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FUTURE ROLE OF THE WORKING PARTY ON ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY

Note by the secretariat

1. The United Nations General Assembly adopted on 31 March 2008 resolution 62/244 on improving global road safety. The resolution reaffirms the importance of addressing global road safety issues and the need to further strengthen international cooperation and knowledge sharing taking into account the needs of developing countries.

2. The resolution recognizes the continuing commitment to global action of UNECE in the elaboration of road safety global technical regulations and amendments to the international Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic and Road Signs and Signals and invites World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Regional Commissions in cooperation with other partners of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration (UNRSC) to promote multi-sectoral collaboration.

3. At its fifty-fourth session (26-28 March 2008), the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) had a first exchange of views on its future role and especially on the best way to contribute to globally improve road safety and knowledge sharing. The secretariat was asked to prepare for further consideration a roadmap on the possible ways for the WP.1 to move forward and contribute to the global road safety.

4. Based on that request, the secretariat has prepared for the fifty-fifth session of WP.1 a comprehensive reflection paper containing an analysis of the status and a list of possible steps to

be taken (Informal Document No.1). After considering the paper, the WP.1 indicated strategic directions and formulated a number of recommendations to be followed and asked the secretariat to prepare an official document based on those recommendations and directions.

5. At its fifty-sixth session, the WP.1 considered the document in detail and made a number of amendments and suggestions to it, which are reflected in the present (revised) document. The document is drafted as an objective Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis and proposes an Action Plan aimed at preserving and further developing the key role played by the WP.1 in improving the global road safety.

6. It is expected that the WP.1 at its fifty-seventh session gives a final consideration and approves the present document. After approval, the proposed actions will be included in the Working Programme for the period 2010-2014 to be discussed and approved at the fifty-eighth session of the WP.1 and subsequently submitted for approval of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) at its seventy-second session in 2010.

I. STRENGTHS OF THE WORKING PARTY ON ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY

7. WP.1 is today the only permanent intergovernmental body in the United Nations dealing with road safety and it is well equipped for knowledge sharing globally. WP.1 is open not only to UNECE member States but to all countries throughout the world.

8. The achievements of WP.1 may be summarized as follows:

(a) Elaboration and constant updating of the Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals of 1968 and of the European Agreements supplementing them, which facilitate the international road traffic and increase road safety through the adoption of uniform traffic rules, road signs and signals as well as markings;

(b) Elaboration and constant updating of a unique set of road safety best practices contained in the Consolidated Resolutions on Road Traffic (R.E.1) and on Road Signs and Signals (R.E.2);

(c) Elaboration of a database containing road traffic safety requirements in a number of UNECE countries, based on data transmitted by Governments. The database contains information on the legislation governing speed limits, permissible levels of alcohol in the blood and methods of control, seat belts and child restraints, wearing of helmets, use of lamps, periodic technical inspections and driving permits;

(d) Contribution to the Road Safety Weeks including the First United Nations Global Road Safety Week, jointly organized by the WHO and the United Nations Regional Commissions, which took place from 23 to 29 April 2007;

(e) Regular compilation and dissemination of road traffic accident statistics in Europe and North America (http://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp6/transstatpub.html) by UNECE. The UNECE owns and manages a rich collection of very detailed data (including on-line) relating to road traffic accidents and casualties by country, year, location, time of occurrence, road condition, nature of accident, age group and accidents under influence of alcohol.

9. Existing initiatives that deal with best practices and exchange of knowledge such as the United Nations Global Road Safety Collaboration (UNRSC) and the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP), for all their merits, are informal, consultative mechanisms involving valuable public and private partnerships. However, these initiatives do not have a formal governmental status within the United Nations system.

10. Interest in improving road traffic safety among United Nations member States from all the regions has constantly increased, as proven by the United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 58/9 of 5 November 2003 on the global road safety crisis, 58/289 of 11 May 2004, 60/5 of 1 December 2005 and 62/244 of 31 March 2008 on Improving global road safety as well as by the WHO General Assembly Resolution 57.10 of 22 May 2004 on road safety and health.

