
Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC)

19th Session
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Almaty, Kazakhstan

Road safety issues and policy interventions in SPECA countries

(Item 4.7 of the Agenda)

Note by UNECE/UNESCAP

1. The issue of road safety has been on the global agenda for quite some time as the casualties from road crashes continued to rise at an alarming rate. Globally, road crashes kill 1.24 million people and injure about 50 million each year. As reported in the recently launched Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013 by the World Health Organization, road traffic injuries is the 8th leading cause of death globally and the number one leading cause of death of young people (15-29 year old).
2. Since 2003, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted six resolutions calling for strengthened international cooperation and multisectoral national action to improve road safety situation. In its resolution 64/255 of 10 May 2010 on improving global road safety, the General Assembly proclaimed 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 by increasing activities conducted at the national, regional and global levels.
3. The resolution was sponsored by the Government of the Russian Federation and co-sponsored by more than 90 countries including the 7 SPECA countries. It calls upon member States to implement road safety activities in a holistic manner, having regard to five “pillars”¹: (a) building road safety management capacity, (b) improving the safety of road infrastructure, (c)

¹ Based on the recommendations of the WHO World report on road traffic injury prevention and proposed by the Commission for Global Road Safety.

further developing the safety of vehicles, (d) enhancing the behaviour of road users, and (e) improving emergency and other post-crash services.

4. More recently, the importance of road safety has been further highlighted at the global Rio+20 Conference in 2012. Road safety has been recognized “as part of our efforts to achieve sustainable development” in the outcome document of the Conference, “The future we want”. This recognition in fact reiterates the view that road safety in many countries of the region is a development issue of concern considering its magnitude and gravity and consequent negative impacts on economy, public health and general welfare of the people, particularly the low-income group.

5. Despite the global, regional and national initiatives, road safety remains to be a development issue of concern in most developing countries. There is a need for further improvement of road safety in many countries within the Asia-Pacific, including SPECA countries, and to receive a higher priority in national planning and policies.

6. According to the recently launched Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013 by the World Health Organization, the progress in road safety in the SPECA countries between 2007 and 2010 has been mixed. In terms of estimated deaths, the progress in reduction of road traffic deaths has been achieved in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgystan showing that improvements are possible. Road traffic deaths in other SPECA countries², however, continued to increase in this period.

Road safety activities by the UNECE

A. Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1)

7. The Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1), serviced by UNECE, is the only inter-governmental permanent body in the United Nations system focussed on improving road traffic safety. It typically meets twice a year in Geneva. In 2013, it also met for a special session on 5–6 December in New Delhi, India, following an inaugural “Europe-Asia Road Safety Forum” on 4 December 2013.

² Except Turkmenistan as data is not available in the Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013

8. In 2013, WP.1 reviewed and worked through amendment proposals to the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic with a view to maintaining consistency between the convention and other international legal instruments, such as those developed by the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29). These included proposals related to lighting and light-signalling as well as a definition of “Driver Assistance Systems”. WP.1 also considered a proposal to amend the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals to include variable message signs. WP.1 also discussed issues related to the mutual recognition of driving permits, a safe system approach, multidisciplinary crash investigations and distracted driving.

9. Starting in 2014, WP.1 will oversee the work of two new Groups of Experts, the Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals, and on Improving Safety at Level Crossings. The mandate of the Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals is to review and to suggest ways to facilitate better comprehension of road signs and a more effective implementation of the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals. The mandate of the Group of Experts on Improving Safety at Level Crossings is take stock of available data on Safety at Level Crossings to describe, assess and better understand the safety issues at a road/rail interface as well as to develop a multidisciplinary strategic plan aimed at reducing the risk of death and/or injury at level crossings.

B. United Nations legal instruments

10. The harmonization of international standards in the area of road traffic safety has continued. In 2013, the number of contracting parties to the 1949 Convention on Road Traffic was unchanged at 95. The number of contracting parties to the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic, on the other hand, increased by two (Turkey and Qatar) and reached 72. The European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road Transport (AETR) had 51 contracting parties.

11. Under the administration and responsibility of the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29), the 1958 Agreement concerning the Adoption of Uniform Technical Prescriptions for Wheeled Vehicles, Equipment and Parts which can be fitted to/or be used on Wheeled Vehicles and the Conditions for Reciprocal Recognition of Approvals Granted

on the Basis of these Prescriptions, and the 1998 Agreement concerning the Establishing of Global Technical Regulations for Wheeled Vehicles, Equipment and Parts which can be fitted and/or used on Wheeled Vehicles, had 48 and 33 contracting parties respectively, covering most of the countries with a major automotive industry. The number of contracting parties to the 1997 Agreement concerning the Adoption of Uniform Conditions for Periodical Technical Inspections of Wheeled Vehicles and the Reciprocal Recognition of such Inspections remained unchanged, at 12.

