



IRF Working Group "Safer Roads"

Kick-off meeting – Amsterdam, 3 April 2008

MINUTES

Participants

Jean Lalo, SOMARO – Chairman
George Lee, Road Safety Markings Association / Highways Industry Confederation
Owen S. Denman, Barrier Systems Inc.
Anne-Claire Courson, Signature
Andreas Kakouris, Public Works Department, Ministry of Communications and Works
Dr Harry Evdorides, University of Birmingham
Garth Strong, South African Road Federation
Arthur M. Dinitz, Transpo Industries Inc.
Jean-Claude Roffe, COLAS
Kent Kekeis, Quixote Transportation Safety, Inc.
Rik R. Nuyttens, 3M Europe
Maria Novikov, IRF Geneva – Secretary

Points addressed

1. Name for the IRF Working Group dealing with road safety
2. Working Plan
3. Next meeting

1. Name for the IRF Working Group dealing with road safety

The Chairman welcomed the Working Group members and thanked them for attending the kick-off meeting in Amsterdam. He introduced himself and asked the participants to do the same.

The Chairman proposed to decide on the name of the new working group on road safety. Following a brief discussion it was decided that the name IRF Working Group "Safer Roads" was the most appropriate as it is both proactive and dynamic. The Chairman emphasised that through this Working Group we intend to promote an innovative and flexible system that can work all over the world.

2. Working Plan

The Chairman advised that the Brussels and Washington PCs address road safety in their own geographical scope. The work of the Geneva WG should not duplicate their work. For the sake of transparency, the working programme for road safety for 2008 of the Brussels PC is attached to these minutes. The Washington PC has set up a new working group dealing with road safety. As soon as its programme is determined, it will also be circulated among the Working Group "Safer Roads" members.

The Geneva WG "Safer Roads" should focus on promoting smart education, not individual road safety hardware products. The real need is in convincing civil servants, primarily in low- and middle-income countries, that road safety must come on top of governments' agenda. For this they should embrace the concept of managing safety, which lies at the heart of the success of a road safety programme.

The Chairman is confident the best way to achieve governmental commitment to road safety management is with road safety audits and specialised seminars. IRF should become a major reference regarding global trends in road safety.

Harry Evdorides reiterated that often the municipal authorities are responsible for vertical signing. When there is lack of coordination with the traffic police, this may lead to confusion. For example, if a "STOP" sign is placed only 15 metres before the related stop line, it does not leave enough time for the driver to react. This is a clear indication of the existence of a road safety management problem.

The Chairman pointed out that the overall objective of the WG is to reduce the 1.2m fatalities worldwide. The strategy to achieve this objective is through promotion of best practices and finding better ways to educate the authorities, drivers and engineers. He emphasised the importance of training, which should be given according to the needs of the authorities. E-learning options should be explored.

Owen Denman said that the two other PCs concentrated on specific products (training, barriers etc.) but as a whole the IRF did not have a holistic approach when addressing the needs of developing countries. In dealing with developing countries it is paramount to sensitise the authorities to road safety management first and then introduce and apply international standards. For example, warn the authorities that excavation works should not take place in the vicinity of traffic lights without protection barriers, then train them in managing such operations.

Garth Strong stressed that developing countries have the same attitude and road problems. IRF should become the catalyst for such changes that will help implement the provisions of many regional declarations signed over recent years. Harry Evdorides emphasised the need to collate case studies to be able to show examples of failures. The Chairman proposed the WG be more present on the web to facilitate contacts with experts from developing nations.

The Chairman raised the point that many institutions deal with road safety and dispose of allocated resources, but lack an organised mechanism. He believed that IRF should look into partnering with these organisations (PIARC, FIA Foundation, ADB, World Bank, African Development Bank) to finance road infrastructure safety projects. IRF could work with the International Transport Forum on road training as they could provide direct contact with high decision-makers worldwide. Petroleum companies might also be ready to finance and/or coordinate training programmes as they have a vested interest in roads.

The Chairman proposed to launch a tender on the IRF website for specialists to deliver training and develop a module on road safety management.

3. Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Monday 15 September 2008 at the IRF office in Geneva.

Summary of decisions taken

The Working Group "Safer Roads" is intended to generate a holistic approach to road safety management. It will concentrate on developing countries.

Within this group the main emphasis will be on developing training modules, organising training seminars and providing training solutions of top decision-makers jointly with other interested stakeholders.

The WG members will gather and share information on the following topics:

- accident statistics (benchmarking)
- road accidents knowledge base (FAQ, glossary, e-learning)
- road safety guides (design/audit): cooperation with other organisations and dissemination
- safe roads and driving simulator
- sharing the roads: pedestrians (handicapped, elderly, young people), bicycles, motorbikes, public transport, heavy goods vehicles, cars.
- road safety management training courses
- speed control and ITS
- adherence to road surface

WG members are asked to submit contributions on the above topics (please send to mnovikov@irfnet.org) by 15 August 2008. These will be circulated by the secretariat and will serve as food for reflexion for the next meeting.

Annexes: IRF Brussels PC work programme 2008 on road safety,
List of Working Group members.
