

AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD BACK BETTER: THE POTENTIALLY TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ROAD SAFETY IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

A DYNAMIC DISCUSSION ON ROAD SAFETY AT THE TIME OF COVID-19

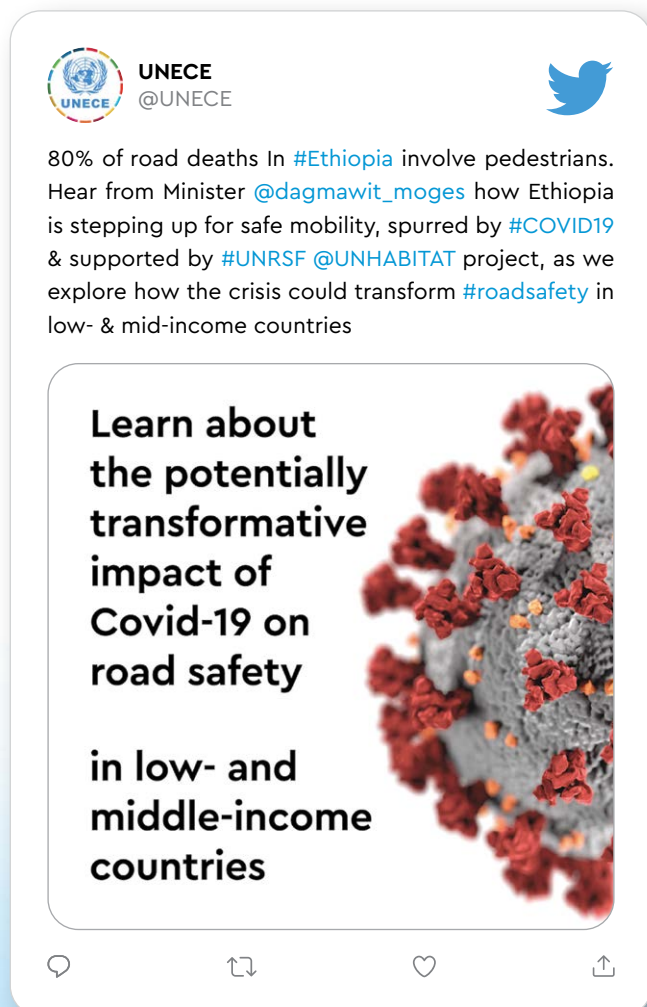
WEBINAR OUTCOME DOCUMENT
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INTRODUCTION

The webinar was organized by the secretariat of the UN Road Safety Fund (UNRSF) on the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on road safety in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). How we respond will help shape the future and efforts to build back better must be prioritized by identifying the best opportunities and lessons learned. The dynamic discussion at the webinar shed light on both the global and national effects of road safety and safety measures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND

With more than sixty percent of the world's population under some form of confinement at the beginning of June, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted road safety. In March 2020, there was a reduction in road fatalities of around 40% in France and Sweden in comparison with 2019, and 56% for New York City. In Jamaica, the Director of the Road Safety Unit, stated that since the Government's imposition of the island-wide curfews in a bid to stymie the spread of the coronavirus, there has been a drastic reduction in the number of people being killed on the roads. Same observation in Morocco where there was an unprecedented decrease in road crashes under lockdown, with a 65.52% decrease in fatalities between March and April 2020.



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80% of road deaths in [#Ethiopia](#) involve pedestrians. Hear from Minister [@dagmawit_moges](#) how Ethiopia is stepping up for safe mobility, spurred by [#COVID19](#) & supported by [#UNRSF](#) [@UNHABITAT](#) project, as we explore how the crisis could transform [#roadsafety](#) in low- & mid-income countries

Learn about the potentially transformative impact of Covid-19 on road safety in low- and middle-income countries

Decreasing the number of road crashes, as highlighted by the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road safety, Jean Todt, "not only relieves the health system from road victims but is undoubtedly linked with a significant amount of financial benefits for governments especially amidst the virus which is draining budgets." If we observe an overall decrease in the total number of victims on the road, we must continue to be vigilant because as highlighted by Lotte Brondum, Executive Director of the Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety Secretariat. "While traffic volumes are lower in most countries due to lockdowns and curfews, many are also seeing a huge increase in excessive speeding on quiet roads. This is a story we hear across high-, middle-, and low-income countries. That the roads are quieter due to Coronavirus, but there are more fatal crashes" remarked Ms. Brondum.