12. WP.29 has recently adopted a considerable number of technical modifications to UN vehicle Regulations to increase their safety performance. Some examples include: (i) provisions for reducing the blind spot on the passenger side of heavy duty vehicles and improving driver visibility of other road users were incorporated in the text of existing regulations; (ii) improved overturning test procedures to reduce the risk of child ejection from child restraint systems, (iii) new provisions for the snow test for some categories of tyres, (iv) performance requirements for Advanced Emergency Braking Systems (AEBS) for vehicle categories below eight tons, (v) new requirements for service doors, windows and emergency exits and safety requirements in specific designed areas for prams or pushchairs in urban buses.

13. In 2013, WP.29 adopted four new UN vehicle regulations including one UN Global Technical Regulation (GTR) on hydrogen and fuel cell vehicles addressing passenger vehicles safety and three main systems: (i) fuel system integrity, (ii) electrical safety and (iii) hydrogen storage systems. A second UN GTR on the protection against pole side impacts, which will significantly improve the safety of a motor vehicles' occupants in the event of an impact against pole size objects (i.e. telegraph poles, signposts and trees). This last UN GTR – which is the first harmonized, international vehicle safety legislation addressing this issue - introduces requirements on lateral crash tests simulating this type of accident before vehicles are put on the market. It is expected that manufacturers would react by installing wider side airbags in order to increase passenger safety, among other things. The new UN GTR also introduces improvements in the protection of drivers' and passengers' heads. It will complement UN Regulation No. 95 on the protection of passengers against car to car lateral collision, by addressing brain and spinal cord injuries more directly. It has the potential to prevent a high number of fatalities and serious

injuries occurring in pole side impacts worldwide. A detailed list of activities of the WP.29 is contained in the annex to this document.

14. The European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) now has 48 Contracting Parties. The UNECE has issued a Road Map on how to set up the administrative structures for implementation of ADR (ECE/TRANS/WP.15/217, annex IV). The UNECE secretariat has also published a 2013 consolidated edition of ADR which takes account of all amendments up to 1 January 2013.

C. United Nations Global Road Safety Week, 6–12 May 2013

15. In May 2013, the UNECE commemorated the second United Nations Global Road Safety Week (proclaimed by General Assembly resolution A/RES/64/255) with the secretariat's partners in the Palais des Nations with the organization of four key events and a number of supporting side events. The details of these events are provided below.

a. Regional Perspectives on Drinking and Driving Symposium

16. To mark the launch of the UN Global Road Safety Week in Geneva, Switzerland, UNECE and the International Center for Alcohol Policies partnered to organize a symposium on “Regional Perspectives on Drinking and Driving”. Experts from Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East presented and discussed from their regional perspectives the main issues influencing alcohol-related accidents involving vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. The lesser explored topic of drunken VRUs was also canvassed in addition to that of drunken drivers. The symposium concluded with a poster signing ceremony during which attendees had the opportunity to express a personal commitment to improving road safety by autographing a large, custom-made “We don’t drink and drive” poster.

b. Scouting for Global Road Safety

17. In parallel with the symposium, UNECE partnered with the World Organization of the Scout Movement, Scouting Ireland and the Hellenic Road Safety Institute “Panos Mylonas” to give 50 young leaders from its global Rover Scouts Programme the opportunity to participate in an interactive lecture by Professor Claes Tingvall, one of the creators of the “Vision Zero” concept. The Rover Scouts were empowered to develop, and present at the end of the session,

their plans to modernize the pedestrian related aspects of the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic from a young person's perspective.

c. International Level Crossing Awareness Day 2013 roundtable

18. Now on its fifth year, the International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD) is spearheaded by the International Union of Railways (UIC) with the support of the railway community around the world and a growing number of road sector organizations to raise awareness among road users and pedestrians of the risks at level crossings and to change their behaviour to “act safely at level crossings”.

19. The highlight of ILCAD 2013 was a press conference followed by two roundtable discussions on the three E's of safe level crossings – education, engineering and enforcement. National experts and advocates from Estonia, Greece, India, Italy, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland debated and discussed how behaviour at level crossings could be positively changed, and how infrastructure and enforcement could reinforce and facilitate safe behaviour. The event concluded with a poster signing ceremony affirming participants' commitment to safe level crossing behaviour as well as the opening of the ILCAD exhibition featuring the top entries from the third UIC international children's drawing contest on safety at level crossings.

d. Discussion forum on insurance and road safety

20. Victim rights and insurance are also important road safety issues, particularly in an international context. UNECE in co-operation with the Council of Bureaux (COB) organized an insurance and road safety session. COB is the key organization that administers the Green card system by handling and settling claims arising from accidents caused by visiting motorists. This

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