

UN Session on Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and Indicators Holds Promise but Limited Clarity for Sustainable Transport

Summary Report • April 3, 2015

Partnership on Sustainable Low Carbon Transport

I. Background

The third session of intergovernmental negotiations (IGN) on [the United Nations \(UN\) post-2015 development agenda](#)¹ took place from March 23-27, 2015 in New York. The session [agenda](#)² contained multiple objectives, which focused on the discussion of sustainable development goals (SDGs) and targets, and indicators to measure progress toward SDGs and targets. The session included a presentation on provisional global indicators; presentations by member States on approaches to implementation of the SDGs at national levels, and discussion of themes for the interactive dialogues at the September 2015 Summit. The session closed with discussions of coordination with the Financing for Development (FfD) process in the fourth IGN session in April 2015.

The third session was framed by the release of two UN documents proposing provisional indicators and revised targets, which gave rise to several key points of debate, including potential revisions to SDGs and targets, timeframes for finalizing indicators, and levels of ambition for targets and indicators, which are discussed further in the following section of this report. A subsequent section analyzes proposed transport-related targets and indicators vis-à-vis recommendations from the Partnership on Sustainable Low Carbon Transport (SLoCaT) and input from member states during negotiating sessions. A further section summarizes more detailed discussions of sustainable transport at session side events.

Indicators for Goals and Targets

Opening discussions of the session centered on indicators for proposed post-2015 goals and targets. The newly-released United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) [indicator report](#)³ presents an initial set of provisional indicators to measure the targets proposed by the Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs. The UNSC has stressed that the development of a robust indicator framework is an iterative, technical process, which includes the possibility of future refinements.

The discussion on indicators began with an address from John Pullinger, chairman of the UNSC, marking the first time for a chair of the UNSC to address the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and thus stressing the importance of this technical work. Mr. Pullinger asserted that appropriate indicators must be developed for all SDGs and

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/sdgsandtargets>

² [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6264Intergovernmental Negotiations Post-2015 Dev.Agenda - 6 March 2015.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6264Intergovernmental%20Negotiations%20Post-2015%20Dev.Agenda%20-6%20March%202015.pdf)

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[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6754Technical%20report%20of%20the%20UNSC%20Bureau%20\(final\).pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6754Technical%20report%20of%20the%20UNSC%20Bureau%20(final).pdf)

targets (including means of implementation (MOI)), and suggested that a limited number of global and universal indicators be supported by a broader set of indicators for regional, national, and thematic monitoring. The UNSC document includes ratings of feasibility, suitability, and policy relevance for each indicator based on a survey of available country data.⁴ Mr. Pullinger stressed that statisticians are ready to “step up, step forward, and step on the gas” to develop indicators in support of the SDG process.

Subsequent commentary from Parties included consensus from a number of alliances on several major points introduced by the *G77/China*. First, the process of defining indicators should not be used to undermine previous efforts in defining SDGs and targets. Second (as asserted by *El Salvador* among others), the UNSC should work to define indicators on a global level, and regional and national level indicators should be left up to respective statistical commissions (e.g. the African Union is developing regional indicators for Africa). Third, it is essential to provide financing for building capacity among statistical commissions in developing countries to allow sufficient resources for data collection, as asserted by *Lebanon* and echoed by *Switzerland*.

A key issue in this discussion was whether to extend the finalization of indicators to March 2016 or to uphold the initial target of September 2015. Roughly one third of delegates supported maintaining the current, while the other two thirds endorsed a more comprehensive and consistent framework, one that would take more time to establish. Next steps in the process include convening a high-level expert group on indicators, which is to be largely intergovernmental but is also to include UN agencies, civil society, and other stakeholders. The first meeting of the expert group is slated for May 2015, and the group is expected to review a set of initial criteria by July 2015.

In discussions on indicators, few member states commented on the substance of individual indicators, focusing instead on the process slated for the months ahead. Proposed transport-relevant indicators from the UNSC report, along with SLoCaT recommendations and relevant input from negotiations are enumerated in Section II.

