

A DECADE OF ACTION FOR ROAD SAFETY 2011-2020

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ABSTRACT

On March 2, 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 64/255, proclaiming the period 2011-2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety, with a goal to stabilize and then reduce the forecast level of road traffic fatalities around the world. Recognizing that nearly half of the road fatalities worldwide are vulnerable road users, the resolution explicitly calls for inclusion of activities targeted at reducing the risk imposed on pedestrians and cyclist in the Plan of Action of the Decade.

The resolution calls upon Member States to implement road safety activities, particularly in the areas of road safety management, road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behavior, road safety education and post-crash care, based on the Plan of Action. It further invites all Member States to set their own national road traffic casualty reduction targets to be achieved by the end of the Decade, and to pay attention to the needs of all road users, in particular the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users.

Amongst ways to reduce road traffic accidents, the resolution clearly suggests building sustainable mass transportation systems, besides appropriate legislation, policy and infrastructure, and invites international financial institutions and regional development banks to assist developing countries in building these. Last but not least, the resolution promotes the organization of the second United Nations Global Road Safety Week to launch the Decade, and the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims on the third Sunday of November every year.

The United Nations Road Safety Collaboration has been requested to continue its role of informal consultative mechanism, including for the implementation of activities relating to the Decade. As a member, the International Federation of Pedestrians will actively participate in getting the necessary focus on pedestrians, cyclists and other sustainable transport modes and infrastructure in the Plan of Action.

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The Decade and the International Federation of Pedestrians.

Pedestrians are amongst the most vulnerable road users. Improving their safety situation cannot be done by solely looking at their transport mode in isolation, since the exposure to significant levels of kinetic energy that are generated by other transport modes are a key player in overall fatality and injury levels. However, care should be taken that safety measures do not decrease the walkability of the public space. On the contrary, sustainability as well as health targets mandate measures that both stimulate active transport modes and make them safer.

The International Federation of Pedestrians welcomes the Decade of Action on Road Safety wholehearted. As a member of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, we are happy to contribute to the plan of action for the Decade. Other activities will include, but are not limited to, the active involvement in the writing of a good practice manual about pedestrian safety, coordinated by the World Health Organization.

In order to further disseminate the plan, an abbreviated version of its current draft, is attached. The (updated) full version can be found on www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action.

The Road Safety Tag

Within the frame of the Decade of Action, the “Road Safety Tag” has recently been unveiled at special events in New York and London. The tag is intended to become the road safety equivalent of the red ribbon for HIV/AIDS awareness or the white wristband worn in the fight against poverty.



Figure 1: The Road Safety Tag

Launch of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020

The international community is currently planning the global launch of the Decade for 11 May 2011. The objectives are to draw attention to the Decade and more generally to the impact of the global road safety crisis and the prospects for prevention, and to provide an opportunity for governments, international agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders to announce their respective plans for the Decade.

At the global level, a 24-hour "rolling" event will begin in the East and travel to the West across a one-day period. In each of the world's 24 time zones, one or several countries will take the lead in organizing a high-profile, media-oriented event. It is hoped that heads of state and ministers from various sectors of society will show their commitment to scaling up road safety efforts. Select national events will be broadcast by Internet time zone by time zone, with a certain number of the events being broadcast live. Ideally, every country of the world, many international agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector and others will mark the occasion of the global launch to officially announce their national or local plans for the Decade to the public.

APPENDIX: Abbreviated version of the draft planning document for the Decade of Action, current on Oct 15, 2010.

Background

Magnitude of the problem, increasing trends

Each year nearly 1.3 million people die as a result of a road traffic collision—more than 3000 deaths each day—and more than half of these people are not travelling in a car. Pedestrians and cyclists pay – together with motorcyclist – a very high price for our current surge for mobility and road transport, and the overwhelming individual motorization thereof. Twenty to fifty million more people sustain non-fatal injuries from a collision, and these injuries are an important cause of disability worldwide. Road traffic injuries are among the three leading causes of death for people between 5 and 44 years of age, worldwide killing more people each year than malaria. Unless immediate and effective action is taken, road traffic injuries are predicted to become the fifth leading cause of death in the world, resulting in an estimated 2.4 million deaths each year by 2020.

Aside from road traffic injuries, increases in motorization have had a number of other negative consequences on human health and on the global environment. Many parts of the world are already suffering from the effects of climate change, and evidence suggests that road transport – which is still heavily oil dependent – accounts for 14% of global greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions affect human health directly through air pollution and subsequent respiratory effects. Health is also adversely affected through the reduction in physical activity as a result of the reliance on motorized transportation.

Gaining momentum

There is growing awareness that the current road safety situation constitutes a crisis with devastating health, social and economic impacts that threaten the health and development gains achieved in the last half century. Road safety is not a new issue but over the last decade activity at the international level has gained new momentum. A number of documents have been developed that describe the magnitude of the road traffic injury situation, its social, health and economic impacts, specific risk factors, and effective interventions. These have served to provide momentum for the adoption of a number of resolutions that call on Member States and the international community to include road safety as a global policy issue, making specific recommendations for action. The resolutions have called for international collaboration to be strengthened. The UN Road Safety Collaboration was established in answer to this call. Chaired by WHO, with the United Nations regional commissions as rotating vice chairs, the Collaboration has brought together international organizations, governments, nongovernmental organizations and private sector entities to coordinate on road safety issues since 2004.