The COVID-19 crisis has been an opportunity for many cities to review urban street design policies and to test new mobility systems, such as closing streets to motorized vehicles, promoting cycling and walking corridors or using artificial intelligence for moving safely. National and local

authorities had to respond to the demand of commuters by opening emergency bike lanes, making street infrastructure safer for pedestrians and allocating more space to them, including embracing the concept of safety distance as an integral part of urban transport systems.

The 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety held in February 2020 led to the Stockholm Declaration, a commitment to engage and invest in road safety. The Stockholm Declaration calls for a new¹ global target to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries by 50% by 2030. This was adopted by the General Assembly in September 2020 through Resolution A/74/L.86 that also proclaims 2021–2030 as the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety

¹ As the first Decade of Action for Road Safety and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target 3.6 on the reduction of road fatalities expires at the end of 2020

and calls upon The 2020 Resolution also invites member states to further invest in road safety at all levels, including by supporting the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund. **This momentum for road safety cannot be lost and it was in this context that the webinar was organized.**



*The renowned moderator and international journalist **Femi Oke** facilitated the discussion and questions, expertly guiding participants through a thought-provoking interactive discussion.*

SESSION 1: ADVOCATING FOR ROAD SAFETY FOR LOWER MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES (LMICS) DURING AND AFTER COVID-19

The objective of this session of the UNRSF webinar was to advocate for the importance of road safety on the political agenda with prominent international voices in the transportation and road safety sector.



Opening Remarks by:

Olga Algayerova, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Jean Todt, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE SESSION / KEY OUTCOMES

UNECE makes a call to member states to renew their commitment to the Global Stockholm Declaration 2020 by endorsing the seven road safety conventions.

Just a month before the lockdown, in February 2020, the Stockholm Declaration was launched by member states declaring their commitment to reduce deaths by 50% by

2030. As part of the opening remarks, Olga Algayerova, the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the UNECE made a call to all 193 member states to accede to the seven road safety conventions that address the main causes of crashes. UNECE emphasized that the lessons learned from COVID-19 crisis must lead to a paradigm shift in mobility to efficient and environmentally friendly driving and safer road use. She noted that we can help flatten peak traffic hours through

**/// We cannot continue with business as usual on roads.
We should not miss this opportunity to contribute to Agenda 2030
and SDGs 3.6 and 11.2. ///**

Olga Algayerova, UNECE Executive Secretary

“Until there is a vaccine to COVID-19 we must be better informed by education and law enforcement as a form of vaccines for safer roads.”

Jean Todt, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety

greater reliance on active mobility such as cycling and walking, and reinventing public transportation systems. She emphasized that COVID-19 has proven to us the importance of breaking silos and developing partnerships for more resilient and greener safer cities.

Jean Todt, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety issued a call to member states and individuals to enforce road safety laws, such as respecting speed limits and not driving under the influence. This can help to achieve SDG target 3.6 that seeks to halve road traffic deaths and injuries by 2020 and SDG target 11.2 that focuses on providing safe, sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety with special attention to key groups such as children and the vulnerable. Mr. Todt further stated that manufactures must ramp up safety manufacturing standards for vehicles in LMICs. He noted that we are seeing indications of this progress with the recent appointment of Erik Jonnaert as the new

Session 1 Panel:

Dagmawit Moges, Minister of Transport, Ethiopia

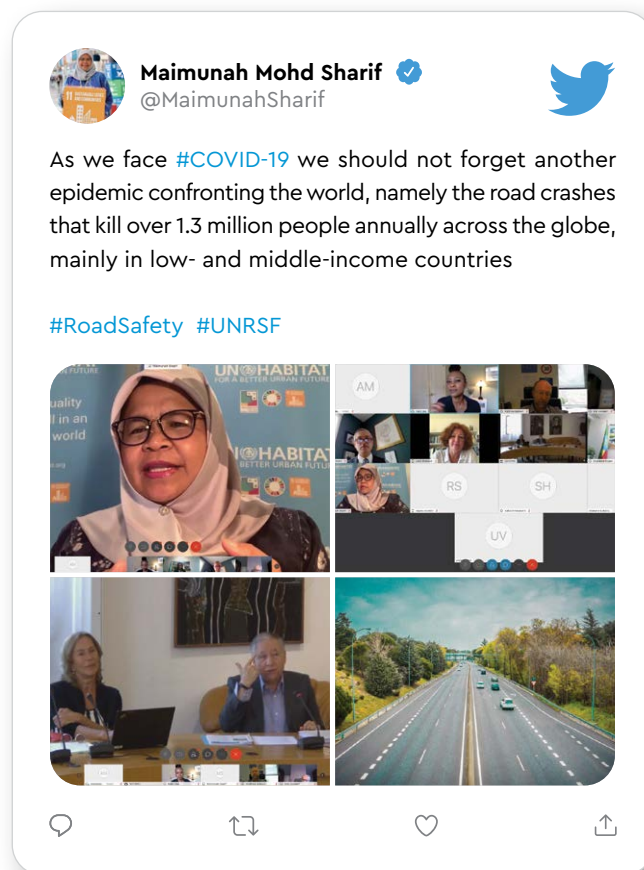
Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

Lotte Brondum, Executive Director of the Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety

Matthew Baldwin, Deputy Director-General for Mobility and Transport, DG Mobility and Transport, European Commission

Adnan Hyder, Senior Associate Dean for Research, Professor of Global Health, Director, Center on Commercial Determinants of Health, Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University

Erik Jonnaert, Special Envoy for Road Safety for the International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers (OICA)



Special Envoy for Global Road Safety of the International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers (OICA) in charge of promoting the effective implementation of OICA's Global Road Safety Manifesto as adopted in October 2019.

COVID-19 Rapid Response: Ethiopia leveraged the use of data and a legal framework

The Minister of Transport in Ethiopia, Her Excellency Dagmawit Moges, made a strong case for a business model for road safety based on data and a legal framework, that has been evidenced to work as a response to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted that in Ethiopia even with written legal frameworks, execution was a major challenge, but due to the pressure of the pandemic, laws have been rapidly executed and enforced without requiring a lockdown. Her Excellency reminded the panel that "saving lives is equivalent to saving livelihoods for LMICs as it is for the rest of the world." She concluded that the pandemic has shown Ethiopia what they are

capable of doing in the midst of a crisis as Ethiopia saw a reduction of 56% road related deaths during the height of the pandemic.

Technology was successfully ramped up for safer and environmentally friendly mobility in Ethiopia

"Strong public action is needed to save lives and save the economic cost of death as a consequence of road crashes" emphasized Matthew Baldwin, the Deputy Director-General for Mobility and Transport of the European Commission. The public has embraced the radical lockdown and a radical change to their lifestyle to save lives during the COVID19 pandemic. He explained that while the necessary lockdown actions did result in a huge amount of economic damage, whereas saving lives in road safety saves money. He stated that in the European Union 1–3% of GDP is the cost of road crashes. He stressed that a paradigm shift is needed to increase safe mobility for the environment by reducing the dependence on private cars to improve traffic congestion and CO₂ emissions. Local solutions need to be made, such as bike lanes to increase safe mobility and less reliance on public transportation and on vehicles. He concluded that "We have to invest in public transportation, walking, and cycling, especially in LMICs, so this can be the new normal standard. Lessons learned awakened us to change our behavior as individuals and as a community with reduced mobility for only essential trips and essential transport of goods."

Ms. Moges, the Minister of Transport in Ethiopia later said that as a result of social distancing the Federal Transport Authority rapidly complemented infrastructure related work by providing online services. In some ways the pressure of the pandemic has rapidly required the government to ramp up public services by upgrading services through the activation of technology. "Online services are here

to stay", she said, "along with using big data to generate intelligence to improve road safety."