Sustainable Development Goals and Targets

To frame discussions on sustainable development goals and targets, the co-facilitators introduced a [document](#) with proposed revisions to a small percentage of targets (19 of 169) determined through a “technical proofing” process.⁵

The updated document proposes no significant changes to transport-related targets, apart from a logical revision regarding road safety target timeframes.⁶ A change was proposed to target 3.6. *By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.* This is not consistent with the Decade of Action on Road Safety (2011-2020), which was to reduce by half from the projected increase of deaths and injuries by 2020. The baseline was 2010. Hence the target cannot be met by 2020 (using 2015 baseline). Target year should therefore be changed to 2030

A majority of delegates criticized this idea, which would open up the discussion of previously discussed goals and targets, and stressed that technical exercises should

⁴ See Annex 4,

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6754Technical%20report%20of%20the%20UNSC%20Bureau%20\(final\).pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6754Technical%20report%20of%20the%20UNSC%20Bureau%20(final).pdf)

⁵ http://unngls.org/images/PDF/Post2015_Targets_document_March2015.pdf

⁶ See ‘Road Safety Targets and Indicators’ section below.

only take place with political guidance. The co-facilitators proposed providing a more detailed explanation on suggested changes in the coming weeks and to address the issue again during the May IGN session.

In subsequent discussions, delegates reiterated the need for consistency and enforceability of targets, and the need to mobilize resources for developing countries to develop regional and national indicators. *India* and the *United States* insisted that targets be quantifiable, internationally supported, and void of definitional issues. Many delegates concurred with *Canada's* call to strengthen and clarify the language of the targets, which would help to define the role of sustainable transport in the SDG process.

Tonga (for SIDS) pointed to the Category 5 storm affecting Vanuatu as an example of the need for small island states to focus on climate change. *Peru* (for AILAC), stressed the need for clear global indicators that are inclusive of vulnerable populations. *Belize* (for CARICOM), focused on a technology transfer mechanism as a crucial element, and *Benin* (for LDCs), hoped the technical work of elaborating on the indicators would fill in empty variable and focus on the means of implementation in the outcome document.

The co-facilitators pointed out that indicators are still rudimentary in nature, and there was general consensus among member states that more time was needed to develop robust indicators. In this context, it is necessary to further develop transport-related indicators, ideally before the September summit, for discussion in any final agreement.

Country Experiences in Implementing SDGs

An interactive session on Tuesday afternoon involved presentations by several member states, including *Togo*, *Colombia*, the *Netherlands*, and *Myanmar*, on plans to integrate the 169 proposed OWG targets into national development agendas. Although these states are at different levels of developmental capacity, they all stressed that many of the SDGs are indeed already integrated into their national strategies. All governments mentioned the establishment of an inter-department or inter-ministerial platform through which crosscutting solutions and policies have been developed to address the SDGs.

With regard to transport, all presenters mentioned the importance of investment in clean technology and tackling climate change. *The Netherlands* mentioned the development of sustainable cities (in relation to SDG 11⁷) as a key priority in the Dutch national agenda, citing the Port of Rotterdam as a sustainable transport development. *Malaysia* mentioned that environmental considerations have been mainstreamed in economic planning, reducing GHG emissions by 33%. *Vietnam* mentioned the importance of a stable climate as a more vulnerable developing country, and *New Zealand* shared its national development plan, which analyzes 15 themes, including transport.

In summary, the co-facilitators stressed that while the many discrete elements interwoven into SDGs and targets may prove a challenge to monitor and evaluate, they demonstrate the complexity of meeting sustainable development needs in the future. In this context, transport must be better integrated in national development strategies, as a cross-cutting strategy that supports the achievement of a broad set of SDGs and targets.

Interactive Dialogue with Major Groups and Other Stakeholders

Wednesday morning featured an interactive dialogue with Major Groups and other

⁷ "SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable."
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal>

Stakeholders. Representatives asserted that indicators must consider differences in gender, race, age, geography, indigenous status, disability, and other factors to monitor SDG implementation. This point has particular relevance for development of transport, as many urban and rural areas continue to lack safe, reliable and accessible transport infrastructure and services that serve the needs of society's most vulnerable members.

Speakers emphasized the need for indicators to be robust, ambitious, relevant, and specific, and for these indicators to consider factors beyond mere economics. As one speaker said, "Beyond GDP we must account for human well-being, sustainability and equity," and sustainable transport can contribute to more sustainable and equitable communities, and thus to well-being at many levels. SDG indicators should also facilitate grassroots participation in the measurement of local progress toward global goals.

