



Statement

by

Ms. Olga Algayerova

United Nations Under-Secretary-General

Executive Secretary

of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at the

**Russian Federation and UNECE Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety (WP.1)
Pre-event to the 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety**

**“Considering the legal framework governing the international application of emerging
automotive technologies for the benefit of road safety and Sustainable Development
Goals”**

Stockholm, 18 February 2020

Excellencies,
Dear Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to begin my remarks by thanking the Government of the Russian Federation for making this event possible and for its continued interest and support for UNECE work in the area of road safety.

I also would like to mention the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) and – especially - its Bureau consisting of Ms. Luciana Iorio (Chair from Italy), Mr. Joel Valmain (Deputy Chair from France) and Mr. Dmitriy Mitroshin (Deputy Chair from Russia) who worked hard to organize this meeting.

We all know why we are here this week. Tomorrow, the Ministerial Conference on Road Safety will begin. I am in Stockholm – together with Jean Todt, the UN Secretary's General Special Envoy for Road Safety - to launch a wake-up call to governments, to the international community and to all stakeholders, to make road safety a priority. And to place safety at the core of mobility policies.

UNECE has been facilitating international cooperation for road safety for over 70 years. We supported countries in 1949 as they mobilized to adopt the first United Nations convention on road traffic. Twenty years after, we were also instrumental when countries were creating a far more sophisticated road traffic convention in 1968.

All in all, UNECE manages 59 inland transport conventions. Seven of these are considered key for road safety. These conventions offer countries a foundation to legislate and implement concrete measures to address the main causes of accidents, covering areas such as traffic rules, road signs and signals, driving times and rest periods for professional drivers, all aspects of vehicle safety and the transport of dangerous goods.

I urge you to consider acceding to them, or, if you have already done so, to implement them to the fullest.

I am happy to report to you at this point that a few days ago, Honduras became the 81st contracting party to the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic. We are very happy about this development and congratulate Honduras on this important step.

At this point, it is important for me to thank Mr. Jean Todt – in his capacity as a special envoy. He has been tireless in effectively promoting not only the UN Road Safety Fund established in 2018, but also the UN road safety conventions.

I understand that today you will not be specifically discussing the UN conventions, as this is something you will be busy doing in Geneva in early March. Instead, you will reflect on creating an international road traffic legal framework which takes into account rapid technological progress.

So, let me turn to automotive and digital technologies, and an imminent deployment of automated vehicles in road traffic.

Imagine passengers taken by driverless cars to places where they want to be; children driven by automated vehicles to school; elderly people and those with disabilities with access to affordable, safe and individual mobility; platoons of trucks without drivers moving cargo across borders. And all of this without any significant accidents and injuries, no traffic congestion, and with little pollution.

This is a picture of sustainable transport at its best. You may ask “how do we achieve this vision”?

Technology will continue to advance, and we need to harness it to satisfy the needs of our society. These fundamental needs are safety, security, and clean environment.

We can meet these basic needs when “we” – that is the academia, private sector, governments, and international organizations - work jointly on developing and facilitating the vision of future sustainable transport that I just described. If we all work together, we can reach automated transport that is harmonized, compatible, and interoperable, while also being safe, secure, and green.

Conversely, the future – automated – transport may not be safe, secure, clean, and integrated nationally or internationally, unless there is coordinated cooperation across all stakeholders.

What do we do to ensure this necessary cooperation?

At UNECE, we have networks of government officials, academia, industry, and civil society. We bring together hundreds of experts from all over the world. In particular, at the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety and World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations, we combine the latest legal and technical developments with long-lasting experience, and a well-established, well-functioning processes.

Take advantage of these structures– they are yours to be used.

UNECE stands ready to support you, should you collectively decide to develop a new road traffic convention to deal with automated vehicles. It will be up to the governments to decide in March – by approving the creation of a group of experts – whether this is something worth pursuing.

The UNECE also stands ready to support you, should you decide to amend the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic to accommodate automated vehicles. If so, I urge you to make sure that – speaking like a true lawyer – the new amendment fully supports “admission to international traffic”. What I mean in plain English is that UN road traffic conventions are to facilitate international movement of passengers, vehicles, and cargo.

In closing, I would like to thank you for participating. Thank you all for taking the time and effort to be here, and your commitment to safer, more secure, and more environmentally friendly transport.