II. WEAKNESSES AND CONSTRAINTS OF THE WORKING PARTY ON ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY

11. The lack of adequate resources at national level as well as in the secretariat is a significant constraint preventing WP.1 to make full use of the Group's most valuable assets i.e., knowledge, expertise and experience in road traffic safety, in a wider geographical area. This affects mainly the countries with economies in transition which are also countries that need assistance the most.

12. Even though some of UNECE and/or WP.1 road traffic safety activities were financially supported by donors (e.g. Italy, FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society and the European Commission), travel cost and distance discourage participation in the work of WP.1 of experts from countries with economies in transition from the UNECE region, and in particular experts from the secretariats of other United Nations Regional Commissions.

13. In order to define and/or assess problems and identify solutions thereto the WP.1 needs adequate data. The reliability and periodicity of UNECE's databases relevant for the work of WP.1 such as road traffic accident statistics database and the inventory of the actual technical parameters and standards of the E-road network are highly dependent on the feedback from countries. Databases being obsolete are unfortunately rather common; this situation can be remedied by countries through regularly sending updated data to the secretariat.

14. At present no monitoring mechanism has been defined for the implementation of the Conventions on Road Traffic and Road Signs and Signals, 1968 and of the European Agreements supplementing them. Questionnaires that have been launched to determine the degree to which the domestic legislation of Contracting Parties conforms in substance to the legal instruments have not been answered to by countries, with the exception of few African countries. The lack of such information is a weakness for WP.1 because without it WP.1 can neither assess the reasons for non-implementation nor actively address these reasons.

15. The products and activities that make WP.1 unique, notably the conventions and resolutions, are poorly communicated which does not contribute to improving the Working Party's visibility.

16. The highly specialized legal work of WP.1 may create the perception of a slow body (in

making decisions and producing tangible results) compared to other players which deal with more practical aspects of road safety, and which, as a result, are perceived as more dynamic.

III. OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WORKING PARTY ON ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY CONTRIBUTING TO GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY

17. WP.1 should continue to play a key role in global road safety; to do so, it should pursue in updating and promoting the legal instruments and sets of best practices that made its fame. However, taking into account the multiple aspects composing road safety and the capabilities acquired by the WP.1, adding other activities to the "traditional" legal work could be beneficial as it would contribute to improving road safety in countries that are in need of such improvement. Currently there are several known projects/proposals/initiatives which could be used as opportunities by WP.1 to enhance its contribution to global road safety and which are briefly described below.

A. The project on "improving global road safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets"

18. The project on "Improving global road safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets" has received funding of about 660,000 USD from the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) and is to be implemented in 2008 and 2009, by the five United Nations Regional Commissions, in cooperation with other international organizations and NGOs active in the field of road safety.

19. The objective of the project is to help countries with economies in transition to develop regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets and to provide them with examples of good road safety practice that could help them achieve the targets selected by 2015. The results of the project will be discussed by the Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety to be held in November 2009 in Moscow, Russian Federation.

20. The project is primarily implemented through the organization of seminars, one or more under the auspices of each regional commission. It is planned that the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific will aim for 15 participating countries each, while ECE for 7-10 and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia for 5-8 countries.

21. In the substantive work to be undertaken in bringing about a methodology to establish road traffic casualty reduction targets, the UNECE will build-up on existing achievements such as UNECE's statistical definitions, methodologies, databases, including road traffic censuses without which the setting of meaningful road traffic casualty reduction targets and benchmarks, as well as their monitoring seem to be very difficult.

B. Proposal put forward by Italy, the Netherlands and the United States of America

22. Seeking to best utilize WP.1 and UNRSC assets to meet their institutional mandate of increasing road traffic safety and recognizing the need to pursue broader collaborative efforts

from which all members of the UNECE and also the community at large will benefit, a small working group consisting of Italy, the Netherlands and the USA proposed to create a supplemental instrument focusing on the high-yield areas of road safety. The proposal, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.1/2008/4, received support from the United Kingdom and FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society.