The facilitators also offered six proposed themes for future interactive dialogue⁸, which *Switzerland* described as ambitious and transformative. *Cameroon* and *Lesotho* emphasized the key role of good governance to enable development, and *Mexico* and *Australia* stated support for establishing peaceful societies, noting that combatting climate change will be a key element in this effort. Transport was not specifically discussed within the thematic dialogues, however this theme should be raised in forthcoming interactive dialogues as one key crosscutting theme to help bring the post-2015 agenda to local communities and to support achievement of a broad range of development goals

Closing Session

During the Friday closing session, delegates presented their opinions about the key role of technology in the Financing for Development (FfD) process. *Sudan* and *South Korea* pointed out that the post-2015 agenda and the FfD processes are complementary but should not overlap, and *Nigeria*, *Bolivia* and *Samoa* emphasized the need for substantial discussions on MOI within the FfD process. The *United States* and *Brazil* pointed out that MOI and capacity building are also key elements for global partnership.

Next steps in the SDG process include an April 2015 session on MOI and global partnership for sustainable development, with a planned joint session⁹ between the FfD and post-2015 processes. Co-facilitator Macharia Kamau said that the April session will be the "train station where all tracks come together," underscoring that it is the sole opportunity for the post-2015 agenda process delegates to "inject" their ideas into the FfD outcome. A follow up and review session is scheduled for May 2015, in advance of a series of three IGNs in June and July, leading up to the September 2015 Summit.

II. Analysis of Proposed Transport-Related Targets and Indicators

Each of the following sections presents relevant UNSC-proposed targets and indicators under consideration in the third IGN session, SLoCaT-recommended additions and modifications to these proposed targets and indicators¹⁰, and relevant negotiation dialogue in each six areas. These six areas of analysis are linked to the [SLoCaT Results](#)

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<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/67896%20themes%20for%20Interactive%20Dialogues.pdf>

⁹ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6793DRAFT_programme_joint%20session%20April_2503.pdf

¹⁰ http://slocat.net/sites/default/files/annex_2_-_indicators.pdf

[Framework on Sustainable Transport](#),¹¹ which defines six targets (along with a series of supporting indicators) to underscore the crucial contribution of transport to the post-2015 development agenda. The six SLoCaT sustainable transport targets include three on improving access (rural, urban and regional connectivity) and three on negative externalities (air pollution, road safety and climate change).

Rural Access Targets and Indicators

The UNSC draft report proposes the following indicators with implications for rural access:

- *Indicator 2.a.1: Agriculture Orientation Index for Government Expenditures*
- *Indicator 5.4.2: Proportion of households within 15 minutes of nearest water source*
- *Indicator 9.1.2: Transport by air, road, and rail (millions of passengers and ton-km and % population with access to all season road)*

SLoCaT proposes two potential options to better reflect the critical role of rural transport within the targets of the draft SDG framework. One approach is to add a *new target* related to rural transport under SDG 2¹². Another, possibly more feasible, approach is to modify *existing targets* to better highlight rural transport (e.g. adding a direct reference to *transport* in Target 2.3¹³, and adding a direct reference to *rural access* in Target 9.1¹⁴).

At the indicator level, SLoCaT notes that Indicator 9.1.2 adds needed focus on rural access with its specific reference to all-season roads. SLoCaT suggests incorporating the Rural Access Index¹⁵, which measures the proportion of rural population living within two kilometers of a road or trail providing all-year access for sustainable transport. In addition, to promote the deployment of rural transport services, SLoCaT proposes an indicator to assess the presence of a conducive regulatory environment for such rural transport services (e.g. in-country expert panels).

In negotiating dialogue relevant to rural access, *Ecuador* and *Argentina* stressed the importance of disaggregation of data indicators to address inequality and structural gaps, and *Serbia* further specified that both gender and age should be taken in account. This point is underscored in rural transport access, in which it is noted that women by far bear the biggest transport burden (e.g. it is common for households in rural Africa to spend five hours per day on transport tasks such as collecting water and firewood, and most of this effort is by women carrying goods on their heads and backs.)¹⁶

Urban Access Targets and Indicators

The UNSC draft report proposes the following indicators with implications for urban access:

- *Indicator 11.2.1: Percentage of people living within 0.5 km of public transit [running at least every 20 minutes] in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants*
- *Indicator 11.2.2: (km of high capacity (BRT, light rail, metro) public transport per person for cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants)*
- *Indicator 11.7.2: Proportion of residents within 0.5 km of accessible green and public*

¹¹ <http://slocat.net/resultsframework>

¹² E.g. "Universal access, by sustainable transport, for rural populations by 2030."