The vehicle industry is starting to take a stronger lead on safe vehicle manufacturing

"The vehicle industry is at a crossroad of change as it reinvents itself", stated Erik Jonnaert, the Special Envoy for Road Safety for OICA, "and strengthening safety is at the core of vehicle manufactures". Voluntary efforts by individuals is not enough, which is why OICA has gone outside of its usual practices to pursue legislation changes. He explained that OICA is advocating for industry members to adopt a global manifesto for road safety that requires a minimum set of legal provisions for new vehicles before these can enter the market. Mr. Jonnaert further emphasized that "Vehicle safety is core from design to manufacturing", and acknowledged that "automobile industry is stepping up their commitment to global road safety from higher to lower middle-income countries, therefore as a response the OICA global manifesto was drawn up." The OICA global manifesto calls on all governments worldwide to place all actors in the automotive industry on an equal competitive footing by setting compulsory minimum vehicle safety performance requirements for all new vehicles sold on their territory, based on already established UNECE regulations."²

Mr. Baldwin reminded the panel that "international regulations through a legal framework have already been adopted, vehicle safety requirements have been identified and now we need to ensure they are implemented, especially in LMICs, where people and communities at large have been left behind." In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World

² <http://www.oica.net/wp-content/uploads/OICA-manifesto-on-global-road-safety-final-2019-10-28.pdf>



“We must all strive to implement 30km/h in high-risk areas. This way, we are sure of halving road deaths in no distant time. Speeding is at the core of many fatalities; we must stop it now!”

Dr. Adnan Hyder, Senior Associate Dean for Research and Professor of Global Health at the Milken Institute School of Public Health of George Washington University

// Small measures and mediocre campaigns are not enough to make a change. //

Anonymous audience member

Health Organization (WHO) reinforces the need for a legal framework, innovation, and affordable measures to address the challenges of the pandemic.

COVID-19 is an invitation to rethink urban mobility and make cities safer, greener and healthier

Maimunah Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat said that "COVID-19 invites us to rethink urban mobility systems. Now is the best time to *build back better* – but we have to reflect upon *what* we are going to build back better." She made reference to the global sustainable agenda by stating "we don't have to reinvent the wheel – road safety is already in the New Urban Agenda. Paragraph 113 commits to improve road safety and integrate it into sustainable mobility and transport infrastructure planning and design – as called for in the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety."

Ms. Sharif further explained, that as we re-think cities during the pandemic and into the aftermath of the pandemic, mass transit designs should integrate walking and cycling paths. She discouraged individuals from relying on car-based transport and rather challenged governments to promote lower levels of motorized transport for wider sustainability benefits.

Road safety is a human right

COVID-19 and road safety have a common unfortunate characteristic -that the most vulnerable people are the worst affected when crisis hits. Pedestrians, children and women and those in extreme poverty continue to be most vulnerable on the roads. Lotte Brondum, the Executive Director of the Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety, reiterated that "as we draft and advocate for better global road safety solutions, we must not forget that they must be relevant to the local context." The importance of road safety is a human right to protect the right to life, the right to personal security, the right to health, of all people. She explained that civil society has a strong role to play and contribute to resiliency when crisis hits, they are the eyes

and ears of the needs of the community. Engaging with the community remains crucial in making sure that global solutions work on a local scale.

Leadership and leveraging partnerships are at the core of an integrated approach for road safety

"Academics and the WHO have been grappling with the question of leadership and leveraging partnerships" says Professor Adnan Hyder, Senior Associate Dean for Research, Professor of Global Health, Director, Center on Commercial Determinants of Health, Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University. He stated that "economic downturns usually mean less travel particularly in vehicles, we can assume this would lead to less crashes on the road. However, we have seen that there is an increase in speeding and alcohol consumption presumably due to the reduction of law enforcement. LMICs have proven that efforts from the South can work and be leaders in road safety, as shown with the business model in Ethiopia."

