

**UNECE****United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

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## **UN General Assembly recognises key role of Regional Commissions in the Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020)**

On 2 March 2010, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted a historical resolution aimed at strengthening action of the international community to reduce deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes worldwide over the next ten years.

In the resolution, tabled by the Government of the Russian Federation and co-sponsored by more than 90 UN Member States, the General Assembly proclaims the period 2011-2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety with a goal to reduce the forecasted level of road fatalities around the world by increasing activities at national, regional and global levels.

The General Assembly also reaffirms the need for further strengthening of international cooperation in addressing global road safety issues; calls upon Member States to implement road safety activities, particularly in the areas of road management, road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behaviour and post crash care; and encourages them to become contracting parties and implement the United Nations Road Safety related Conventions.

At the same time, the General Assembly recognises the work of the United Nations regional commissions in increasing their road safety activities and welcomes the conclusions and recommendations of the project "Improving road safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets" implemented by the United Nations regional commissions to assist low-income and middle-income countries in setting and achieving road traffic casualty reduction targets. It also invites the United Nations regional commissions and the main road safety stakeholders to prepare the Plan of Action and to coordinate regular monitoring of global progress towards meeting the targets identified in it. Moreover, it invites them to organize the second United Nations Global Road Safety Week to launch the Decade.

"This resolution is of utmost importance for the continuation and further strengthening of the efforts of the international community to effectively address the large and growing impact of road traffic crashes", said **Ján Kubiš**, UNECE Executive Secretary,. "It is a great encouragement for the work of the regional commissions and in particular of UNECE, as it recognizes our contribution over many years to improving road safety, not only through our technical and legal work, but also through our road safety campaigns and initiatives aimed at raising awareness and advocating increased political commitment to road safety".

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## Note to editors

Road traffic injuries are a major social, economic, development and public health problem. Road crashes claim the lives of more than 1.3 million people and at least 50 million people are injured on the roads every year. Developing countries and economies in transition bear the majority of this burden so that road traffic crashes are a development issue that disproportionately affects the poor. Road crashes typically account for 1 to 3 per cent of a country's GDP.

UNECE pioneered road safety activities in the United Nations system with the establishment of an Ad Hoc Working Group on the prevention of road accidents in 1950, followed by the Group of Experts on Road Traffic Safety (GE.20). In 1988 the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1), an intergovernmental body in which other related international organizations, as well as NGOs play an active role, was established. Nowadays, WP.1 is the only permanent intergovernmental body in the United Nations system that focuses on improving road safety and which is open to all UN member States. Its primary function is to serve as guardian of the United Nations legal instruments aimed at harmonizing traffic regulations.

UNECE's global work under the World Harmonization Forum of Vehicle Regulations and the Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods has developed provisions for the construction of vehicles, the requirements for their periodical technical inspection and the transport of dangerous goods that have assisted countries to produce safe and clean vehicles, reduce the risk of accidents with dangerous goods and hazardous materials and ensure that only safe and well maintained vehicles are allowed to participate in traffic. Moreover, transport infrastructure Agreements developed under UNECE auspices, in particular the European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries, of 1975, have enabled the UNECE member countries to develop their road transport networks in a coherent way from the Atlantic ocean to the Pacific.

The Conventions on Road Traffic and on Roads Signs and Signals of 1968, and other related UNECE legal instruments addressing the main factors of road crashes i.e. the road user behaviour, the vehicle and the infrastructure, are real contributors to improved road safety and promotion of global actions in a systemic and proactive way. Many countries around the world have become Contracting Parties to them and benefit from their implementation. These Contracting parties are also the key driving forces to keep these international road safety conventions up-to-date. Moreover, UNECE supports the development and promotion of best road safety practices and the organization of road safety weeks and other awareness raising and road safety promotional events. In addition, UNECE collects and publishes data on road traffic accidents in Europe and North America in a systematic way.

For further information please visit:

<http://www.unece.org/trans/main/welcwp1.html?expandable=99>

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