UNION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS ET ORGANISMES TECHNIQUES
Organisation Internationale Non Gouvernementale
INTERNATIONAL UNION OF TECHNICAL ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS
International Non – Governmental Organization

# Urban mobility and social cohesion in big cities

## Speech by Jacques ROUSSET

### President of UATI at the gKTP meeting in Tunis

### on 28 February and 1st March 2006

Dear Colleagues,

Last Thursday, gTKP asked me if I could give a speech on urban transportation. I accepted because it is a field with which I am fairly well acquainted and to which I devoted half my career, and because the questions concerning the future of cities is one of UATI's key preoccupations.

However, I have only had the weekend to prepare this speech and I should thus like to ask you to forgive me if it is neither perfect not fully complete. I shall also be talking in French because I have not had time to write the English version, but I promise to send both versions to Jenni in a few weeks' time.

My speech will be but a modest contribution to the debate on the key issue of urban mobility, which was the subject of an international conference that we organised in 2004. I will be taking inspiration from the conclusions of that conference and will be dealing successively with the following points:

- a reminder of what UATI is and what its priority objectives are
- the challenges of urban mobility in relation to social cohesion in big cities
- some conclusions

### A reminder of what UATI is and what its priority objectives are

**Who are we?**

• UATI is an international NGO set up in 1951 on the initiative of UNESCO. It covers the technical field of engineering.

• Our members are specialised international organisations (for example, in the field of transportation there is the PIARC, also one of gTKP's partners) and national organisations active at international level.



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**Our strategy**

We have adopted two major focuses:
- mastering urban development and management;
- animating the UATI network.

• Our method is to facilitate the promotion of initiatives taken by our members and partners by providing them with a forum for expression

• The basis of our programme of action is to organise events (seminars, colloquiums, them-based meetings), to carry out studies and to identify expert capacities that can be made available to UNESCO, to the member states and to local actors.
This last point is very important and the project that gTKP is developing constitutes for us an exemplary source of inspiration.
I shall now deal with the second part of my speech devoted to the challenges of urban mobility in big cities.

## ▪ The challenges of urban mobility in relation to social cohesion in big cities.

### • The international conference in 2004

The right to mobility is one of the keys to the economic and social development of big cities, particularly in the developing and transition countries where social problems and questions of governance and of the valorisation of technological progress are acutely posed.
It was in an attempt to respond to these preoccupations that, in partnership with Metropolis (an international association grouping together the major cities of the World with populations of one million or more), that UATI organised an international conference, held in 2004 at UNESCO Headquarters, on the theme "Megacities of the future, mobility and social cohesion".
This event comprised general sessions and the presentation of examples of successes or failures and provided an opportunity to highlight a certain number of major issues for the future.

I shall now briefly present the main lessons that can be drawn from this meeting, dealing successively with:
-the overall problem of urban mobility
-an overview of the successes and failures that were presented and their implications for the future
-some reflections on technical aspects
-financial problems.



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• **The lessons of the conference**

**a) The overall problem of urban mobility:**
This problem can, I think, be resumed by quoting some of the experts and managers.
*"In 2020, over 60% of the world's population will live in urban areas and it is estimated that, by then, the demand for urban mobility will have increased by approximately 50%."*

What can be done to make this ineluctable urban development as rational and as equitable as possible?
Like Janus, the city has two faces, one that smiles and the other that scowls. That is why, as one of the speakers said:
*"The population both detests and adores cities: for millions of people they represent hope, in particular in terms of employment, and the process of emigration to urban areas started with industrialisation and is now continuing throughout the world. But the city can also be a nightmare world and a factor for increased poverty"*

In the field of mobility the main risk is that of a dual scenario:
*"On the one hand a city (or area of a city) characterised by major mobility facilities and, on the other hand, a city badly served by public transportation, a city of poor people because distances in space and time make it very difficult to find a job."*

There is this risk, but there is also hope: hope is represented by the return of an ambition in terms of transportation policies
*"We are entering a phase of major inventiveness with improvements in the design of urban vehicles, new ways of regulating urban traffic (no-car days, urban toll zones), new types of public transportation, a new organisation of urban timetables and times as well as important innovations at institutional level, in particular as far as the relations between public institutions and operators are concerned."*

**b) Taking stock of successes and errors and the challenges for the future:**
This problem of risks and hopes was well illustrated by the presentation of a certain number of experiences that clearly highlighted the three main political challenges of urban mobility.