23. The proposed instrument is envisioned as a complement to operational rulemaking under the Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals, 1968.

24. Under the proposed instrument, science-based best practices addressing road safety would be established. To allow countries at different levels of development to adopt the best practices, a series of benchmarks would be established in the form of intermediate specific indicators for each best practice. This would allow countries to progress in stages towards adopting the best practices addressing road safety issues (e.g. seat belt use, alcohol and driving, speeding, high standards for safer infrastructure etc.).

25. The jointly developed best practices and associated benchmarks would be publicized through both WP.1 and UNRSC websites as well as directly through the parties to the instrument. Such a strategy, combining WP.1's significant road traffic safety expertise and WHO's experience in designing and delivering public health solutions, would be in line with directives from the Inland Transport Committee (ECE/TRANS/162) and United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/58/289) calling on WP.1 to work more closely with the UNRSC to proactively develop solutions to the transport, economic, and social facets of the road traffic safety crisis.

26. The small working group that tabled the proposal felt that it might be premature to select one structure for this instrument, as there are more than one potential options, of which:

(a) an instrument similar to the 1998 Global Agreement which is administered by the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29). In this potential option, the instrument would be overseen by an Executive Committee composed of representatives from WP.1, the UNRSC, and member States. All parties to the instrument would be members of the representative body that would vote to approve the final draft best practices, intermediary benchmarks, and mentoring programs designed "on-demand" and provided by issue-based ad hoc working groups.

(b) a Resolution, similar to the existing Resolutions nos. 1 and 2, containing guidance and strategies addressing road safety that can be adopted by any country and is flexible enough to address different levels of development.

C. New ISO standard for road traffic safety management systems

27. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is developing an international standard for road traffic safety management systems. The future standard will not encroach on regulatory responsibilities, but seek to be complementary to the road safety work of intergovernmental organizations such as the UNECE and the WHO. It will be applicable to all actors with an influence on road safety and will provide a holistic approach to road traffic safety.

The intention is to help organizations improve their performance in relation to road safety, contribute to reducing accidents, better meet regulatory requirements and societal expectations regarding road safety, employ a process approach, including the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle and continual improvement, and to set and achieve road safety objectives.

D. Bilateral assistance

28. Many of the developed UNECE member countries have put in place bilateral programmes to assist countries with transition economies in their efforts to improve road traffic safety (Spain, Sweden, etc). Success stories would produce a maximum of benefit if they were shared and multiplied in the framework of an appropriate platform, where both donors and recipients meet as equal members; WP.1 is well equipped to be that platform.

E. World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility

29. The World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility was set up in 2006 to support global, regional and country efforts that would lead to reductions in road deaths and injuries in countries with economies in transition. The Facility's mission includes activities directed at strengthening road safety strategies and institutional capacities in their target countries. The Facility, which is now administering grants, has two streams of funding: one for global road safety initiatives and the other for supporting country programmes. As such, the Facility's mission is consistent with the mandate of WP.1 to "initiate and pursue actions aimed at reinforcing and improving road safety".

F. Second United Nations Global Road Safety Week

30. At present no formal decision has been taken on organizing a second United Nations Global Road Safety Week; however it can be envisaged that such an event would be planned for 2010 or 2011. WP.1 should be prepared to play a key role in all the stages of the event.

IV. THREATS AND OBSTACLES TO THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY TO GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY

31. The critical situation of road safety has been recognized as a "global crisis" and the General Assembly has reaffirmed the importance of addressing global road safety issues and the necessity to further strengthen international cooperation, taking into account the needs of developing countries by building capacities in the field of road safety and providing financial and technical support for their efforts.

