



— GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE —
TRANSPORT CONFERENCE
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Thematic discussion 10: Global Vision Zero: reaching a new era in road safety

Sunday, 27 November, 4:00 – 5:30 P.M.

Lead entity: UN Economic Commission for Europe

Every year around 1.25 million people are killed and between 20 and 50 million are seriously injured on the world's roads, according to the World Health Organization. Traffic deaths and injuries have overwhelming effects on families everywhere. They cause enormous economic losses, estimated at around 2-5% of the Gross Domestic Product of countries. Clearly, such levels of road deaths and serious injuries are unacceptable both in terms of human suffering as well as societal and economic costs and are not sustainable.

Half of all road traffic deaths are among vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. Road traffic deaths are also the leading cause of death for young people aged 15-29, and road traffic injuries are the eighth leading cause of death globally. In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed a Decade of Action for Road Safety. The goal of the Decade (2011-2020) is to stabilize and reduce the forecast level of road traffic deaths around the world. The Decade reached its mid-term in 2015 with little observed change in the number of global annual road traffic deaths. In addition, the United Nations, in their Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3.6 and SDG 11.2), have set the target of reducing global road fatalities and serious injuries 50% by 2020, compared to 2010 levels. Yet rapid motorisation in many low- and middle income countries points to the risk of further increases in the number of road fatalities and serious injuries in the coming years. Traffic in fast-growing cities in particular is becoming a major challenge while in countries with leading road safety improvement results, performance is stalling.

With motorization rates rising rapidly around the world, especially in low- and middle income countries, it is timely and imperative for all countries now to make tangible progress in improving the safety of their roads if they have not yet started to do so, and to further improve their road safety record.

In a world where more than one million people die on the road annually, a number of United Nations road safety Conventions, both global and regional, exist which may be an effective instrument to reverse such a worrying trend. These legal instruments cover: traffic rules; road signs and signals; construction and technical inspection of vehicles; road infrastructure; driving times and rest periods for professional drivers; safe transport of dangerous goods and hazardous materials. In addition, different decision making tools in support of the most appropriate road safety policies can be used, such as Safe Future Inland Transport Systems (SafeFits) that is being developed by the UN Economic Commission for Europe. That is based on a 360^o road safety approach and could be viewed as complementary to safe system as it offers its road safety international legal instruments as global public goods to the international community.

The experience of countries who have introduced some form of "Vision Zero" (as it is commonly called) is useful as it provides a framework for the implementation of integrated road safety policies with the potential

to bring road safety performance closer to the ultimate aspiration. The experience of countries achieving the lowest levels of death and injury could therefore provide useful lessons. A common feature of several well-performing countries is that they have adopted a long-term policy goal that no-one should be killed or seriously injured in a crash on their roads.

A Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 has been established and consists of five pillars which are: (i) Road Safety Management which concerns the institutional framework needed to implement road safety activities, and thereby sets the oversight of all other pillars; (ii) Safer roads and mobility that deals with road development, the safety of all road users, especially pedestrians and other vulnerable users; (iii) Safer vehicles which focuses on standards, entry and exit of vehicles into and from countries; (iv) Safer drivers and other road users that addresses driver training, testing and licensing, driving permits and enforcement of the driving code, awareness and education of the public, and the development of a safety culture, and (v) Post-crash response which deals with on-site care, transport and trauma care of injured.

Although universally adopted, implementation of the five pillars on the ground is facing a whole plethora of obstacles in many countries. One can start from the most obvious, lacking in many countries, – political support to road safety, and then continues with: lack of awareness about the magnitude of the road safety problem coupled with lack of availability of quality data on road safety, absence of adequate and effective legal and regulatory as well as institutional frameworks needed to implement road safety activities with lasting results, lack of safe infrastructure, slow vehicle fleet renewal prevents the entry of safer vehicles, and absence of effective post-crash response. All these would also warrant appropriate funding facilities at both national and international levels.

Drastically reducing road fatalities and serious injuries on a global scale will need more than increasing efforts in implementing traditional road safety measures. The sustainable development goals (SDGs) provide an opportunity for governments to fundamentally review their road safety policies and explore new approaches that deliver significantly better results, but for them to show real progress a fundamental paradigm shift in the way the road safety problem is viewed is needed, as well as in the strategies used to address it. This paradigm shift should involve a move from traditional road safety policies to an integrated view on new mobility in which road traffic becomes a “safe system” where crashes are prevented.

In addition to sharing best practices and experiences, discussion will focus on implementation of road safety related UN Conventions and aims at demonstrating that their implementation is indispensable in the effort to address all road safety challenges and reverse the trend in growing number of victims of road crashes in many countries in the world. These conventions have great potential to contribute to improved road safety situation in countries which have not yet acceded to them.

Possible questions for discussion:

1. What policies could most efficiently enable us to achieve the road safety related SDGs and how can UN road safety Conventions be implemented to benefit road safety?
2. How the various road safety activities could be most effectively financed?
3. Is “Vision zero” achievable on the global level? What needs to be done to achieve it?