¹³ E.g. "Double agricultural productivity...including through...access to basic services, including transport..."

¹⁴ E.g. "Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including rural, regional and trans-border infrastructure and services, to support improved logistics, economic development..."

¹⁵ <http://www.worldbank.org/transport/transportresults/headline/rural-access.html>

¹⁶ http://slocat.net/sites/default/files/u10/rural_transport_fact_sheet-march_2015.pdf

space

- *Indicator 11.a.1: Cities with >100,000 inhabitants that implement urban and regional development plans integrating population projections and resource needs*¹⁷
- *Indicator 11.a.2: Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate at comparable scale*¹⁸

SLoCaT supports inclusion of the above indicators, and proposes the following additions/modifications, in part to increase measurability of the above indicators:

- *Proportion of households within 500 meters of good quality affordable public transport accessible by dedicated walking and/or cycling facilities (Target 11.2)*
- *Travel times by traveller type and purpose (Target 11.7)*

In addition, SLoCaT proposes the inclusion of supportive city-level indicators on affordability, and public transport passenger satisfaction surveys in cities to assess the quality of public transport services.

In negotiating dialogue relevant to urban access, the *Major Groups and Stakeholders* session noted that by 2050 two thirds of the global population will reside in urban areas¹⁹, and that SDG11 must incorporate local, subnational, and territorial approaches. With regard to transport, *Germany* mentioned that integrated urban development (including transport) is a national priority, and *Mexico* asserted that a stronger nexus is required between rural and urban issues, and thus it is necessary to link SDGs to cut across a spectrum of issues, a role that could be readily filled by sustainable transport.

National Access and Regional Connectivity Targets and Indicators

The UNSC draft report proposes the following indicators with implications for national access and regional connectivity:

- *Indicator 9.1.2: Transport by air, road, and rail (millions of passengers and ton-km and % population with access to all season road).*
- *Indicator 17.17.1(2): Number of PPP projects implemented (by developing countries)*

SLoCaT recommends the following modifications to Target 9.1, which would address three key areas, which require greater attention in the SDGs (in underlined text):

- *Target 9.1: Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including rural, regional and trans-border infrastructure and services, to support improved logistics, economic development and human well-being, ...*

At the indicator level, SLoCaT notes that Indicator 9.1.2 adds needed focus on national and regional freight access with its specific reference to ton-kilometers. SLoCaT also suggests adding indicators for the Logistics Performance Index,²⁰ rail and airline passenger data, and data on trade volumes by air/sea, as well as delays to goods at border crossings. In addition, SLoCaT supports the inclusion of indicators for volume and value of transborder land-based trade as a share of total trade, and transborder person volumes by land based modes as a share of total passenger volumes.

¹⁷ See also Indicator 11.3.2

¹⁸ See also Indicator 11.3.1

¹⁹ <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/population/world-urbanization-prospects-2014.html>

²⁰ <http://lpi.worldbank.org>

In negotiating dialogue relevant to national access and regional connectivity, *Egypt* requested elaboration on proposed interactions among global, regional and national indicators, and the *United Kingdom* recommended that national and regional indicators should complement and not substitute for global indicators. *Mexico* raised the question of how global indicators can help to capture data at regional and national levels, and conversely, how regional indicators might in turn help to inform global indicators.

Road Safety Targets and Indicators

The updated SDG framework target document²¹ and the UNSC draft report propose the following targets and indicators with implications for road safety:

- *Target 3.6: By 2030, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.*
- *Indicator 3.6.1: Number of deaths due to road traffic accidents*

The UN proposed the above revision to Target 3.6 (which previously had a 2020 target) to ensure consistency with the UN Decade of Action on Road Safety²², which states a goal to reduce by half the projected increase of deaths and injuries by 2020. Since the baseline was 2010, it is not realistic to meet the target by 2020 using a 2015 baseline; thus the target year has been changed to 2030 in the technical proofing document.