Ms. Sharif emphasized that "what is needed is leadership, political will, financial investments, policies, a legal framework, and new technology to implement strategies. At the core of the leadership efforts there has to be the commitment to people and their safety."

"We must all strive to implement 30k/h in high risk areas, this way, we are sure of halving road deaths in no distance time. Speeding is at the core of many fatalities, we must stop speed now!"- *Dr. Adnan Hyder, Senior Associate Dean for Research and Professor of Global Health at the Milken Institute School of Public Health of George Washington University*

"The risk of a road accident affects everyone", Ms. Brondum referenced a survey where 97% of respondents reported they had experienced a car crash. She emphasized that "we have to make evidence-based decisions and make sure road safety works in our communities and subsequently follow-up to improve the situation. This is where civil society step in to hold manufactures and governments accountable."

What should we prioritize in road safety globally?

At the close of the session, Ms. Oke asked the panelists to reflect on what should be prioritized with respect to road safety at this time. The following points were made:

- The group agreed on an integrated approach to road safety and promoting safer vehicles and roads is a powerful tool as we aim to achieve the objective of the Stockholm Declaration and reduce road traffic deaths and injuries by 50% by 2030. In addition, promoting walking and cycling will also depend on how safe infrastructure is, something that remains a challenge in some LMICs. However, Ethiopia has shown to be successful in their case study and sustainability of their efforts will be the next step.
- Erik Jonnaert, OICA, is committed to prioritizing the adoption by LMICs of the minimum set of legal safety requirements for new vehicles. Along with policy and law changes, road safety needs to be part of an integrated approach focusing on safer vehicles on safer roads driven by safer drivers, which requires a multi-stakeholder partnership.
- Adnan Hyder, George Washington University, advocated for social justice for everybody and everywhere, as the basis for improving global road safety.
- Matthew Baldwin, European Commission, stated that vehicle manufacturers make vehicles safer for pedestrians and public transport users, along with building on evidence-based better decisions by collecting and analyzing road safety data.

SESSION 2: CASE STUDY- THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON A UNRSF ROAD SAFETY PROJECT IN ETHIOPIA

The objective of the second session of the UNRSF webinar was to learn about best practices on how to advocate and maintain road safety on the political agenda during a crisis through a real-life implementation experience. The UNRSF road safety project implemented in Ethiopia was shared as a case study with the hopes that this would be of guidance to other LMICs in similar settings. The discussion was held with Ethiopian policy-makers, practitioners and implementing partners.

Welcome words by Her Excellency Dagmawit Moges, Minister of Transport in Ethiopia

Introduction by Saul Billingsley, Executive Director of the FIA Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE SESSION / KEY OUTCOMES

Her Excellency Minister of Transport, Dagmawit Moges, welcomed the audience with an introduction on the UNRSF project. Ms. Moges shared that in Ethiopia to accelerate the implementation of the Government's initiatives on policies and investments, prioritizes immediately shifted focus to pedestrians and cyclist road safety, where previously their prioritization was to serve vehicles. Through the Addis Ababa Non-Motorized Transport (NMT) Strategy, the city is now planning to have a permanent bike network on the

Jemo – Lebu corridor for which the UNRSF project team has provided technical review to the design. Addis Ababa like many other LMIC's cities have unsafe pedestrian pathways and cycle lanes, including illegal trails and parking lots, missing sidewalks and poor intersection design. Through this project, the Ministry of Transport, in partnership with other government counterparts such as the Ministry of Urban Development and Construction, sees the necessity for a paradigm change to shift their priorities from vehicles to improving pedestrian and cycling lanes and streets designs to enhance the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.



Through partnerships we can reduce fatalities on our streets.

