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Statement

by

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at the

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Panel: “Road Safety in South Asia: Saving Lives, Boosting Prosperity”

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[5 minutes]

Mr. Schafer,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honor to participate in today's panel on the important topic of road safety in South Asia. I apologize for not being with you in person today.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes Goal 3.6 on road safety, which calls for halving global deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes by 2020.

I don't need to tell you that we are very, very far from achieving that target.

So, what can we do?

The UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is one of the five Regional Commissions of the United Nations. We are a technical organization that develops standards, harmonization and strong legal frameworks which we know to be powerful tools in our efforts towards sustainable development. This approach has proven beneficial also for road safety.

UNECE's Inland Transport Committee (ITC) is the only body in the UN focused on inland transport, and road safety in particular. For 72 years, it has provided an intergovernmental forum where countries come together to forge

tools for economic cooperation, and negotiate and adopt international conventions on inland transport. These 59 conventions are considered indispensable for developing safe, efficient and sustainable inland transport systems. They are legal frameworks that build safer roads and safer cars, and ensure that we have safer drivers. The carriage of dangerous goods by road, traffic rules, driving license, road signs and signals, vehicle inspections and technical regulations for vehicle construction are among the topics addressed by these conventions. They are open to all UN Member States, but the rate of accession in South Asia is very low. UNECE encourages all governments in the region to join these instruments – we stand ready to support the accession process.

Of course, once the legal instruments are acceded, countries need to build awareness and capacity to ensure their implementation, transpose the instruments into domestic legislation and enforce them. All of that together with road safety infrastructure require financing. That brings me to my next point: As of April 2018, UNECE hosts the UN Road Safety Fund (UNRSF), which has already reached nearly \$20 million USD in pledges. The UNRSF is a multi-stakeholder financing instrument that brings together UN organizations, governments, private sector, academia and civil society. (I take the opportunity here to thank the World Bank, for cooperation in the establishment and governance of the UNRSF.) The focus of the Fund is on low- and middle-income countries and on projects to address key gaps in national road safety systems, with concrete institutional impact. Five pilot projects were approved last year, one of which is “Strengthening legal frameworks for road safety in Egypt and Pakistan”.

The timing of this panel is fortuitous, because the UNRSF just launched its first call for proposals last week. This will run until 4 December 2019, with an overall disbursement of USD 4 million to approved projects. I encourage everyone to work with their constituencies in South Asia to submit high quality, impactful proposals. You can find all the necessary information on our website. The outcome of the call will be announced at the 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in February 2020.

And needless to say, we are of course looking for further pledges to the UNRSF, to scale up impact and help us achieve the road safety related SDGs.

On a final note, UNECE also has the pleasure of hosting the secretariat to the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety, Mr. Jean Todt. You heard from him earlier. We thank him for his tireless efforts in promoting the UN road safety legal instruments and the UN Road Safety Fund, most recently on his joint mission to Bangladesh and Nepal with Mr. Schafer.

Once again, UNECE stands ready to work with all stakeholders to enhance road safety in South Asia.

Thank you.
