



Statement by Mr. Andrey Vasilyev

Deputy Executive Secretary

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

(UNECE)

Delivered at the

The UNECE – BSEC

Conference on Improving Road Safety in the BSEC Region

Ioannina, Greece, 18 November 2010

**It is a great pleasure and honor for me, on behalf of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, to welcome you all to the UNECE-BSEC Conference on Improving Road Safety in the BSEC Region, held under the Greek Chairmanship-in-office of BSEC.**

**I should like to express our gratitude to the Greek Government, to the General Secretary Mr. Theocharis TSIOKAS and the Greek Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks, as well as to the Chamber of Ioannina and the Hellenic Chambers Transport Association for hosting this Conference in Greece, in the beautiful and historic city of Ioannina.**

**I should also like to thank H.E. Ambassador Chrysanthopoulos, General Secretary of BSEC, and BSEC secretariat for teaming up with us, in organizing this important event.**

**I should also like to thank you all for your participation.**

**As you all know in this room, road crashes claim the lives of more than 1.3 million people and at least 50 million people are injured or disabled on the roads every year worldwide causing in addition to human suffering, overwhelming costs running into hundreds of millions of dollars amounting to 1.5 to 2.5 % of most countries' annual GDP.**

**Developing countries and economies in transition bear the majority of this burden so that road traffic crashes are a development issue that disproportionately affects the poor in low and middle-income countries.**

**Only in Europe as much as 127,000 people die every year and 2.4 millions more are injured or disabled. The death toll of BSEC countries from road traffic crashes exceeds 62,000 people every year.**

**With the forecasted trends, which unfortunately, are suggesting dramatic deterioration of the situation around the world, particularly in low-and-middle income countries where road traffic fatalities are expected to increase by almost 90% in the next decade, road safety remains an enormous global social, economic, development and health concern.**

**However, road traffic risks are known and can be prevented. These include excessive speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol, non use of seat belts, child restraints and helmets, as well as non respect of pedestrians and cyclists. Poorly designed or insufficiently maintained road infrastructure and the use of old vehicles are only added to the list of road traffic risks.**

**Improving road safety is vital for society and a top priority for the United Nations. The need for action to improve global road safety has been acknowledged by the first global Ministerial Conference, held in Moscow, in November 2009, as well as by several resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, including the resolution 64/255 of March 2010, proclaiming the period 2011-2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety with a goal to reduce the level of road fatalities around the world by increasing activities at national, regional and global levels.**

**Therefore the Ioannina Road Safety Conference is timely and highly relevant.**

**UNECE pioneered road safety activities in the United Nations system in the course of the last 60 years. As the only existing UN intergovernmental body on road safety, our work focuses on**

**improving road safety through developing and updating legal instruments aimed at internationally harmonized traffic regulations, construction and technical inspection of vehicles, as well as for the transport of dangerous goods. These regulations have assisted member States all over the world to harmonize and enforce traffic rules and measures, produce safer and cleaner Road vehicles, reduce the risk of accidents with dangerous goods and hazardous materials and ensure that only safe and well maintained vehicles and competent drivers are allowed to participate in traffic. Moreover, transport infrastructure agreements developed under UNECE auspices, have given Europe coherent pan-European and safer road transport networks.**

**UNECE and the other sister UN Regional Commissions around the world, through a variety of initiatives and projects and in collaboration with major global road safety partners are contributing in increasing road safety activities and advocating for enhanced political commitment to road safety. In this context the continuing commitment of the Economic Commission for Europe to global action through elaborating and amending safety-related technical regulations and recommendations is of utmost importance. The Conventions on Road Traffic and on Roads Signs and Signals of 1968, and other related legal instruments addressing the main factors of road crashes i.e. the road user behavior, the vehicle and the infrastructure, are real contributors to improved road safety and promotion of global actions in a systemic and proactive way.**

