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Working Party on Road Traffic Safety

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Agenda item 3 (a)

**REVISION OF THE CONSOLIDATED RESOLUTION  
ON ROAD TRAFFIC (R.E.1)**

**Introduction**

**Note by the secretariat**

The members of WP.1 will find below the draft introduction to the new revised R.E.1, with some amendments made at the forty-eighth session.

## DRAFT INTRODUCTION TO R.E.1

*(amendments appear in bold)*

Road traffic accidents are a global problem affecting all sectors of society. Every year nearly 1.2 million people throughout the world are killed on the roads, over half of them young adults aged 15 to 44. Nearly 50 million are injured. Added to this is the suffering endured by accident victims and their families and the enormous cost incurred by these accidents, estimated at several hundred billion dollars annually.

It is the duty of all those concerned to mobilize since the road safety crisis is a multifaceted problem that requires the collaboration of the various actors at all levels and demands every effort to put an end to the massacre; accidents are not inevitable.

### I. *Road safety: a challenge long faced by UNECE*

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe has since 1947 made road safety one of its major concerns, in particular through the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety, known as WP.1. Under its auspices several international legal instruments have been drawn up, including the 1949 Geneva Convention on Road Traffic and its Protocol on Road Signs and Signals, succeeded by the two Vienna Conventions of 1968 on Road Traffic and Road Signs and Signals, respectively, and the European Agreements supplementing them (Geneva, 1971). These legal instruments and the Vienna Conventions in particular are important points of reference not only for the international harmonization of regulations governing traffic, signs and signals and driving behaviour but also for drawing up national highway codes. In its resolution **A/RES/60/5 of 26 October 2005** the United Nations General Assembly encouraged Member States to adhere to these Conventions in order to ensure a high level of road safety in their countries.

In addition to these legal instruments, WP.1 has issued **two** Consolidated Resolutions, including R.E.1 on road traffic and R.E.2 on road signs and signals, to reinforce the Vienna Conventions and the European Agreements supplementing them. While these Resolutions do not have the binding force of the Conventions, they go into more detail and furnish a catalogue of measures and practices that States are called on to implement on a voluntary basis.

In addition, WP.1 was behind the launch of the Road Safety Weeks in the UNECE region, of which there have been four since they began in 1990. It is also behind the launch of the First Global Road Safety Week scheduled to take place from 23 to 29 April 2007.

### II. *Road safety: awareness worldwide*

Confronted with the growing absence of road safety worldwide, the highest echelons of the United Nations system have mobilized to support efforts to resolve the international road safety crisis.

**On the initiative of the Sultanate of Oman**, the United Nations General Assembly considered **this question for the first time in 2003** when it adopted two resolutions, the first, 57/309, on 22 May 2003, and the second, 58/9, adopted pursuant to the report A/58/228 on the subject by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, on 5 November 2003.

On World Health Day (7 April 2004), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank jointly launched a **report entitled** the “World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention”, stressing the urgent need for Governments and other key sectors to redouble their efforts to prevent accidents.

The political authorities took advantage of the **WHO** report and the events organized around World Health Day to adopt two **major new** resolutions on road safety. On 14 April 2004, the United Nations General Assembly, in a special plenary meeting aimed at a better high-level understanding of the extent of the problem of injuries resulting from road traffic accidents, adopted a **third** resolution (58/289), entitled “Improving global road safety”, **which invites WHO, acting in close cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions, to ensure the coordination of road safety questions within the United Nations system. Within WHO, road safety has also benefited from special attention, which was reflected in the adoption in May 2004, for the first time in 30 years, by the World Health Assembly of a resolution on road safety (resolution WHA 57.10, entitled “Road safety and health”).**

**In 2005, as a follow-up to its resolutions, the United Nations General Assembly** once again addressed road safety when, following the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/181), it adopted a fourth resolution (A/RES/60/5 of 26 October 2005), in which it welcomed the progress made in advancing road safety throughout the world and the initiatives taken by the competent United Nations agencies and their international partners in this domain.

