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Working Party on Road Traffic Safety

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OTHER BUSINESS

Note by the secretariat

1. This document is a follow-up to the preliminary discussions held at its 53rd session of the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) (see ECE/TRANS/WP.1/113, para. 38).
2. Members of WP.1 will find below a proposal on the development of a supplementary instrument on road traffic safety submitted by Italy, the Netherlands and the United States of America which requests WP.1 to allocate time at the 54th Session for a thorough exploration and discussion of this possible initiative that seeks to best utilize WP.1 and United Nations Road Safety Collaboration (UNRSC) assets to meet their institutional mandate of increasing road traffic safety.

DEVELOPMENT OF A SUPPLEMENTARY INSTRUMENT ON ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY

I. Introduction

1. Recognizing the need to pursue broader collaborative efforts that will benefit the full membership of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the community at large, a small WP.1 working group consisting of Italy, the Netherlands, and the United States of America, wishes to propose the creation of a supplemental instrument focusing on the high-yield areas of road user behaviors and countermeasures. Such an instrument would also provide the added benefits of institutionalizing the collaborative efforts of the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) and the World Health Organization (WHO) - led United Nations Road Safety Collaboration (UNRSC), ensuring the most efficient coordination and implementation of these groups and their resources. This instrument is envisioned as a complement to operational rulemaking under the Convention on Road Traffic of 1968 and the European Agreement Supplementing the Convention (Vienna Conventions). By explicitly combining WP.1's significant road traffic safety expertise and WHO's experience in designing and delivering public health solutions, the instrument will promote gains in our vital efforts to improve road traffic safety. Creation of this instrument is in keeping with various contemporary directives from the Inland Transport Committee and United Nations (UN) General Assembly calling on WP.1 to work more closely with the UNRSC (ITC: ECE/TRANS162; UNGA: A/RES/58/289) to proactively develop solutions to the transport, economic, and social facets of the road traffic safety crisis.

2. The instrument's primary products would be non-binding, science-based best practices in the field of road user behavior supported by subsidiary benchmarks and implementation programs graded to different infrastructures, driver behavior patterns, and levels of development. These products would be designed to enable countries at all developmental levels and with different infrastructures to take steps towards a safer road traffic environment and would draw from WP.1's analytical experience and recently awarded UNECE benchmarking funding, in addition to the UNRSC's work creating toolkits to address key road safety issues. In addition to the primary benefits this program would provide, it would also help ensure that the increased awareness and support that road safety issues currently enjoy are put towards the creation of concrete, lasting benefits.

II. Justification

3. As suggested in the UN Secretary General's 2003 Global Road Safety Crisis report (A/58/228, 44.b), we propose the development of a new instrument to address the road safety crisis to supplement the works already undertaken by WP.1 and the UNRSC. As noted in the WP.1 mission statement, the Working Party both considers "a vast array of issues related to road traffic safety" and "develops new legal instruments as the needs arise." Given the statistics this body is so familiar with, we believe that the need for a new instrument addressing road traffic safety issues has clearly been documented.

4. Indeed, with much of the work on operational good practices already accomplished with the Vienna Conventions and with road vehicles becoming increasingly safe thanks to, among other things, the efforts of the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29), the broader arena of road user behavior remains an opportunity to further the common goal of increased road traffic safety. Moreover, as travel takes individuals beyond their national borders with ever increasing frequency, traffic safety on all roads has become a most pressing transportation and public health issue for nations concerned with their citizens' well-being within and beyond their sovereign borders.

5. Furthermore, the challenges in enacting road traffic law makes the adoption of the Vienna Convention's myriad rules almost impossible for many nations, including some ECE members, who are nonetheless committed to reducing the incidence and severity of road traffic collisions in their territories. Thus, the new instrument will allow these nations to participate in the development and deployment of proven countermeasures designed to reduce the incidence of road traffic crashes and their consequent fatalities and injuries. It could even pave the way for member states' eventual adoption of the Vienna Convention. The agreement will meet the need, identified by the World Health Assembly, to "establish science-based public health policies" and "encourage research to support evidence-based approaches for prevention of road traffic injuries and mitigation of their consequences" (WHA57.10, 5).

6. The new instrument would also strengthen the relationship between WP.1 and the UNRSC per the WP.1 Secretariat's statement (TRANS/WP.1/2004/11) by institutionalizing a collaborative partnership designed to combine, coordinate, and implement these groups' varied resources. Specifically, WP.1's expertise will be spread widely and efficiently thanks to the WHO's program design and delivery experience, and the UNRSC programs will have the benefit of WP.1's preeminent expertise in road traffic safety issues. The reach of these programs will extend far beyond countries that belong to the UNECE, to other countries with urgent need for WP.1's knowledge and experience.

III. Structure and Implementation

7. We feel it may be premature to select one structure for this instrument as there are many potential options, one of which - similar to the 1998 Global Agreement which is administered by WP.29 - is described below. In this potential option, the instrument is overseen by an Executive Committee composed of representatives from WP.1, the UNRSC, and member states. All parties to the instrument would be members of the representative body that would vote to approve the final draft best practices, subsidiary benchmarks, and program designs. These items will be produced by issue-based working groups convened as needed by the representative body at the suggestion of the Executive Committee in consultation with the representative body.

8. Working Groups would leverage data and research from parties to the agreement and would incorporate original analysis into their findings as well. Working Groups would be tasked with establishing the best practices, a series of benchmarks keyed to differing development levels, and

immediately deployable programming for each road traffic safety issue. As noted above, this process combines the technical resources of WP.1's research and analysis functions and the UNRSC's programmatic toolkit development experience to derive the most benefit out of the groups' expertise. Once drafts have been finalized, meetings of the representative body would examine and promulgate these non-binding guidelines and encourage member states to utilize the benchmarking and programmatic tools provided to work towards the best practice as they saw fit.

9. We suggest that WP.1 and UNRSC sessions be scheduled close together - if not overlapping - in the same week and in the same location in order to facilitate the development of this instrument and greater cooperation between the two groups as well as minimize the cost associated with overseas travel.

IV. Products

10. The instrument will produce a series of issue-based best practices and program designs keyed to tiered benchmarks (intermediate goals) rooted in - yet distinct from - the best practice itself. This, along with the non-binding nature of the instrument's suggested actions, ensures that the agreed-upon best practice is just that - the best practice - since neither the specialists in the Working Groups nor parties in the representative body will have to compromise due to political or technical exigencies. This will allow for a more flexible approach to these often culturally, politically, and developmentally sensitive issues, and permit all parties to participate in the establishment of the high-level best practice while enabling them to make much needed, quantified steps to increase the safety of their roads.

11. Intermediate benchmarks and program designs keyed to member states' development levels will be developed with eventual progression from one to another in mind, ensuring that positive effects are cumulative. Benchmarks are critical to the success of the instrument and its goals. Establishing a series of intermediary steps for each issue will allow all countries to choose the appropriate program design and quantify their successes in applying said programs at home. This aspect of the project could be undertaken in concert with WP.1's recently-awarded UN programming funds for "Setting Regional and National Road Safety Targets."

12. Each issue will have, in addition to its tiered benchmarks, a series of program designs created for said benchmark and corresponding level of development. These designs will rely heavily upon the UNRSC's accumulated expertise, particularly in creating road traffic safety toolkits. It is expected that much of the work already done in this area could be retooled to meet these benchmarked needs. The jointly developed best practices and associated benchmarks would be publicized through both the WP.1 and UNRSC websites as well as directly through the parties to the agreement.
