



EXTRACT OF:

Chair's Summary¹

Ninth Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Forum in Asia

(Intergovernmental Ninth Regional EST Forum in Asia: EST for Resiliency – Building Safe, Smart, Low - carbon and Resilient Cities in Asia)

17-20 November 2015

Venue: Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu, Nepal

The full Chair's Summary can be accessed [here](#).

X. EST Plenary Session-6: Sustainable Rural Transport for Resilient Rural Community, Food Security & Poverty Eradication

76. Rural transport is one of the important topics for the EST Forum for several reasons: there is a great need for improved rural access, as 1 billion people worldwide lack access to an all-season road; there are great potential benefits to sustainable development, as nearly 80% of the extreme poor live in rural areas; and there is little coordinated action among key sectors (e.g. transport, agriculture, health care), despite the fact that 30% of the global population will remain rural in 2030.

77. Rural transport is a critical enabler of several of the recently-adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated targets. Rural transport makes direct contributions to Targets 1.4 (access to basic services), 2.1 (access to nutritious food), 9.1 (reliable and resilient infrastructure), and 11.2 (sustainable transport systems). Rural transport also makes indirect contributions to Targets 6.1 (access to safe drinking water), 12.3 (reduction of food loss), and 13.1 (climate adaptation). The Rural Access Programme of Nepal promotes economic development by developing gender-equitable approaches to rural road project management, and Afghanistan's National Rural Access Programme aims to improve all-season accessibility in four provinces, expand maintenance practices, and build local capacity.

78. Efficient rural transport is crucial to ensuring food security while developing agriculture and reducing rural poverty. Reducing rural transport costs can raise farm-gate prices, increase farmers' incomes and reduce urban food prices. It can also

¹ Advanced text issued without formal editing

facilitate delivery of farm inputs, increase agricultural yields, and reduce post-harvest losses, which in India amounts to approximately 40% of total production due in part to a lack of reliable rural transport options. This is being addressed through the Prime Minister's Rural Roads Program (PMGSY), which is to provide all-season farm-to-market connectivity in all villages with more than 500 people (about 180,000 villages) and develop capacity of Indian States.

79. In defining rural resilience, we must not focus solely on climate or disaster resilience, but also on socio-economic resilience. Improved rural transport systems and connectivity can increase productivity, incomes and livelihoods in rural communities and thus their contribution to GDP. Furthermore, improved rural transport can support more efficient evacuation, relief mobilization, and rehabilitation. Importantly, investment in resilient rural transport infrastructure and services can progressively reduce government expenditures by limiting the extent of damages and losses during extreme events.

80. The discussion identified some key aspects for advancing rural road networks, being: community based management and maintenance, targeted investment with a phased approach to critical points in the system; continuing improvements in planning and engineering for these particular road networks and better exchange between government agencies, technical experts, political actors and the private sector.

81. The Forum emphasized the importance of raising the political priority of rural transport at national and global levels; prioritizing funding streams for rural passenger and freight infrastructure and services including maintenance; accelerating efforts to increase resilience of all aspects of rural transport. The Forum confirmed that effective rural transport programs require an active involvement of communities. Participants endorsed the continued integration of rural transport in the EST Forum.