SLoCaT concurs with the proposed revision to Target 3.6, along with the proposed indicator on global traffic deaths (which numbered 1.24 million in 2010), which is consistent with the indicator proposed in the SLoCaT Results Framework. It is also suggested to incorporate a parallel indicator on serious injuries, with a desired achievement to reduce by half the 12.4 million global serious traffic injuries in 2010.

In negotiating dialogue relevant to road safety, *Vietnam* reported progress in reducing traffic accidents, while *the Netherlands* reported only 570 traffic deaths per year, stating that solving “the last 1%” (for any number of issues) can be difficult to solve within an egalitarian society. Other countries including *Denmark* and the *United Kingdom* mentioned that the goal of halving road accident deaths should not be applicable, since the number of deaths in these countries is already so low, thus raising the broader question of how the universality of the SDGs should be interpreted at national levels.

Air Pollution and Human Health Targets and Targets and Indicators

The UNSC draft report proposes the following indicators with implications for air pollution and human health:

- *Indicator 3.9.1: Population in urban areas exposed to outdoor air pollution levels above WHO guideline values*
- *Indicator 11.6.2: Level of ambient particulate matter (PM 10 and PM 2.5)*

SLoCaT supports the proposed indicators, and recommends the following additional indicators, which focus specifically on air pollution from land transport sources:

- *Number of premature deaths from road related air pollution by 2030 compared to 2010 (with desired achievement of 50% reduction from 2010 baseline)*
- *PM10 and/or PM2.5 from passenger vehicles (with desired achievement of 70% reduction from 2010 baseline)*

²¹ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6769Targets%20document__March.pdf

²² <http://www.un.org/en/roadsafety/>

In negotiating dialogue relevant to air pollution and human health, representatives from most *Major Groups and Other Stakeholders* advocated for desegregation of indicators for SDGs and targets (as noted in Section I), asserting that indicators must reflect differences in gender, age, disability, and other factors to monitor the most vulnerable members of society. Sustainable transport is major factor in ensuring that the right to breathe clean air applies universally to individuals and communities worldwide.

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Targets and Indicators

The UNSC draft report proposes the following indicators with implications for GHG emissions:

- *Indicator 7.3.2: Composite Energy Efficiency Improvement Index (built up of sub-indicators measuring transport, industrial energy efficiency, power generation, buildings and agricultural energy efficiency)*
- *Indicator 12.c.1: Amount of fossil fuel subsidies per unit of GDP (production and consumption), and as proportion of total national expenditure on fossil fuels*

SLoCaT supports these indicators and proposes the addition of the following indicators under SDGs 12 and 13²³, based on 2014 Climate Summit commitments from the Global Fuel Economy Initiative²⁴, Urban Electric Mobility Initiative²⁵, and other ongoing efforts:

- *Global transport-related GHG emissions peak no later than 2020 then decline at a 2% per year, with 2030 transport-related emissions no higher than 2010 emissions*
- *Fuel economy in all new light duty vehicles by 2030, and in all light duty vehicles by 2050, from a base year of 2005 (desired achievement: double fuel economy)*
- *Zero emission vehicle share of light-duty 4-wheel and motorised 2-wheel vehicle sales worldwide by 2030 (desired achievement: 20%)*
- *Motor vehicle fossil fuel subsidies by 2020 (desired achievement: 100% phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies)*

In negotiating dialogue relevant to climate change, one of six themes selected for Interactive Dialogues session was 'Tackling climate change and achieving more sustainable lifestyles',²⁶ in which *Comoros* cited its vulnerability to climate change as a SIDS, and *Maldives* described climate change as 'an existential threat.' *Mexico* asserted that climate change can disrupt peaceful societies and weaken strong institutions; thus, if sustainable transport meets its potential within the SDG process, it can help to ensure political stability, quality of life, and even the very survival of nations around the world.

III. Transport-Related Side Events

A number of side events were convened during the March session alongside official negotiating sessions, which offered more in-depth discussions of the contribution of sustainable transport to the post-2015 development agenda through the channels of sustainable cities, urban health, and civil society engagement.

²³ Note that targets under SDG 13 mainly focus on adaptation. While transport has relevance for both mitigation and adaptation, there is no specific target related to transport.

