

**Committee of the Regions**

**Plenary session**

**30 June 2011**

**Vice President Siim Kallas**

**White Paper – Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area**

President,

Honourable Members of the Committee of the Regions,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your invitation to share with you my views on the future of transport which I am convinced will greatly benefit regions in the next 20 years - and also for the opportunity to get your feedback on the 2011 White Paper published last March.

I would also like to congratulate Mr Costa and the Committee for the valuable opinion adopted today which will be closely considered by the Commission.

I will not go too much into presenting the White Paper since much has already been said. In fact, the White Paper attracted a lot of interest and generally speaking has received very positive feedback. During the last Transport Council, Member States welcomed the Paper, as a very comprehensive document contributing to the competitiveness of the sector, to the completion of the internal market, to environmental goals and tackling oil dependency. Member States consider it as an appropriate basis to develop future transport policy measures.

While policy makers and stakeholders might still have divergent views on specific issues, it is reassuring to see a growing consensus on the challenges Europe will soon be facing in terms of transport, on the need for ambitious goals and on the broad lines for action. I believe this comes from the awareness that **economic, social and environmental goals of transport policy are increasingly aligned**: reducing oil dependency will have multiple knock-on effects such as reducing the cost of fuel but also fighting climate change and local pollution.

The same is true for new innovative and European made technologies that can make transport sustainable as well as keep our industry competitive in the world markets. And providing better public transport will help combat social exclusion as well as reduce the cost of congestion for businesses.

### **What's in it for the regions and local communities?**

The internal market can only properly function if goods and workers can move freely and safely between all regions. The social and economic cohesion between all regions – including peripheral and ultra-peripheral ones – depends on an efficient trans-European transport network, a vital policy objective that will bring together the Western and Eastern part of the Union.

To this effect, regions will have a key role to play in replacing some of our poorly connected modal and national networks with a **single, multimodal network**. This theme is present throughout the White Paper, inspiring the initiatives on the internal market (a “Single European Transport Area”), on the infrastructure (a multimodal “core” network for TEN-T) and on technology (**multimodal traffic management, ticketing and information system**). Full modal integration – together with advances in vehicle and fuel technology – is the response to achieve sustainability and maintain the right to mobility for our citizens and businesses.

Peripheral regions will greatly benefit from the transformation of our transport system, since they are the ones most threatened by the status quo. In fact, our modelling scenarios show that rising cost of fuel and congestion will penalise in particular those areas that are more peripheral and dependent on road transport.

Peripheral regions will also benefit from appropriate transport connections to all neighbouring regions, at the EU's inland and maritime borders vital for the integration of Europe's neighbours as well as Europe's external trade. The White Paper stresses the need to continue developing our transport networks beyond EU borders and complete important initiatives such as the **European common aviation area**, develop a **cooperation framework to our immediate neighbours** (the Commission just received a new mandate to start negotiations with Moldova on an air transport agreement) or implement the **Mediterranean Maritime Strategy** to enhance maritime safety, security and surveillance.

Another aspect that characterises this White Paper is the considerable attention it devotes to urban and local transport. Transport works as a system and it would not make sense to discuss a different approach to mobility without addressing the urban context where most journeys start and end.

With projections estimating that Europeans living in urban areas will increase from 74% today to around 85% in 2050, this aspect will become even more relevant in the future.

You might agree with me that the urban environment poses the biggest challenges to the sustainability of transport. Cities currently suffer the most from congestion, poor air quality and noise exposure. Urban transport is responsible for around one quarter of transport emissions and 70% of road accidents.

But as much as cities can be a source of problems, they can also be the source of solutions. Many of the new technologies and business concepts will first be tested and developed in the urban environment. We have to look at metropolitan areas as our laboratories for innovation and encourage the change that is already taking place.

### **How do we get there?**

In its opinion, the Committee of the Regions rightly points out that we need intermediate milestones to reach the ambitions set out in the White Paper.

This is why we have indicated ten goals or benchmarks to guide policy action and measure progress. These are not binding targets, but indicate the developments that we believe need to take place to put the transport system on the path to sustainability. Several of them refer to intermediate steps by 2020 and 2030. They are supported by the modelling scenarios presented in the impact assessment of the White Paper.

Furthermore, we present **40 actions that the Commission will propose in the next ten years**- but mainly within the present mandate. This is in fact very important to me. These are very concrete proposals and in line with the ambition of the goals.

But action will often have to be taken on the ground. Many operators, stakeholders and different levels of government are concerned. With the White Paper we intend to provide not only the Commission agenda for the next decade, but a vision for the transport

system that can inspire action at all levels. I see the Roadmap not only as a series of Commission objectives: I see it as a unique opportunity for local and regional authorities to shape the future of our transport system.

I look forward to today's discussion and your future contribution to this ambitious project.

Thank you.