



Press Release ECE/TRANS/08/P06
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Fifty years of safer and cleaner vehicles The value of United Nations Vehicle Regulations

Seventy three million cars were manufactured worldwide in 2007. The valuable impact of motorization on economic development and the freedom of movement has, unfortunately been accompanied by environmental and safety hazards. The United Nations vehicle regulations have a prominent role in the construction of safer and cleaner vehicles, as well as facilitating international trade.



Celebrating its 50th anniversary in June 2008, the Agreement demonstrates the importance of continued joint efforts – by countries, by public and private bodies and by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – at overcoming the negative consequences of vehicle fleets.

The Agreement concerning the Adoption of Uniform Technical Prescriptions for Vehicles adopted in 1958 (referred to as the 1958 Agreement) has laid the foundations for vehicle regulations over the last 50 years. It is administered by the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29), which is a subsidiary body of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Fifty countries, together with the UNECE secretariat, road users, consumer associations, standards setting organizations and NGOs, including vehicle and parts manufacturers, meet for 15 weeks throughout the year to develop and update vehicle Regulations aimed at increasing vehicles' safety and environmental performance.

The 50th anniversary of the 1958 Agreement will be celebrated with a round table discussion on 26 June to commemorate the Agreement's history and to examine how continuous expansion of the Agreement can help solve challenges ahead.

Over the course of its lifespan, the 1958 Agreement has put in place 127 Regulations that are constantly updated according to the latest technological progress, new developments in scientific research and to government policy.

In addressing environmental concerns, the World Forum has focused on reducing pollutants, including through fuel-cell and hybrid vehicles, but is now also endeavouring to increase engine efficiency and to reduce CO₂ emissions and global warming. The Forum's road safety work is centred around two main axes: accident prevention (active safety), including Intelligent Vehicle Systems, Tyre Pressure Monitoring Systems and Electronic Stability Control Systems; and measures that reduce the effects of crashes on the human body (passive safety), such as increasing the efficiency of frontal and lateral crash protection, improvements in child restraint systems as well as protection against roll-over on coaches.

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The 1958 Agreement was initially created for the UNECE region. However, in 1995 stakeholders recognized an urgent need to reduce and streamline a myriad of regulatory requirements for vehicle safety and environmental performance, and the Agreement was opened to all countries. The ability of the Working Party on the Construction of Vehicles, as it was called at the time, to act as a coordinating mechanism that could facilitate globally harmonized Regulations led to its transformation into a World Forum in 2000.

A half-day round table will be organized on Thursday 26 June 2008 at 3 p.m. in Salle XII, Palais des Nations, Geneva, in connection with the 145th Session of the World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29). High level representatives of Governments, Standardization bodies and Industry will head the round table, with the participation of the 150 stakeholders who regularly attend WP.29 meetings. The round table will be followed by a cocktail. The draft agenda is attached.

Specialized media are invited to participate. To register, please go to:

<http://www.unece.org/trans/registfr.html>

For more information, please see: <http://www.unece.org/trans/main/welcwp29.htm>, or contact:

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