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ADVANCED STUDIES ON TRANSPORT ORGANISATION IN THE EUROPEAN  
ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

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Trieste, 7 September 1995

Lord CLINTON-DAVIS, Member of the EC Commission with responsibility for  
Transport, Environment and Nuclear Safety 1985-89

The European Commission's Transport Policy - an action programme towards sustainable mobility in Europe - is based on the thesis of sustainable development, aiming to address the root causes of environmental degradation before problems become so pressing that they can no longer be ignored. It recognises that the full benefits of the Single European Market, the largest internal market in the world, in terms of continued growth and efficiency, are limited by environmental constraints which could jeopardise the whole internal market programme if tolerance levels of the natural environment were to be seriously breached. The Commission is pressing for the implementation of an effective transport infrastructure policy which respects sustainable growth and environmental and safety considerations.

The competitiveness of European business, growth and employment depends on efficient transport systems, which take proper account of the requirements and interests of individual citizens as transport users. The continued development of transport services and the volume of traffic has accentuated environmental problems, exacerbating already heavy congestions at system bottlenecks. Major deficiencies in Europe's transport infrastructure gravely impair these purposes and must therefore be tackled.

No one can doubt that transport is a major contributor to energy and environmental problems, being one of the main consumers of fossil fuel. It is responsible for much urban degradation and atmospheric pollution which degrades the quality of life for so many of our citizens. The OECD estimates that the socio-economic cost of road accidents, pollution and congestion could be as high as 5% of GDP. Pollution is particularly aggravated by road transport which accounts for no less than 84.4% of energy consumption within the transport sector; and 55% of total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the transport sector can be attributed to the private car alone. Aircraft emissions also represent an issue of growing concern, particularly those produced in the mid-to-upper stratosphere, where the impact of gases such as nitrogen oxide is greater than at ground level. In general, water, soil and air pollution have far-reaching effects on human, plant and animal life.

To reduce pollution, it is clear that, as the Commission has argued over many years, all means of transport must use the "best available technology" and adequate infrastructure. Stricter standards governing gaseous emissions, noise and energy must all be applied with much greater rigour. The Commission is currently engaged in supervising research into improving the environmental performance of different transport modes and infrastructure as well as the promotion of new energy technologies such as bio-energy and electricity-driven vehicles. However, further fiscal incentives need to be provided to encourage the use of the technically most environmentally friendly vehicle, aircraft, vessel, train and fuel.

Transport infrastructure makes a permanent impact on the environment. It is evident that a limitation of this impact needs to and can be achieved in the following ways:

- by making more efficient use of existing infrastructure capacity;

- by spreading the flow of traffic more evenly; and

- by the coordination of infrastructure planning and regional development, taking into account the impact on environment.

In general a shift should be encouraged from encumbered sectors to under-used sectors in order to make better use of existing transport capacity. There needs to be greater encouragement in favour of rail if at all possible at the expense of road; private car use needs to be discouraged in favour of collective transport for people; combined transport needs to be encouraged for the transportation of goods. The theme that I constantly sought to deploy as Commissioner for Transport was to work towards an integrated transport policy which involves the complementary development of the different modes of transport. This still holds good.