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Opening Statement

by

Mr. Sven ALKALAJ

United Nations Under-Secretary-General

Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at

**the symposium on “Regional perspectives on preventing alcohol-related
crashes involving vulnerable road users”,
on the occasion of the launch of the Second UN Global Road Safety Week**

Palais des Nations (Room VIII, 10 a.m.), Geneva, 6 May 2013

**Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Colleagues,**

It is a great pleasure to be with you this morning and together to launch the Second United Nations Global Road Safety Week.

The road safety statistics are staggering and often mentioned, but I believe they are worth repeating. The annual global toll from road crashes is 1.3 million deaths and 50 million injuries. The impact is an immeasurable amount of human suffering by victims and their families, and economic losses of up to 2 per cent of GDP.

Let me repeat the words of United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, that "Improving road safety is a shared responsibility".

At the international level, the UN secretariat, as represented by UNECE and our four sister regional commissions, will continue its work on raising road safety awareness and promoting best practices. For UNECE, our Transport Division will continue to pursue a 360 degree approach in promoting a sound multilateral legal

framework for road safety through accession to and implementation of UN road safety legal instruments. Additionally, we will carry out analytical work and capacity-building to improve and disseminate our knowledge and experience.

At the national level, many UNECE member States continue to make good progress in addressing road safety as reflected in declining or stabilized low numbers of road fatalities. However, road safety is a timeless message that needs to be reiterated continuously and reaffirmed to everyone in society, be they part of the younger or older generation, or experienced decision makers in Government.

It is also important that UN member States around the world - that have not yet done so - consider becoming contracting parties to the UN road safety-related legal instruments such as the 1968 Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals.

And at the individual level, road users, which includes all of us, should drive, cycle and walk responsibly and abide by traffic rules.

To commemorate the Second UN Global Road Safety Week, UNECE and our partners, such as the International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP) for this morning's symposium, are organizing a series of events at the Palais des Nations today and tomorrow. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Brett Bivans, Senior Vice-President of ICAP, his team, as well as other contributors, for making this event happen.

In closing, I encourage you to actively participate and make the most of the excellent opportunities to learn, to gather resources and to further develop your network of road safety experts and stakeholders from around the world.

Now, let me turn to His Excellency, Ambassador Roderick van Schreven who is Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations in Geneva. Mr. van Schreven is the Chairman of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Mr. van Schreven is also an avid sailor. I understand he competed in the "Whitbread Round the World Race" in 1978. The name "Whitbread" comes from Samuel Whitbread, who in 1750 created the first mass-production

brewery in the United Kingdom. The company has sold its interests in the beer business and it no longer sponsors the “round the world yacht race”. Interestingly, the latter function has been taken over by Volvo and the Volvo Car Corporation – companies perceived as makers of very safe vehicles - and the race is today called the “Volvo Ocean Race”.

Thank you.