

HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Implementing the UN Decade of Sustainable Transport

11th of July, 13:15 – 14:30

Location: UNCTAD New York Office, 2 United Nations Plaza

**Opening remarks of the Executive Secretary of ECLAC,
Dr. José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs**

- Mr. Representative of DESA
- Mr. Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
- Ms. Tatiana Molcean, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)
- Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
- Authorities and representatives of governments, international organizations and the United Nations System
- Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to be here today.

The agenda that brings us together is indeed ambitious. As other regions in the world, Latin America and the Caribbean has faced a history of persistent underdevelopment in transport infrastructure. The crises

triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions have only further exposed the growing needs and limitations in the region.

Adding to this, the region has started to suffer from new natural conditions, such as the drought at the Panama Canal. We are dealing with a multidimensional/multinational issue, that will need multinational solutions to advance.

One of our significant focus areas has been the improvement of transport and logistics infrastructure to facilitate trade and enhance international competitiveness. An adequate stock of transport infrastructure is an indispensable condition for economic growth and productivity.

At ECLAC, we have explored some solutions at the regional level. One of them is to promote the benefits of multimodal transport systems over isolated transportation modes, enhancing their efficiency and reducing the environmental impact. Alternatives such as rail, ferries, airships, and river navigation, and their combinations, are expected to significantly contribute to a more sustainable transportation system.

As an outstanding example of the potential benefits of multimodal transportation, our studies and technical assistance highlight the development of bi-oceanic integration corridors in South America. These projects are particularly valuable for landlocked countries, providing them with access to the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and enhancing their

participation in international trade. Nevertheless, we know that these projects are not enough.

Referring to regions as homogeneous entities is an oversimplification. Significant disparities exist among countries, with some facing greater difficulties due to financial constraints, infrastructure conditions, and social requirements.

Geographical isolation further complicates matters for landlocked nations and those with natural barriers. Increasing the necessary investment capacity presents formidable challenges, especially when many are currently grappling with limited fiscal spaces and high levels of debt.

As international organizations, we play a crucial role in promoting cooperation and helping to correct these disparities. By facilitating knowledge exchange, providing technical assistance, and fostering regional integration, we can support countries in their efforts to improve infrastructure and achieve sustainable development. Jointly with the member countries, the private sectors and other international bodies, it is also imperative to explore innovative financing options and help mobilize the necessary resources to invest in infrastructure.

Dear Colleagues,

The current state of our transport systems requires immediate and transformative action. This process demands a long-term vision and decisive actions today to achieve sustainable and resilient transport.

We are confident that today's session and our collaborative efforts during 2024 and 2025 will lead to concrete actions, culminating in a successful Plan for the UN Decade of Sustainable Transport. This plan will ensure that the benefits of development are equitably distributed, leaving no one behind.

I would like to conclude by wishing you a fruitful session and reiterate ECLAC's strong and continued commitment to making progress on the issue that brings us together today.

Thank you very much.