stressed that while transport had been missing within the MDG's, this should not be the case in the post-2015 agenda for the SDGs. They questioned why for example road safety had not been mentioned at all in the HLP report, while data prove that road crashes related death rates are now higher than e.g. death rates from malaria or TB. Ms. Mohammed acknowledged the seriousness of this problem and urged the participants to bring this issue, as well as other arguments underscoring the importance of sustainable transport, to the attention of wider group of decision makers. She also underlined that it would be wise not to wait too long to come to concrete conclusions on how best to anchor ST in the post-2015 framework (narrative, goals, targets, etc.).

Session 3: Transport and the Post-2015 Goal Framework

The third session focused on this last point: how to anchor ST firmly in the post-2015 agenda. Participants discussed whether to deal with transport as a separate topic or to link and integrate it with other topics. Both were considered to have advantages. The best approach would probably be to prepare texts both for an overarching ST goal and for specific targets. These last ones could then be included together under a separate ST goal, or individually as one of the targets under other goals. Also the importance ST in the narrative framing the individual SDG's, was underlined. In the end the central objective is to ensure that sustainable transport is included, in whatever form or place.

In this context a specific goal on sustainable transport was presented: **“Universal access to safe, clean and affordable transport,”** with the following targets:

- 1) *Urban households are, on average, able to access jobs, goods and services within 30 minutes by quality public transport and/or walking and cycling infrastructure and rural households have access to paved or all-weather roads to take products to markets and reach essential services;*
- 2) *Traffic related deaths are cut in half by 2030 compared to 2005 with an ultimate vision of near zero fatalities;*

- 3) *Air pollution from passenger and freight transport is halved by 2030 compared to 2005, and GHG emissions from transport peak globally by 2020 with an ultimate vision of 40-60% reductions by 2050 compared to 2005 levels¹.*

There was a strong feeling among participants that the discussion on sustainable transport needs to focus more on access and poverty than on environmental or climate change considerations. Many participants felt that the proposed SDG, together with the three proposed targets on access, road safety and environmental performance of transport, offer a good way forward to combine these different key elements of sustainable transport.

The My World 'Global Opinion on Post-2015 Priorities' shows that transport is labeled as a relative low priority ('better roads and safety' ranked 10 out of 16 topics) but nevertheless still higher than sustainable energy. 11 out of the 16 topics mentioned in My World are enabled by sustainable transport. Based on this, the suggestion was also raised for the possibility of a multi-sector goal, "universal (improved) access to safe, clean and affordable energy, transport (and water) for all".

The ensuing discussion clarified that transport institutions should perform an analysis on the benefits and feasibility of pursuing one specific sustainable transport goal versus several (cross-cutting) targets under several goals. While opinions diverged on the likelihood of a specific ST goal passing, there was general agreement that an advocacy for a dedicated SDG on sustainable transport is a powerful manner to raise awareness on sustainable transport.

The point was also made that it will be key to have effective communication to the right people, organizations and institutions. There needs to be an active engagement with countries to overcome perception barriers and to explain that targets can and should be differentiated by countries. One should analyze who should be approached in the advocacy process (e.g. the ones who frame the SDG's or the ones who can influence those who frame them.)

The Goal Framework does not need to cover all components of sustainable transport, but rather can consist of a strategy with a clear focus on a couple common targets. It is furthermore crucial that institutions work on a narrative, which is supported by data. A roadmap for the upcoming 15 years should be created to understand on what needs to be accomplished for these common targets.

Session 4: Means of Implementation

Through the Voluntary Commitments on Sustainable Transport, including the \$ 175 billion MDB pledge for more sustainable transport, an important contribution has been made towards the means of implementation of a possible sustainable transport goal and associated targets. Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and other organizations have jointly been advocating and implementing the "Avoid-Shift-Improve" framework. This is now ready for scaling up. It was also pointed out ASI was primarily focused on the how, and that further work needed to be done on the what.

However, large investments are needed to realize sustainable transport and to fill the existing finance requirements, estimated at \$300-400 billion per year for the next decade. The MDB catalytic finance

¹ Or as compatible with the UNFCCC agreements.

contribution in 2012 was \$17,3 billion, less than 4% of what is required. The bulk of funding will have to come from countries themselves and from global (public-private) transformative partnerships.

Resource mobilization will be aided by a clear accountability framework for sustainable transport. The message of sustainable transport should be simplified to connect to the private sector and civil society and enable additional voluntary commitments.

Closing of the Retreat

Hungary, as one of the co-chairs of the Open Working Group on SDGS thanked the participants for their inputs and indicated that these would be very valuable in the continuation of the work of the OWG. Transport will be discussed in the January meeting of the OWG, but = there are also ample opportunities to introduce sustainable transport in other sessions of the OWG. This will be important to stress the integrated and cross-cutting role of sustainable transport.

The Netherlands PR in his closing words suggested that it might be good to focus first on getting a consensus on the targets for sustainable transport that should be integrated in the post-2015 goal framework. The development of a more detailed results framework on sustainable transport would be a logical next step in this process. The decision on whether these targets are best served by a dedicated transport SDG or whether transport could be combined with another topic, e.g. cities or energy, can come later.

The SLoCaT Partnership in its closing remarks thanked the Dutch PR Herman Schaper for his initiative to develop the Friends of Sustainable Transport among the UN Missions in New York , wished him well in the future after his retirement and expressed the hope that his successor would be equally committed to the topic of sustainable transport.

Participants concluded that follow-up discussions, including perhaps another retreat, would be desirable to further enhance the discussion.

Please visit the following events page for presentations and documents of the Retreat:

<http://slocat.net/event/929>

Note: This summary report of the discussions is based on the Chatham House Rule; no direct quotations of particular persons were used, and the only participants identified by name are ASG Amina Mohammed, DESA Director Nikil Seth and SLoCAT coordinator Cornie Huizenga.