²⁴ <http://www.fiafoundation.org/our-work/global-fuel-economy-initiative>

²⁵ <http://unhabitat.org/action-platform-on-urban-electric-mobility-initiative-uemi/>

²⁶

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/67896%20themes%20for%20Interactive%20Dialogues.pdf>

Sustainable Transport Side Event

The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) and the SLoCaT Partnership co-organized a side event discussing the contribution of sustainable low carbon transport to sustainable development. The event featured panelists from ITDP, the Ford Foundation, 100 Resilient Cities (100RC), the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Worldwide Ferry Safety Association, and the Communitas Coalition.

ITDP stressed that measurability of SDG indicators is crucial, noting that ITDP has used UN agglomeration data to determine that rapid transit systems exist in more than 40% of large global cities, to establish a goal of 100% coverage by 2030. ITDP stressed that indicators must incorporate a focus on walking and cycling, since these modes are disproportionately used by women, children, and lower-income populations who do not have access to motorized vehicles, and they are rarely included in mode share studies.

The Ford Foundation asserted that transport is the cornerstone of community and can help to build social fabric while reducing poverty. NGOs like the Ford Foundation can contribute to global sustainable transport objectives by providing “risk capital” funding to facilitate research by organizations like ITDP and provide capacity to civil society organizations to promote participation in the SDG process. Ford suggested that mobility and access should be better represented among the proposed SDG indicators.

100 Resilient Cities (100RC) works in 40 countries to build resilience to chronic and catastrophic stresses under the direction of a network of chief resilience officers. 100RC asserted that indicators must do more to clarify how individual transport projects can contribute to SDGs, create positive externalities, contribute to positive health impacts, and support economic systems and livelihoods. 100RC also stressed the need for resilient transport services – in addition to resilient infrastructure – to achieve SDGs.

UN DESA commented on the role of intergovernmental organizations in sustainable transport, noting that the Secretary General (SG) office is preparing a report for transport for the first time in the context of sustainable development. UN DESA discussed the SG’s high-level advisory group on sustainable transport (HLAGST), which will consider the integration of sustainable transport into SDGs and the post-2015 agenda, with the SLoCaT Partnership acting as one of the focal points to consolidate ongoing discussions.

The Worldwide Ferry Safety Association (WFSA) asserted that contributions from the maritime sector should be more clearly spelled out in targets and indicators, noting that ferries provide urban transport for millions in cities like Manila, Mumbai, and Dhaka, as well as providing rural access in many countries. WFSA stated that the maritime sector can move passengers and freight with low infrastructure requirements, and stressed the relative safety of ferries, while noting that 97% of fatalities occur in developing countries.

The Communitas Coalition described its role in defining urban goals, targets and indicators under SDG 11 with primary support from the Ford Foundation. The Coalition emphasized that urban regions are integrators for many other concerns represented in the SDGs, noting that unless targets can move on-the-ground policies, their impact will be quite limited. The Coalition argued that further disaggregation of data, even within urban regions, is needed to better understand issues of equity and access and safety.

SDG on Cities and Human Settlements Side Event

The Communitas Coalition, along with its core partners ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability, Tellus Institute, UN-Habitat, and the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development convened a panel to present experiences on indicators and for urban sustainability and balanced territorial development at various geographic scales. Panelists discussed specific proposals for indicators under SDG 11, and how geospatial technology can help in tracking SDG targets.

Panelists pointed out the central role of cities and the ways in which efficient urban planning can produce positive externalities on environmental protection, as well as economic, social and community development. The University of Pennsylvania highlighted many ways in which public transit is key to urban connectivity and inclusive access, traffic efficiency and economic development. UN-Habitat illustrated that housing, water/sanitation, energy, and transport are closely connected and need to be addressed collectively, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development stressed the importance of connecting urban and rural geographies in urban planning processes.

The Singapore Mission includes transport and traffic congestion among its 158 sustainable development indicators, noting that high-density living need not compromise quality of life, and that aging populations require safe and accessible transport. Finally, the European Commission presented research on territorial disaggregation of data, to improve focus on vulnerable groups and ensure that no one is left behind under SDG 11.

