

Meeting: Lunch Meeting and Panel Discussion on Sustainable Transport: Poverty Eradication through Sustainable Transport

Date: 21 January 2013

Venue: UN Headquarters, North Lawn Building, Conference Room A

Attendees: Main guest speaker Enrique Penalosa, 4 commentators, Permanent Representatives and delegates of several UN Missions, UN-bodies, experts of Multilateral Development Banks and NGOs. Total count: approximately 85 people.

INTRODUCTION

The Permanent Representative (PR) of the Netherlands, **Mr. Herman Schaper**, opened the lunch meeting by welcoming and introducing the guest commentators and the main speaker, Mr. Enrique Penalosa, former Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia and a leading advocate for sustainable transport initiatives.

Following the successful discussion last November 19th, 2012, organized by the Missions of the Netherlands and Thailand, together with UN-DESA, this was the second lunch meeting to discuss important issues around sustainable transport (ST). The session aimed to explore the interest among Member States and UN-bodies to promote a discussion in New York on ST as an integral part of the broader development agenda, and in particular how it could contribute to poverty eradication.

Mr. Nikhil Seth, Director of Sustainable Development Division of UN-DESA, emphasized the importance of the need for ST in reducing poverty, by enabling the poor to get access to jobs, health services, food and by improving air quality, which leads to better health.

MR. ENRIQUE PENALOSA

Following the introduction, Mr. Enrique Penalosa, President of the Board of Directors of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) grasped everybody's attention with a slideshow showing successful interventions on ST and urban planning set by him during his tenure as Mayor of Bogotá, a capital he helped to transform from a city "without bearings and self-esteem nor hope", into an international example for improvements in public spaces, quality of life, mobility and equity.

Main points made by Mr. Penalosa were:

1. A good and safe city can be created by an approach based on equality. The democratic principle that every citizen is equal contributes to recognition of the need for quality sidewalks. With sidewalks all citizens can safely move around and it's their initial way of transportation and get access to jobs, food and services.
2. Low-cost high frequency public transportation is another crucial need for citizens in compact cities in order to move around and avoid congestion on the roads by private vehicles.
3. By investing in highways, a city only addresses a problem for its upper income citizens, and neglects accessibility for the poorer population.
4. In certain American cities and some European countries, even wealthier citizens use public transportation since it's faster. A good public transport system solves mobility issues. Traffic jams can only be solved by restricting car use.
5. In the developing world the rich are only interested in road space in order to drive a car and in lieu of good alternatives. A good laugh amongs all attendants arose when Mr. Penalosa mentioned that many UN Ambassadors won't use public transport in their own countries – it starts with setting an example and the democratic principle of equality. Good example: the Dutch: everybody bikes and this is a more egalitarian approach.
6. A bus with 100 people on board should have 100x more right to use of the road than a private vehicle with 1 passenger. Bus systems with use of exclusive lanes seem the most cost efficient means of transportation versus rail or subway. Bogota's Transmilenio system is a good example of "democracy at work".
7. When space is scarce, priority should be given to public transport and environmentally friendly forms of transportation, like the promotion of bicycles.
8. Giving citizens the right to sidewalks and bikeways is a sign of democracy, showing that a citizen on a \$30 bike is as important as a person in a \$30K car.
9. It's easier to create a culture of using bikes or buses in a growing city, where for each road for cars a bus lane or a bike road can be created simultaneously.

COMMENTATORS

A panel of four guest commentators gave their views on the topic of poverty eradication through sustainable transport:

1. Mr. Robert Guild, Director for Pacific Strategy & Special Operations, Asian Development Bank (ADB)

For ADB the first recognition of sustainable transport's role in poverty eradication, is to focus on Accessible & Affordable transport. The poor are disproportionately affected by the lack of sustainable transport options: they are vulnerable with no access to health services, jobs and prone to be hurt in accidents and air pollution. ADB therefore invests in accessibility, affordability and equality, since women and children are even more vulnerable in the current (lack of) transport systems.

2. Mr. Michael Replogle, Managing Director, Institute of Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP)

ITDP also emphasizes the opportunities given by sustainable transport in providing access. Unsustainable transport cuts large groups of the population off and robs them off access to health facilities, economic development and growth. It only causes lower long-term productivity and fewer jobs being accessible. Support from multi-lateral institutions and national institutions is much needed to choose the right investments in "walkable" and "bikeable" systems. With urbanization happening globally, a guideway to sustainable transport as part of the Sustainable Development Goals beyond the Millenium Development Goals should be created. Support from the UN and individual countries is instrumental to move money from unsustainable to sustainable transport.

3. Mr. Cornie Huizenga, Joint Convener, Sustainable Low Carbon Transport (SLoCaT)

SLoCaT refers to ST as "opportunity" and an "urgency". ST brings safety, economic and social aspects together. SLoCaT would like to see a 'scaling up' of ST as soon as possible. The \$175 billion commitment of the multilateral development banks to invest in ST, is an important step, but the real drivers are the individual countries, they need to come on board to enable the shift towards improvements by using ST. Therefore the series of discussions initiated by the Thai and Dutch Permanent Representatives, are a welcome and much needed step to promote best practices by national governments.

4. Mr. Andreas Kopp, Lead Transport Economist in the Energy, Transport and Water Department, World Bank

Mr. Kopp emphasized the importance to recognize that "Mobility drives Development", by connecting rural areas, and to find answers to the challenge to keep cities functioning with alternative and sustainable transportation options. Costs of transportation and use of fuels are high in the existing transportation systems. With a change in composition of transport, costs can be lowered and mobility conflicts can be solved. The World Bank is grateful for the extended momentum following the Transforming Transportation Conference in Washington DC on January 17 and 18.

Short Q & A followed:

The Permanent Representative of Hungary emphasized how much he had learned during the session and stressed the need for action and the inclusion of ST in the discussion on the post 2015 agenda and the SDGs. A representative of Morocco echoed that saying that it is time for political action around these issues since many of the solutions are already known. Nikhil Seth stressed the need to raise this issue to a higher level while the Thai Minister Counsellor concluded the lunch discussion by mentioning that ST should be prioritized in the post-2015 discussion. In Thailand they have seen the power of ST, by the way South East Asia has been linking countries, thus creating access.