- first challenge, the social stakes:
*" We observe that many populations have no real possibility to move around. However, the right to mobility is gaining importance insofar as, in megacities, populations no longer live at immediate neighbourhood level. They are obliged to move in order to have access to work, health, education, housing, culture and socialisation opportunities. The*


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*right to mobility is thus becoming a generic right that underpins access to other rights and which makes claims on public authorities whose responsibility it is to guarantee that right to all citizens within the framework of what is sometimes called a universal service"*

- second challenge, the economic stakes:
*"There are, effectively, economic stakes: there is no economic progress today without mobility. Mobility is a means of exchange, and transportation plays an increasing role in economic dynamics. The attractiveness of a site for a company, and thus for job creation, is directly linked to the quality of its public transportation services"*

- lastly, the third challenge, the environmental stakes
*"Everyone must be able to move around, whether it be the inhabitants of the city in their everyday life or persons who work in companies or in public services, but at the same time transportation has serious downsides: accidents and insecurity, noise, pollution and its consequences on the greenhouse effect."*

Faced with these three contradictory demands, politicians have an extremely complex equation to solve insofar as there exists no simple solution nor any "standard" good practices that could be generalised: knowledge of the experiences of other cities is, of course, very enlightening, but it still remains that equilibrium and consensus must be built up city by city. The question of transportation is thus placed at the very heart of the political choices of a society, requiring diversified responses that will be provided through the development of "democratic play". This is, in effect, the only way to build sustainable compromises.

**c) Some technical reflections:**

- First reflection: technology and users.
As I have already said, there is a profusion of innovations and technological advances. This is not the place to make a full presentation of them, but they all bring us back to the still unsolved question of the difficulty of access facing certain users given their level of knowledge (for example, information systems are constantly being modernised, but they are rarely designed for those who cannot read or for those who do not speak the language), their social situation, their state of health, etc. Thus, increasingly complex technical systems run the risk of excluding an increasing number of persons.

- Second reflection: technical choices and civil society.
How can citizens usefully be given a say to express, and feel they are being listened to, what they feel today and how they see the future? It is effectively difficult for a professional to engage in dialogue with non-specialists, especially to discuss what will happen for the next generation, but it is nevertheless vital that we do this…



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In this respect, the experiences of the developing countries that invent this local democracy later than the developed countries can provide very interesting lessons for each and everyone.

The progress that we can make together, through a shared approach involving exchanges and the establishment of an online network of actors simply implies a very open mind with regard to experiences from elsewhere: it is this kind of "duty of curiosity" that gTKP so perfectly illustrates.

**c)Financial problems:**

Financial problems have given rise to numerous discussions and from among the talks presented we can pinpoint five major issues:

- the economic link between urbanism and transportation;
- financial questions for the user;
- meeting needs in terms of investments in transportation systems;
- the distinction between the cost of a transportation system and the social policies that go with that system and whose aim is to help the least advantaged categories of the population to gain access to those means of transportation;
- a transversal question which consists in ascertaining in what conditions inspiration can be taken from the financial mechanisms used in the developed countries for the benefit of the developing countries.

## ▪ Conclusions

The exchanges and discussions that took place during the two days of our conference highlighted the following conclusions that I will now give you because I feel that they fit perfectly with today's meeting:

- governance and the relationship between the political authorities, the operators and civil society;
- the system for evaluating situations of mobility in relation to representative technical, financial and social indicators;
- financial transparency: the mobility system has a cost and it is important to have the courage to announce those costs: who pays for what investments and for what services and how can mobility be guaranteed for all, especially those most destitute?
- in practical terms, how can citizens be given their say in order for society to feel reassured that their voice will be effectively heard?
- how can we effectively develop not only technical progress but also innovations in matters of financial mechanisms and social policies for the benefit of the greatest possible number of people?

These are the challenges posed by the animation and de-compartmentalization of networks.



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Thank you.



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