Urban Health Side Event

On the final day of the March session, The New York Academy of Medicine led a side event entitled Urban Health in Sustainable Development, with presentations by the World Health Organization, the Communitas Coalition, and United Nations University. Discussions touched on a broad set of urban transport topics, including road safety in developed and developing cities, and urban infrastructure impacts on physical health. An accompanying research brief from UNU suggests that cities must integrate health considerations into strategies to increase economic and environmental sustainability.²⁷

The brief notes that while adopting electric cars has the potential to reduce local air pollution and GHGs, it does nothing to improve physical health through active transport, and increase mental health through reduced congestion and improved access to green space, as defined in SDG 11. This discussion and research demonstrates the essential contribution of transport to SDG 3 (health) and underscores the need to strengthen ties among SDGs, which are unified through the cross-cutting role of sustainable transport.

High Level Policy Forum Side Event

The UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) was formed to create an alliance for citizen participation and stakeholder consultation within UN processes. The HLPF side event was intended to inform and inspire civil society organizations (CSOs) in continuing action. HLPF goals include providing political leadership, setting the sustainable development agenda, identifying emerging issues, and reviewing SDG progress.

Ambassador Michael Gerber of Switzerland, stressed the importance of ensuring inclusive governance structures (such as monitoring and review processes) at national, regional, and global levels. Ambassador Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota of Brazil

²⁷ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/632481-Siri-Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20in%20Sustainable%20Urban%20Development.pdf>

expressed hope that the HLPF will assist in aligning actors within the UN system and serve as a forum for accountability on the outcome of Addis Ababa in July 2015. Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Special Governor Advisor, stated a desire to engage further with existing UN structures to continue progress in the post-2015 agenda, and Nikhil Seth, UN-DESA, agreed that CSOs should help inform policy to form comprehensive solutions on sustainable development. Naiara Costa of Beyond 2015 noted the importance of stakeholders establishing autonomous, effective mechanisms for participation, stressing the need to reach out to self-started networks and coalitions.

CSOs and major groups responded to the forum suggested alternative frameworks to monitoring and reporting, including peer review and multi-stakeholder approach. In this context, the HLPF provides an important avenue for the sustainable transport community to engage in the SDG process, by more centrally incorporating views of non-state actors.

IV. Summary and Next Steps

In conclusion, the third IGN session of 2015 was a challenging session with few tangible outcomes. In the words of one delegation to the co-facilitators, “it’s been an exciting week, and we hope next session will be more predictable.” The third session, along with its associated documents, has yielded some small steps toward clarifying the position of transport within the process of developing SDGs, targets and indicators, but a number of fundamental issues remain unresolved.

First, proposed indicators from the UNSC report promise potential to define transport’s contribution to the SDGs more concretely than goals and targets; yet, since these indicators are provisional, their ultimate fate is yet uncertain. Second, while member states have urged to strictly respect of the political agreements behind each target (e.g. to leave no target without an indicator), upper limits on indicators are less clear, with some countries open to expansion, and others calling to sharply limit their number. Finally, competing timeframes for finalizing targets and indicators hold pros and cons: near-term resolution offers the possibility for indicators to play a greater role in the September summit, but would come at the expense of a more comprehensive process.

The March session demonstrated that member states are increasingly resistant to top down policy prescriptions, and that global IGNs must be better translated to the country level for successful adoption. This sentiment will also have an impact on MOI, which would not just be about implementing the global consensus but also about helping countries shape their own agendas. This trend shows a commonality with the UNFCCC process (and funding discussions of the Green Climate Fund) in which global consensus and targets are the summation of bottom-up national commitments and contributions. While the March session left delegates with a clear degree of anxiety, the April session offers opportunity to move the agenda forward with another interactive dialogue with Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, coordination between the post-2015 agenda and the FfD process, and discussions of the technology facilitation mechanism, an outcome of the Rio+20 summit which is of particular significance to developing nations and LDCs.

Recapping the opening meeting of the March session, *Peru* stressed the need for a set of cross cutting strategies that fulfill the three pillars of development and address needs of the most vulnerable groups. Furthermore, Peru asserted that indicators should not be less ambitious than targets, to ensure that indicators are able to play a transformative role in the sustainable development process. Sustainable transport addresses each of

the criteria noted in Peru's opening statement, and thus transport-related targets and indicators should be woven more deeply into the fabric of the SDG process to facilitate achievement of a broad set of development priorities. In this context, the sustainable transport community must act concertedly and decisively to capitalize on this opportunity to solidify the position of transport within the post-2015 development agenda.