



**Conference on Improving Road Traffic Safety in South-Eastern Europe
Setting Regional and National Road Traffic Casualty Reduction Targets**

Hosted by Evia Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Hellenic Chambers Transport Association with the support of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Greece

25-26 June 2009, Halkida, Greece



Honorable Ministers,

Dear Mrs. Molnar,

Dear Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honor and pleasure for me, on behalf of the Hellenic Chambers Transport Association, to welcome you to the United Nations Economic Commission's for Europe Conference on Improving Road Traffic Safety in South-Eastern Europe, kindly hosted by the Evia CCI and our Association in Halkida, with the support of the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communications.

I should like to express our deepest thanks and gratitude, to the UNECE and in particular to Mrs. Molnar for her positive response to our joint request with the Evia CCI for this Conference, as well as to Mr. Adamantiadis and his colleagues in the Transport Division for their organizational efforts and contribution in preparing and holding the Conference.

I should like also to thank, on behalf of all, the President of the Evia CCI, Mr. Pangiotis Simosis, the Financial Supervisor of the CCI and member of HCTA's Board of Directors, Mr. Dimitrios Stamatoukos, the Director of the Evia CCI, Mr. Meletios Manolis, as well as all of their colleagues who helped for the organization and holding this Conference, in the magnificent town of Halkida.

I should also like to express our gratitude to the Greek Minister of Transport and Communications, Mr. Evripidis Stylianidis, the General Director of the Transport Division of the Hellenic Ministry, Mrs. Evaggelia Tsaga and their colleagues for their organizational efforts and contribution in preparing and holding this important Conference.

The Hellenic Chambers Transport Association is a non-for profit organization established by the Greek Chambers aimed at contributing to the overall national efforts for the development and modernization of the Greek transport systems, their harmonization with those of the other countries in Europe and their integration in the Pan-European and international transport context.

Since its creation, in 1993 as Greek Chambers Transport Council, and since 1995, as Hellenic Chambers Transport Association, our Association has worked in close cooperation with the competent authorities of Greece, the European Union, Transport related National, European and International Organizations and bodies, as well as other European Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Our Association elaborated a number of focused studies, organized national and international conferences, seminars, workshops, round tables and promoted the exchange of experiences and sharing of know-how. Through these initiatives, it was made possible for us to identify the main obstacles hampering the smooth transport operations in

Greece and the South Eastern Europe, to undertake concrete initiatives to overpass them, and make policy recommendations, some of which have been translated to National and European Union Policies and are currently implemented.

Our main concern was, and remains, how best our transport industry can address new and emerging challenges and explore opportunities in order that Greece's economy creates an enabling transport environment that would meet user's needs for modern, efficient, effective, sustainable and secure transport system, which, at the same time, would be part of an integrated pan-European and global transport chain.

Main topics in the agenda of our work currently and for the next years to come include the modernization of road transport operations, the development of seaports and their hinterland connections, intermodal transport and logistics, as well as road traffic safety.

Despite the significant progress in recent years, road safety situation in Greece cannot be considered good. The most recent statistics of the National Statistical Service of Greece demonstrate the truth: Greece is placed 22nd among the 27 member countries of the European Union, bearing 141 casualties per million of habitants, while the European average is 86. In 2007, there were recorded 15.499 accidents with injured victims (a number which is significantly lower than the one in 2000). From the previous mentioned accidents, 1.442 were fatal, with 1.612 dead people and a high number of injured ones. Each year in Greece, small town's population is killed on the streets. Excluding the Prefectures of Attiki and Thessaloniki, the two prefectures with the most road traffic accidents are Aitolokarnania and Evia. Crete, the periphery from where I come, altogether the 4 prefectures, is placed even higher than the two previously mentioned prefectures (Aitolokarnania and Evia), with even more casualties.

I previously mentioned Evia. Allow me to say something characteristic: there is a specific spot in the Evia road network (road044γ, kilometric position 8), at which 7 accidents happened in 2007, luckily without victims. At another specific spot, 4 accidents happened in 2007, while at another 4 spots happened 3 accidents at each. But there are good news, too. The comparison between the statistics of the first 10 months of 2007 and those of 2008, there is a reduction in the number of casualties: 1.341 in 2007 instead of 1.309 in 2008, a reduction of 2,4%. Another comparison, with the year 2000 statistics, reflect the progress we have made until today: 1.714 dead people in 2000 to 1.309 in 2008, recording a significant reduce of 23,6%.

However, this is not enough. According to the Road Traffic Safety Plan 2006-2010, in order for the target set to be achieved (50% reduction, with base year 2000, which means 1.018 fatal accidents at most), there is way to go. Personally, I believe this is a very high number and I would like to urge the competent authorities as well as all of us to undertake action in order to have zero casualties by road traffic accidents.

The causes of road traffic accidents in our country, as well as in other countries, are known. Excessive speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, failure to use seat-belts and helmets, poorly designed or insufficiently maintained road infrastructure, and the use of vehicles that are substandard, poorly maintained or lacking safety devices, lack of sufficient and effective technical checks as well as lack of traffic signs and signals and road lighting devices.

The Greek Chambers acknowledge the situation. The Chambers community knows the situation that dominates the greek roads. And the community has decided to contribute with any way we can, beginning from this very Conference, with the adoption of the Declaration by all participating CCIs.

This Conference is a wonderful chance for all of us to make a step to the tackling of this modern blight called “road traffic accidents”. Determination, unanimity, cooperation and dedication to the target are needed in order for us to succeed. We, Hellenic Chambers Transport Association, from our side, will always be at the disposal of the United Nations, the Greek Ministry of Transport and Communications and the other competent ministries, relevant organizations and commissions as well as at the disposal of all our members across Greece, so that, with any means we have, to contribute to the efforts for dealing with this modern blight

Looking forward to listening to the interesting presentation from all our Colleagues, once again, we thank the Evia CCI for the hospitality and all its efforts, and wish for a successful Conference.