32. However, countries with economies in transition have many stringent priorities and often road safety is not amongst them; the lack of financial resources, political will and commitment are significant obstacles to finding a solution to the road safety crisis through putting in place adequate policies/programmes. In case of road safety or related programmes/projects already started, lack of will and resources to ensure their sustainability are a threat to national and international efforts to improve road safety.

33. At global level there is a significant multiplication of actors dealing with road traffic safety;

while this is a positive development per se, the lack of coordination may lead to inconsistency and dilute global and national efforts to improve road safety.

34. Road safety has numerous facets and can only be improved through multi-sectoral approach and solutions; lack of coordination and cooperation or even competition between actors, at national and international levels, are threats to defining and implementing solutions to road safety problems.

35. The major projects of the WP.1 will soon be achieved with the comprehensive revision of the Consolidated Resolution on Road Traffic (R.E.1). Unless additional ways to move forward are identified, these achievements could transform into threat by making the WP.1 become a hostage of its past success, mainly because road safety environment is a fast changing one.

36. The Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals, 1968, are proved to be appropriate tools for facilitation through harmonized rules, signs, signals and markings in many regions/sub-regions of the world; however, there are still cases of reluctance to implementing the conventions as they are, preference being given to adapted softer versions.

37. One of the threats faced by WP.1, as well as by other working groups, is the low level of participation in the meetings by countries that have the most urgent need of knowledge and information about road traffic safety. The reason for their non-participation is in most of the cases the scarcity of resources; it is therefore essential that ways and means are found to encourage and support these countries participation in the WP.1 meetings. Without action, the benefits (even of an ambitious and creative work program) would be limited.

V. ACTION PLAN

38. Road traffic injuries continue to be an important public health and development issue. Trend in many countries suggest that the problem could become noticeably worse within the next decade. Despite increased awareness of the issue, there is a pressing need for greater effort and resources to be directed towards addressing the problem, particularly in countries with economies in transition in the UNECE region and beyond. WP.1 can and should continue to play a major role in improving road traffic safety at global level.

A. Strategic directions

39. While remaining the custodian of the legal instruments that made its fame, WP.1 should adapt to the dynamics of road safety by including in its debates more policy-related issues and deal primarily with strategic road safety issues.

40. Representatives from other Regional Commissions should be regularly invited to participate in the meetings of WP.1 and other road safety events. That would ensure global transfer of WP.1's know-how including eventually global coverage of the legal instruments. At the same time, debates would provide WP.1 with additional expertise and information, enabling it to elaborate and implement a global vision on road safety that takes into account the needs and capabilities of countries with different levels of development. Such a global vision would build on the legal instruments and best practices elaborated by the WP.1.

41. Such a strategy for future development would imply a number of organizational changes like for example the creation of thematic ad hoc working groups when needed and in a flexible organization, as well as the creation of joint working groups on matters with impact on road safety (e.g. joint work with the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1) on road safety and infrastructure). The ad hoc working groups will report to the WP.1 and the outcome of their work will have to be approved by WP.1.

42. Improved communication on WP.1's competitive advantages should be considered as a constant and permanent objective of the Working Party and its members, as well as of the secretariat; achieving this objective will depend to a significant extent on the commitment to assume ownership of WP.1's products and activities.

43. Road traffic safety has an impact on all the components of sustainable development; it should thus be fully taken into account when drafting and implementing sustainable transport policies. WP.1 ought to be a guide in matters of road safety regulations and best practices, applicable at global level and particularly by developing countries. To produce positive effects, the guidance provided should be based on reliable research of the causes leading to bad road safety parameters. Introducing the legal instruments and resolutions and teaching "what to do" is not enough, this should be followed by teaching "how to do," especially regarding implementation.

44. Road safety is a global problem; while the solutions to the problem have to be global policies, they should mainly be implemented locally. Global policies can only be developed through improved cooperation; WP.1 should therefore foster partnerships/ develop synergies with the most relevant stakeholders in road traffic safety. A first step has already been taken by inviting the UNRSC for a back-to-back meeting with WP.1 in November 2008. Organizing such joint meetings with other partners too should be envisaged, based on mutual interest and possible complementarities.

