

SLoCaT Engagement in the Second UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference

Memo by the SLoCaT Partnership Secretariat - November 2019

A. Why is this conference important? Why SLoCaT?

There is no doubt that the implementation of sustainable, low carbon transport measures is essential to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Simply put, people depend on transport systems. They are essential to powering lives and livelihoods, moving people and goods, and ensuring no one is left behind. Transforming transport is part and parcel of securing the future and protecting the planet from the scourge of climate change.

Thus, the second **UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference (GSTC)** is a critical step in channeling political will toward scaling up sustainable, low carbon transport at all levels, and leveraging the potential of transport for the realisation of sustainable development commitments. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Ministry of Transport of China, as secretariat and host government of the GSTC, can capitalise on trends in transport and sustainable development in the delivery of the Conference - to go beyond usual mobility topics, and make sure issues such as freight, urban-rural connectivity, the transport-energy nexus, and others play a role in GSTC deliberations.

Since the international community has just completed its first four-year review cycle of the 2030 Agenda, stocktaking exercises show that more needs to be done to fulfill the development paradigm shift required by the SDGs. This is where the GSTC comes in, providing a deep dive into a sectoral approach to SDG action. By gathering ministers of transport, together with cities and subnational governments, the public and private sectors, the transport community, and civil society, a path can be paved for the evolution of transport systems. The SLoCaT Partnership is well suited to facilitate synergies between the transport sector and policy makers on a scale essential to partnerships and ambitious action.

The Conference will span three days, and consist of plenaries, parallel thematic sessions, a sustainable transport exhibition, and individual fora - one each for ministers, business, and the science, technology and engineering community. Each aspect of the GSTC seeks to gather key players in sustainable, low carbon transport, as to bridge gaps between policymakers, practitioners, and innovators.

The second UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference is a follow-up to the first, held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in 2016. The GSTC will be held on **5-7 May 2020** in **Beijing, China**. Details regarding registration will soon be posted on the GSTC [website](#). The provisional programme is also available [online](#).

B. How does participation move us forward strategically?

- The GSTC can sensitise government officials at all levels to governance and planning tools related to transport, including the Avoid-Shift-Improve Framework, as well as better position



transport as a vector for tackling unique issues, including informality, gender, social cohesion, and others.

- Existing links between the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process of the 2030 Agenda and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the Paris Agreement are weak. The Conference can be instrumental in fostering synergy between the two processes at the national level.
- The GSTC can build on existing momentum towards COP26 in the United Kingdom, widening and nourishing transport action throughout 2020, serving to break down silos between intergovernmental processes. SLoCaT is equipped to support in this work, especially as a transport co-focal point with ITF in the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (MPGCA), as well as through the broad coalition that delivered the Action toward Climate-friendly Transport (ACT) initiative, launched at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit.
- Finally, the Conference can help build linkages and support synergies among UN entities working on different elements of transport and mobility. SLoCaT can support in this effort, fostering UN system-wide coherence around transport.

C. How has the SLoCaT Secretariat engaged thus far?

The SLoCaT Secretariat is meeting regularly with UNDESA, and on occasion, has been joined by SLoCaT members. Below is an outline of the work being carried out on a number of fronts.

- **Knowledge Provision:** SLoCaT was invited by UNDESA to present its work on transport and climate change at an online workshop with the Chinese Ministry of Transport. The presentation focused on the findings of the [Transport and Climate Change Global Status Report \(TCC-GSR\)](#), and how transport links to SDG implementation. ITF, ITDP, UITP, and SuM4All were also invited to present.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The SLoCaT Secretariat is advising the organisers of the Conference on the breadth of transport stakeholders that can engage.
- **Policy Coherence:** As SLoCaT plays numerous roles across processes, the Partnership is well placed to work on building synergies with events like the UNFCCC COP25, COP26, and others.
- **Conference Outcomes:** The Conference will result in the Beijing Declaration. It will not be a negotiated agreement, but will highlight key elements of the sessions of the GSTC.

Below are key moments for building a critical mass within the transport sector towards the Conference:

- **COP25 Transport Day:** 6 December 2019, Madrid, Spain.
- [World Urban Forum 10](#): 8-13 February 2020, Abu Dhabi, UAE.
- **UNFCCC Africa Climate Week:** 9-13 March 2020, Kampala, Uganda.
- **Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development:** TBC 2020.
- **Arab Forum for Sustainable Development:** TBC 2020.
- **Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development:** TBC 2020.
- **Forum of Countries of Latin America and Caribbean on Sustainable Development:** TBC 2020.

D. Success Criteria - What are we aiming to achieve and by when?

1. Ensure the interests of the wider Partnership, e.g., different modes and sectors, are reflected in the various fora of the Conference and presented to the organisers. (by the end of 2019)



2. Build synergies between the Conference and other important moments in key intergovernmental processes. (by the end of 2019 and early 2020)
3. Build a critical mass around the Conference and further rally governments at all levels to attend and meaningfully engage. (by early 2020)
4. Maximise opportunities for members within the modalities established by the hosts. (ongoing)

E. Which resources are needed for meaningful engagement?

Participation in the conference primarily requires labour and travel costs. If side events or exhibitions are to be planned by the SLoCaT Secretariat, then more resources would be needed to cover logistical and other costs. The host government will sponsor travel of developing country government representatives, and possibly for certain speakers, so this could have an impact on overall cost if members are selected to be speakers, presenters, facilitators, etc. There could also be some limited financial support from the UN.

F. What are the challenges and mitigation actions?

The questions that remain, and on which the Secretariat will be working further, are the following:

1. This Conference occurs at a moment when ongoing intergovernmental policy processes seem stagnant. How can the GSTC help energise a sectoral approach to the realisation of sustainable development commitments that serves multilateralism and a dedication to meaningful action?
2. Will the GSTC cover key thematic priorities, or be skewed towards a specific sector or topic?
3. What is the role of sustainable development stakeholder platforms in the Conference, namely the [UN major groups and other stakeholders](#)? What are the modalities for their engagement?
4. How will Conference outcomes be integrated into the next phase of 2030 Agenda review?
5. How can synergies between the GSTC and other processes best be facilitated, especially with the ongoing implementation and review of the Paris Agreement?

**For more on transport and SDGs, see the SLoCaT Partnership website, especially the review of the first four year cycle of the VNRs and its treatment of transport: <http://www.slocat.net/vnr>.*