

Regional Road Safety Workshop for Latin America

"Strengthening road safety governance and best practices to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals"

Buenos Aires, 13-14 March 2017

On 13-14 March, more than 150 participants, from 17 Latin American countries, including Government (national and local) officials, representatives of the private sector, and civil society, participated in the regional road safety workshop organized by the United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy for Road Safety, Argentinian Road Safety National Agency, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

The workshop combined presentations from international and Latin-American experts with plenary discussions and working groups organized in thematic areas focused around Safer Vehicles, Safer Roads and Mobility and Road Safety Governance. This work has led to the following results and proposals, addressed to national and provincial authorities in charge of developing and maintaining federal, provincial (state) and municipal road safety policies in Latin America:

- Participants expressed a great concern with the relatively slow implementation of the Decade of Action for Road Safety in Latin America, emphasizing the need to improve road safety, a particularly difficult challenge in countries with a federal structure.
- Participants highlighted and discussed some significant limitations in the existing road safety policies. First, most of these policies do not adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach that seeks to reduce exposure to risks. Second, they do not take advantage of the existing international (ie., United Nations or regional) standards and best practices. Third, they lack a multisectoral perspective and do not benefit from a sustained dialogue with civil society. Finally, in many cases, they also fail to incorporate effective monitoring mechanisms and indicators that use reliable, adequate and quantifiable data.
- The workshop also addressed the global standard setting system for safer vehicles (United Nations 1958, 1997 and 1998 Agreements on vehicle regulations), which aim, at a global scale, to address active safety issues (avoid collisions) and passive safety (during collisions), while simultaneously using a comprehensive approach to address the environment, pollution and the use of energy.
- It was noted that accession to the UN Agreements on vehicle regulations would not only have positive social (road safety casualties) and environmental impacts, but could also bring important economic benefits, by allowing Latin American auto-industry products access new markets outside the region. Export of local production to new markets could provide resilience to local industry and economy, as it happened in Europe when slow growth affected the continent.
- Participants concluded that the process of accession to the United Nations agreements on vehicle regulations may offer a much needed flexibility to countries of the region, by allowing a possibility of gradual approach, and requires an important technical and systemic preparation.
- Alongside with the need for continuous development of the regulatory framework, the discussions on safer vehicle also recognized the importance of inter-ministerial coordination, effective implementation of the legislative measures and monitoring/evaluation mechanisms. Participants underlined the role of the civil society in improving the current regulatory systems in the region, referring to automobiles clubs, consumer organizations, NGOs, governments and insurance companies. Finally, references were made to successful experiences of using social media to raise awareness amongst citizens in favor of the elimination of unsafe vehicles.

- While addressing the issue of the social and economic benefits of vehicle certification under the United Nations Agreements on vehicle regulations, it was concluded that, even though these benefits were, generally, known, the challenge remains in their effective implementation. Participants also noted the need to eliminate misconceptions related to the certification process, such as the alleged high cost of implementation.
- It was highlighted that the United Nations Convention on Road Traffic (1968) and Convention on Road Signs and Signals (1968) offer best global benchmarks and basis for high quality regulations for the national and regional legislation in these areas. They facilitate mutual recognition of rules, vehicles and driving permits and contribute to the overall the improvement of traffic rules road sign comprehension, enabling thus safer international mobility. However, these conventions have not been ratified by many Latin America and Caribbean countries.
- The discussion on these United Nations Conventions also referred to the progress in the regional harmonization efforts in Latin America. At the same time, it was recognized that this harmonization can be deepened and, thus, facilitate and promote a closer regional integration. The United Nations international norms are very instrumental in this process. However, to advance with the harmonization efforts, each country needs to review their institutional policies (whether they have acceded or ratified any of the conventions, or in the case they have not, their willingness to do so) and their ability to implement them.
- In this context, participants called for renewed efforts in harmonizing drivers' training and driving permits, at least, at the regional level. Various countries have already begun working on this topic; however, they have not yet advanced significantly with the implementation.
- Overall, the workshop emphasized the need to move towards better road safety governance, one that allows solving the current, observed shortfalls within public policies in the region. This does not replace public action, but rather reinforces and legitimizes its performance. This governance must pay special attention to the national context where it takes place, which is why it must be flexible and able to adapt to the new requirements, stakeholders and challenges faced by transport and mobility. It should promote wide stakeholder participation, and the provision of information for monitoring actions.
- The participants concluded by calling for a continuous regional dialogue on road safety governance and regional and global best practices as well as underlined the importance of establishing and strengthening a regional expert network on the topic. They called upon organizations within the United Nations system and the regional multilateral developing banks to continue to address the topics discussed during the workshop and organize follow-up activities.
- The level of resources devoted to road safety at the global level continues to falter in comparison to other global scourges. The UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety shared during the opening remarks about a proposal that is being prepared by UNECE, in collaboration with the Special Envoy and in consultations with other UN Regional Commissions and the WHO, for a potential UN Global Road Safety Fund. Participants are invited to review the current proposal, which can be found [here](#), and send comments to executive.secretary@unece.org with a copy to Eva.Molnar@unece.org and Robert.Nowak@unece.org.