Why a Decade of Action?

The Commission for Global Road Safety issued a call for a Decade of Action for Road Safety in its 2009 Report. Endorsements for the proposal have come from a wide range of public figures as well as the UN Road Safety Collaboration. A decade would provide an opportunity for long-term and coordinated activities in support of regional, national and local road safety.

Key partners in global road safety agree that the time is right for accelerated investment in road safety in low- and middle-income countries, together with the development of sustainable road safety strategies and programmes, which rethink the relationship between roads and people, encourage the use of public transport, and also change approaches to measurement of national progress in transport policy. Major risk factors are understood, as are effective counter measures to address them. Collaborative structures are in place to bring together key international players, funders, civil society, and there is a funding mechanism to support accelerated investment and activity. Sufficient resources and political will are the key elements still lacking.

A decade would provide a timeframe for action to encourage political and resource commitments both globally and nationally. Donors could use the decade as a stimulus to integrating road safety into their assistance programs. Low- and middle-income countries can use it to accelerate the adoption of cost effective road safety programs while high-income countries can use it to make progress in improving their road safety performance as well as to share their experiences and knowledge with others.

In March 2010 the UN General Assembly resolution proclaimed a Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 (A/64/255) with a goal of stabilizing and then reducing the forecasted level of road traffic fatalities around the world by increasing activities conducted at national, regional and global levels. The resolution calls upon Member States to implement road safety activities, particularly in the areas of road safety management, road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behavior, road safety education and post-crash care. While supporting the regular monitoring of progress towards the achievement of global targets relating to the Decade, it notes that national targets relating to each area of activity should be set by individual Member States. The resolution requests that the World Health Organization and the United Nations regional commissions, in cooperation with other partners in the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration and other stakeholders, prepare a Plan of Action of the Decade as a guiding document to support the implementation of its objectives.

A framework for a Decade of Action

Underlying the Plan for the Decade of Action are the following guiding principles:

- The Safe System approach: this approach aims to develop a road transport system that is better able to accommodate human error and take into consideration the vulnerability of the human body. It requires recognition that road safety is a shared responsibility of designers of the road transport system as well as users of that system. The goal of the approach is to prevent fatal and severe injuries by identifying and addressing the major sources of error and the design flaws that contribute to them. Road users, vehicles and the road network/environment are addressed in an integrated manner, through a wide range of interventions, with greater attention to speed management and vehicle and road design than in traditional approaches to road safety.
- Ownership at a national and local level: activities towards achieving the goal of the Decade should be implemented at the most appropriate level, encouraging multisectoral involvement
- An inclusive approach: Nongovernmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector should be included in the development and implementation of national and international activities towards meeting the Decade's goals.

Activities and indicators

Activities over the Decade should take place at national, regional and global levels, but the focus will primarily be on national level actions. Within the legal constructs of national governments, countries are encouraged to implement activities according to five pillars below.

Pillar 1: Road safety management

Encourage the creation of multi-sectoral partnerships and designation of lead agencies with the capacity to develop national road safety strategies, plans and targets, underpinned by the data collection and evidential research to assess countermeasure design and, monitor implementation and effectiveness.

Pillar 2: Safer road design

Using road infrastructure assessment rating and improved design to raise the inherent safety and protective quality of road networks for the benefit of all road users, especially the most vulnerable.

Pillar 3: Safer vehicle design

Encourage universal deployment of improved vehicle safety technologies for both passive and active safety through a combination of harmonization of relevant global standards, consumer information schemes and incentives to accelerate the uptake of new technologies.

Pillar 4: Safer road users

Develop comprehensive traffic safety programs to improve road user behavior. Sustained or increased enforcement of road traffic laws and standards and rules combined with public awareness/education activities (in both the public and the private sectors, as well as among nongovernmental organizations) that will improve compliance with key road safety rules that reduce the impact of the key risk factors (speeding, drink-driving, non use of motorcycle helmets and seat-belts and child restraints, and unsafe commercial vehicle operations).

Pillar 5: Post crash care

Increase responsiveness to post crash emergencies and improve the ability of health systems to provide appropriate and adequate emergency treatment and longer term rehabilitation for crash victims.

National level activities

At a national level countries are encouraged to implement the five pillars, based on the recommendations of the World report on road traffic injury prevention and proposed by the Global Road Safety Commission. Countries should consider these five areas within the framework of their own national road safety strategy, capacity and data collection systems. For some countries an incremental approach to including all five pillars will be required.

International activities

In order to guide nations in the attainment of realistic but achievable targets around the world, overarching international coordination is required. Formalized coordination will also provide a mechanism to facilitate the sharing of experiences by Member States towards achieving their national targets.