

**REPORT ON SOUTH AFRICA'S SIGNING OF THE 1998 UN ECE AGREEMENT
AND PROPOSED ACCESSION TO THE 1958 UN ECE AGREEMENT**

South Africa

It is an honour to be able to announce that South Africa signed the 1998 Agreement on 14 June 2000.

Although this was a simple signature it was a very important step and naturally will require review by the relevant authorities. However the final matter of ratification has already been placed on the agenda of the next Parliamentary Session which will be held during August 2000.

Regarding South Africa's accession to the 1958 Agreement, this too is on the same agenda and is expected to be dealt with simultaneously.

The increase in the number of Contracting Parties to both Agreements helped to create unanimity amongst stakeholders in South Africa. We trust that our participation will also encourage other countries to join in and so promote the development of universally acceptable regulations.

South Africa has applied certain Regulations of the 1958 Agreement since the mid-1980's to both domestic and local production. Interestingly from the harmonization point of view our environment is now in the process of expanding to a free trade area amongst the 14 member state Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the task is now to harmonize standards and technical regulations in our region within 7 years.

The SADC region comprises developed, developing and lesser developed countries all anxious to improve standards of safety. Most have no regulatory controls on new vehicle designs entering their markets other than the basic on-road safety requirements.

The current variety of vehicle source designs entering our region creates problems which are not experienced to the same extent by the major producer countries and there are some aspects of our environment, which may be similar to other regions in the world, which are not yet well represented by Contracting Party status in this Forum.

For these reasons South Africa welcomed the initiatives to develop the 1998 Agreement and interacted in its development also to ensure that the needs of developing countries would be taken into account.

In short, the 1998 Agreement was viewed as a mechanism to give a renewed priority and impetus to achieving one set of international standards namely the Global Technical Regulations.

We also appreciate the need and benefits for participation in the 1958 Agreement and in our proposal to accede to the 1958 Agreement we intend to declare that we will be bound to 3 1 of the Regulations but, at this stage of investigation, that we are not bound to the remainder. Studies to date have shown that our national regulations present no conflict with most of the remaining UN ECE Regulations, and that only 10 remain to be studied for possible incompatibilities with national regulations.

South Africa is deeply indebted to the work of the various working parties under the 1958 Agreement, who should be pleased to know that the application of many of your regulations to our developing market has resulted in the ongoing upgrading of safety standards in our country, and to an extent in SADC.

In conclusion we are honoured to be able to inform you that subject to the successful completion of the remaining local and UN procedures in August, South Africa should be able to attend the November 2000 session as a Contracting Party to both the 1958 and 1998 Agreements.

As a final gesture, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the Permanent Representatives to the UN in Geneva of both South Africa and Australia cordially invite you to attend a small celebration to mark the significance of our respective steps in embracing the global nature of both UN ECE Agreements.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

- There is a great need for foreign investment and consequently an incentive to accept commodities, including vehicles, from a variety of such investor countries, whereas: -
 - Adoption of a single current set of Regulations may prejudice some sources of supply and therefore some potential investment.
 - Acceptance of more than one set of Regulations makes regulation and conformity assessment overly complex to administer in some countries, and gives rise to a mixture of vehicle designs which developed countries generally refuse to tolerate.
- The environment is generally less regulated and less disciplined than that of many of the Contracting Parties. Thus inconsistencies between source designs can have a more pronounced effect or may be viewed quite differently, for example:-
 - The relative merits of some differing regulations, (such as passenger car side-impact requirements), can almost be viewed as minor compared with the necessity to have a single degree of prescribed protection which all suppliers or designers can meet and which all regulators can assess.
 - The possibility of a Regulation 13 semi-trailer being connected to an MVSS compliant truck is greater than in the more developed countries, and other forms of incompatibilities with heavy vehicles and their combinations are also in evidence: -eg: -adhesion-utilization, electrical-voltage, wiring circuits, mirrors, wheel-rim-mountings, and even the height of 5th-wheel couplings.
 - The dangers inherent in moving from a car or heavy vehicle equipped with flat mirrors to curved mirrors are believed to be greater in our environment.
 - When designs from a given source of Regulations are modified to meet the requirements of another source, they may then meet the new requirements in full, but the results of the modifications are not necessarily to the same design integrity as would be the case if they had been built-in to the original design-and the cost is increased.
 - The fact that some vehicle controls and their positions differ so radically is also believed to be of greater significance to safety in our environment.
 - Differences can lead to cross-border transportation complications and thus to restriction of the free movement of goods and passengers.
 - Increasing sophistication of vehicle theft techniques has led to the request from Police authorities for unique identification marking of certain components- a task which is not really feasible without International Standards/Regulations.
- There is an increasing demand for high degrees of safety and environmental protection but the needs for simplicity of maintenance, effectiveness of anti-theft measures and vehicle affordability are also paramount.