These resolutions, which gave a powerful impetus to road safety throughout the world, are tools which should enable Member States to adopt strategic priorities and defend the cause of road safety.

### **III. Road safety: a national priority**

Road safety, as a domain that is chiefly the responsibility of local, municipal and domestic authorities, has not always received sufficient attention. This is particularly so in a number of developing countries and countries in transition. There are various reasons for this: for example, a lack of information on the extent of the problem and possibilities for preventing it, a fatalistic attitude towards road accidents, and a lack of political commitment and multidisciplinary collaboration.

Much can nevertheless be done to reduce the number of traffic accidents, as has been proved in numerous high-income countries where the number of road accidents in recent years has been cut sometimes by as much as 50%. To be successful in combating poor road safety, all Governments must set up a genuine road safety policy that goes well beyond merely incidental measures; such a policy should incorporate the following aspects:

- Assertion of a firm political will to make road safety an issue of national importance;
- Incorporation of road safety in policies relating to mobility, accessibility, health and the environment;
- Identification of problems as a result of serious evidence-based analysis and interpretation;

- Definition of realistic but ambitious quantitative objectives;
- Elaboration of a national strategy and action plan:
  - Taking account of the various components of road safety: human beings, vehicles, the infrastructure and emergency assistance. Although it is true that human error is the main cause of accidents, this should not lead to the conclusion that all prevention efforts should concentrate solely on means of directly influencing human behaviour (e.g. road education classes, awareness campaigns, regulations, inspections, sanctions). Behaviour may also be influenced by indirect means (for example, changing the layout of a road or its environment, by improving vehicle ergonomics) that can minimize the effects of errors or stop a user from committing them;
  - Setting up or developing the institutional, legal and financial framework conditions needed to pursue the objectives;
  - Adopting and enforcing the required legislation, organizing the necessary awareness-raising campaigns and introducing appropriate methods for monitoring and evaluating the action taken.
- Involving, according to their various responsibilities and competences, all key participants, nationally and locally, elected representatives, private bodies, industry, health professionals and professionals in other disciplines - and establishing appropriate structures for coordinating activities;
- Comparing the cost-efficiency ratios of the various specific measures to prevent accidents and lessen their consequences.

#### **IV. *The new R.E.1, a reference tool for improving road safety***

The aim of the Consolidated Resolution on Road Traffic (R.E.1) is to give Member States some indication of measures to take and practices to follow with regard to traffic rules, rules of behaviour, user communication and education and the safety of road infrastructure and vehicles. It includes special recommendations to ensure the safety of target groups such as pedestrians, persons with reduced mobility, cyclists, motorcyclists and children.

Since it was first published in March 1978 under the symbol TRANS/SC.1/294, R.E.1 has been added to and amended on several occasions to take into account innovations and new developments and successive amendments to the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic since 1968. Since this first edition there have been five consolidated revisions, the latest bearing the symbol TRANS/SC.1/294/Rev.5.

The UNECE Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) has undertaken a thorough revision of this Resolution so as to update it, modernize the presentation and circulate it as widely as possible throughout the world as a reference tool, providing guidelines for national authorities to follow on a voluntary basis.

The new Resolution presented below is the result of this work. It has **four** aims:

- To increase awareness among decision makers at all levels of:
  - **the true road safety situation in their countries;**
  - **the true cost to society of poor road safety;**
  - **corrective steps that have already been shown to improve road safety.**
- **To provide decision makers with a** catalogue of tried and true ways to combat poor road safety;
- To recommend to the Contracting Parties to the Vienna Conventions and the European Agreements supplementing them the adoption in their domestic legislation of provisions in keeping with the principles of the Resolution, in order to eliminate as far as possible the divergences from one country to the next that have been allowed to persist in these instruments;
- To recommend to States that have not yet ratified the Vienna Conventions, in particular the Convention on Road Traffic, or that are not yet in a position to do so, the fullest possible application of this Resolution from now on.

**It is hoped that this resolution will improve road safety and thus benefit one and all.**

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