45. WP.1 should build on its assets so as to become the most appropriate multilateral platform where concerns, success stories, lessons learnt and failures with regard to road safety can be shared, to the benefit of all the participants.

46. The European Commission should continue to remain a major partner of the WP.1 as the European Union is composed of 27 member States which are also members of the UNECE. The *acquis communautaire* in road safety including legislation, institutions and best practices in vehicle safety, infrastructure safety management and user's behaviour is most valuable and might be spread beyond the EU borders with the specific means of the WP.1.

B. Actions feasible on short-term (2009-2010)

47. Addressing road traffic safety is a cross-sectoral activity involving different national authorities (policy makers/regulatory, law enforcement etc.) such as the Ministries of Transport, Health, Internal Affairs/Police and Education. Action:

National and regional cooperation amongst competent authorities involved in road traffic safety will be promoted and strengthened.

48. In a growing number of countries, the Road Safety Council (or similar) plays a key role in coordinating the activities of the different authorities representing a multi-disciplinary portfolio. Despite their vital role, these Road Safety Councils do not seem to have an international network unlike e.g. the railroad regulators, which have managed to set up a regular consultation forum among them. Action:

WP.1 will act as key interlocutor in promoting the setting-up of a "Club of Road Traffic Safety Councils". Such a forum would ensure a much faster spread of information at national levels on what the WP.1 is actually doing. As a first step, relevant representatives of these national structures will be invited to participate in the fifty-seventh session of the WP.1 in March 2009.

49. The new GA resolution A/RES/62/244 puts the spotlight on global road safety. The support by the resolution to the offer of the Government of the Russian Federation to host the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in November 2009 is the major new element towards raising the political profile of this epidemic of traffic-related deaths and injuries. The Conference, inter alia, could offer the venue for countries to agree upon regional road traffic casualty reduction targets. Action:

UNECE secretariat and WP.1 will provide any possible assistance to the Russian Government for the preparation of this historical event, including providing speakers, input for the event's documents, proposed wording of final declaration, "prodding" all Transport Ministers to attend, etc.

50. The UNECE's road traffic accident statistics database as well as the collection of road safety provisions of national legislations constitute assets that should be used by WP.1 to define and/or assess problems and identify solutions thereto. The reliability of the data is highly dependent on the feedback from countries. Action:

WP.1 will contribute to improving data coverage, periodicity, reliability and effectiveness of UNECE's road traffic accident statistics as well as of the collection of relevant provisions of national legislations.

51. To make WP.1 more accessible to all UNECE Member Countries and to be able to carry out the activities under a broadened mandate of the WP.1, additional resources notably financial ones are a pre-requisite. Actions:

(a) Negotiating a specific agreement with the already existing Global Road Safety Facility of the World Bank to support the work of WP.1 in implementing its activities as well as the road safety work of the other United Nations Regional Commissions;

(b) Encouraging twinning arrangements (or similar forms of cooperation) e.g. between road safety authorities in developed countries and their corresponding authorities in countries with economies in transition;

(c) Calling for synergies with major EU-funded projects in the UNECE region (e.g. "Development of Co-ordinated National Transport Policies in Central Asia" in the framework of which a Working Group on road safety has been established, so as to reap the maximum of benefits from each other's experience.

52. Based on the historic achievements and on-going activities of WP.1, more attention should be given to packaging them invitingly and disseminating/distributing widely. Actions:

(a) Developing an interactive CD-ROM containing the existing instruments (conventions, resolutions) under the authority of WP.1. The CD-ROM would be distributed in all the important road safety-related events and to the stakeholders;

(b) Contributing to the development of the new ISO international standard for road traffic safety management systems and promote it;

(c) Connecting the UNECE's website with other websites, relevant for road safety;

(d) Creating a WP.1/Road Safety mailing list and initiate electronic discussions on a regular basis, with participation of WP.1 members on a voluntary basis;

(e) Preparing presentations of the legal instruments and sets of best practices tailored for different levels of understanding and for different target groups (e.g. policy-makers, practitioners etc.);

(f) Exposing WP.1 (body and achievements) actively and deliberately, and using the UNRSC "green books" as valuable tools worth implementing.