**More recently, in view of the growing recognition of the potential for targets to give impetus to increased level of road safety activity, the UN Regional Commissions have implemented, a UNDA funded project on “Improving Global Road Safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets”. Under this project, the United Nations Regional Commissions organized seminars, conferences and workshops.**

**One of the most important events under this project focusing the Southeastern Europe, was held again in Greece last year, in Halkida, in partnership with the Greek Ministry of Transport and was kindly hosted by Evia Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Hellenic Chambers Transport Association. Halkida Conference contributed highly not only to the successful development of the UNDA project on targets setting and to the improvement of road safety in Southeastern Europe, but also to the preparation of the Moscow Global Ministerial Conference, which was a great success towards addressing the road safety problems and raising the political profile and commitment worldwide. Halkida Conference also opened new avenues for awareness raising through cooperation with the international Basketball community.**

**In cooperation with the Hellenic Basketball Federation and the Greek basketball champions, a first Declaration on “Team Work and Fair Play on the Basketball Court and on our Roads” was signed by the players of the Greek basketball national team in Halkida, in June 2009. Thereafter, another Declaration on the “Respect of the rules” was signed by FIBA, FIBA Europe, UNECE and the Polish Government in Spodek Arena, in Katowice, Poland, in September 2009, on the occasion of the Eurobasket 2009 tournament.**

**And this was not the end of the story. In partnership with FIBA, the Turkish Government and the Turkish Basketball Federation, a global road safety communication campaign under the moto “We play and drive by the rules” has been developed in the framework of the FIBA 2010 World Basketball Championship in Turkey, with great success.**

**The aim of all these campaigns was to engage society, and especially the young people, players, or basketball fans, in this cause, and to encourage respect for the rules on the road, as well as on the court. The motto of our joint UNECE-FIBA road safety campaign “We play and drive by the rules” suggests that road safety is the responsibility of each and all of us and that we should assume this responsibility for ourselves and for the others around us.**

**In my view, this is among the fundamental messages around road safety that has to be communicated to the public - road safety is the responsibility of each and all of us.**

**However, it has to be clear that Governments have a primary role to play in creating safe road traffic conditions through safe infrastructure, legislation, enforcement, education and post crash care, and they also need to optimize their expenditures.**

**Political will and commitment are key elements needed to properly address road safety as a priority under all its aspects, but mainly to secure funds for improving infrastructure, for education, training, and enforcement which are high-cost measures.**

**I should, therefore, call upon BSEC Member States to develop action plans and strategies in road safety at national and regional levels and to identify ambitious measurable casualty reduction targets.**

**I should also invite BSEC Member States that have not yet done so to adhere to the Road Safety related UNECE legal instruments, and in particular to the conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals, of 1968, and to implement them.**

**I should also like to encourage Member States to continue strengthening intersectoral dialogue on road traffic injury prevention and to support efforts to increase intersectoral collaboration and initiatives.**

**UNECE BSEC cooperation can be essential in promoting the road safety cause, as it has been the case in other fields of transport activities. BSEC has an observer status in the General Assembly since 1999 and the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and BSEC has been encouraged by the General Assembly resolution 55/211 of December 2000, as well as a number of resolutions that followed it. A cooperation agreement between UNECE and BSEC was signed in July 2001, providing the basis for such cooperation.**

**Mr. Chairman, Excellency, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Despite some recorded success in the last years towards raising the political profile and addressing this epidemic of traffic-related deaths and injuries, the road towards reducing the global death penalty in road crashes will be long and difficult.**

**UNECE through enhanced collaboration with its Member States, BSEC secretariat, the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, other interested bodies and the major global regional and national stakeholders, will spare no efforts to continue and further strengthen its contribution in making our roads safer and save lives.**

**The Ioannina Conference offers a great opportunity to address the road safety problems in the BSEC region and to contribute towards the implementation of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety.**

**I wish all success to our Conference, and thank you for your attention.**

**- - - -**