C. Actions feasible on medium-term (2011-2012)

53. WP.1 is well equipped with all the necessary knowledge/expertise and experience to expand its role and transfer the know-how to countries beyond ECE region, by that being also able to be useful to the other United Nations Regional Commissions to build capacity and initiate road traffic safety activities in their regions. Actions:

(a) Inviting delegates from all Regional Commission to WP.1 and making them advocating the WP.1 activities in their Commissions;

(b) Encouraging the establishment by ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP and ECLAC of Regional Road Safety Groups aimed at bringing member States closer and improve collaboration between all the road safety stakeholders in that specific region;

(c) Occasionally organizing WP.1 events in other locations than Geneva, with the participation of Working Groups of other United Nations Regional Commissions;

(d) Promoting and encouraging interaction between UNRSC and the regional road safety groups in the framework of the United Nations Regional Commissions.

54. The project "Improving global road safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets" will be implemented by the five Regional Commissions in cooperation with other international organizations and NGOs active in the field of road safety. Action:

WP.1 will contribute to the project and promote its results.

55. In light of the fact that the WP.1 is currently the only existing intergovernmental body dealing specifically with road safety in the United Nations system, it should act as a positive catalyst and a facilitator of contacts and cooperation between stakeholders that can contribute to improving road safety. WP.1 should be open to cooperation with other working structures in the United Nations system or external to it, which are relevant for road safety. Actions:

Encourage countries with economies in transition to participate in peer reviews of road safety performance, identify relevant partners (e.g. volunteer reviewers, donor countries, the World Bank etc.) and facilitate contacts between them and the countries.

Develop synergies between WP.1 and SC.1, starting with joint work on introducing road audits (including safety component) into the Consolidated Resolution on the Facilitation of International Road Transport (R.E.4).

D. Actions potentially feasible on long-term (beyond 2012)

56. Road safety is a global problem which needs a global solution. Part of the global solution is given by the existing legal instruments but a complement to operational rulemaking under these rules might be useful. The existing sets of best practices could be supplemented with additional, science-based best practices addressing road safety, applicable by countries at different levels of development. Action:

Consider developing a global instrument on road traffic safety covering actual needs, not dealt with by other (existing) instruments.

57. The International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP) was established in 2006 to facilitate expansion of road assessment programmes (RAP) into low and middle income countries. Based on an established methodology using three standards protocols, iRAP enables the implementation of large scale programmes to upgrading the safety of roads where large numbers are being killed and seriously injured. The iRAP initiative supports the development of local models and outcomes that suit the needs and road safety issues within participating

developing countries. Action:

Assess all the implications of a possible cooperation with the iRAP and, depending on the results, offering to be associated with it in road safety audits.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

58. WP.1's achievements are well-known in the UNECE region and beyond. The Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals, 1968, have been modernized and their consolidated versions are published. The Consolidated Resolutions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals, useful sets of best practices, have also been brought in line with the most recent developments in road traffic safety.

59. The Action Plan proposed presents a variety of possible approaches and specific activities that may be included in the future work of WP.1. After consideration and decision by WP.1, the resulting document will be submitted to the approval of the Inland Transport Committee as WP.1's Work Programme.

60. It is foreseen that this strategic document will be subject to regular update and adaptation, taking into account the rapid developments that take place at international and national levels in the area of road traffic safety.

61. Member countries are expected to provide further guidance to the secretariat on the ways to proceed, taking into account that for the implementation of a number of proposed activities, additional resources need to be made available to the UNECE secretariat, as well as to the other United Nations Regional Commissions.

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