Her Excellency Dagmawit Moges, Minister of Transport in Ethiopia

Saul Billingsley, the Executive Director of the FIA Foundation, reminded the panel that, in February 2020, the flagship announcement at the Stockholm Declaration was focusing on a maximum speed limit of 30 km/h on urban streets where pedestrians are present. In the subsequent six months due to COVID-19, many cities have adopted speed management plans. Along with speed management plans, he emphasized that "we must embed walking and cycling paths as Ethiopia is doing. Such plans that are human centered address the SDG agenda, including social equity, civil rights, and the needs of the victims. What we need to do is lock-in some of these changes to share a safe space with vehicles and pedestrians." However, Mr. Billingsley shared his concern on the other hand that there is not a lot of bandwidth as Governments are under a lot of pressure to perform, protect, and prioritize human life. Therefore, he emphasized if road safety interventions can demonstrate in practical ways that safe walking and cycling paths can be a success then we can gain backing from governments, civil society, and the population.

Anticipation of continued traction of walking and cycling paths by users beyond the COVID-19 pandemic

Stefanie Holzwarth with the Urban Mobility, Urban Basic Services Section, UN-Habitat explained that the majority of the population in Ethiopia relies on walking as their principle mode of mobility. However, she said there are many limitations to this infrastructure such as safe walking paths or the design of intersections. Seble Samuel from Menged Le Sew further elaborated that most accidents

occur in Addis Ababa from vehicles not properly yielding to pedestrians. Cities in Ethiopia that are car-centric are not resilient to the pandemic. With so many pedestrians in cities, the project team remains hopeful that there may be more community support to utilize walking and cycling paths, especially on car-free days. In addition, Ms. Samuel said due to the reduction of public transportation use as a consequence the cost of public transport doubled and the user has borne the cost.

Session 2 Panel:

Stefanie Holzwarth, Urban Mobility, Urban Basic Services Section, UN-Habitat

Mitku Asmare, Deputy Director General, Federal Transport Authority (FTA), Ethiopia

Seble Samuel, Geographer, Storyteller and Climate Justice Advocate/Co-Founder, Menged Le Sew

Regatu Solomon, Road and Transport Engineer, Safe Cycling Program, Team leader of Public and Non-Motorized Transport team in Addis Ababa Transport Bureau

Romain Hubert, Acting Head of the UNRSF Secretariat



Ms. Holzwarth hoped that this is an opportunity for alternative forms of transportation and safer walking and cycling paths. She reminded participants that community engagement and policy engagement can make an impact in the long term.

UN-Habitat's role in road safety guidance

UN-Habitat provides technical assistance needed to help reclaim a safe space for people by providing policy advice, support to harmonize road design manuals, and technical assistance in the design of pedestrian paths that are in line with global standards and best practices. An additional role that UN-Habitat takes is bringing together the right stakeholders.

Regatu Solomon, the Road and Transport Engineer, Safe Cycling Program, Team leader of Public and Non-Motorized

Transport team in Addis Ababa Transport Bureau stated that during the lockdown the project saw a 10-fold increase in the use of one of the cycling paths and bicycle ownership also surged, however the city streets are starting to get congested again.

Ethiopia claims opportunities to combat road safety in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic

Ms. Moges said that in an effort to ensure the continuation of projects during the pandemic while abiding by preventative physical distancing measures the Addis Ababa Non-Motorized Transport (NMT) Strategy was successfully launched online on 3 June 2020 with 50 key participants. This was a best practice example of how UNRSF's support for remote conferencing and data collection can be kept on track during the pandemic and prevent long programme delays. The challenge that remains for road safety practitioners is how to ensure that Ethiopia keeps road deaths low; Ethiopia saw a 65% reduction in vehicle related crashes at the height of the pandemic-related confinement measures.

Mr. Hubert announced that the Fund's mandate was endorsed until 2030 and that it was agreed to prioritize the 2020 call for proposals for new projects in LMICs that are aligned with national priorities and SDG target's 3.6 and 11.2, and the Stockholm Declaration, including a COVID-19 response. He emphasized that, currently, the best vaccine for a better global road safety is the regional and local implementation of the Global Framework Plan of Action,³ which is an excellent guideline, not only for governments but all road safety stakeholders on how to improve the national road safety systems.

³ Available at: www.unece.org/unrsf/about-un-road-safety-fund.html

What should we prioritize in road safety nationally?

At the close of the session, Ms. Oke asked the panelists to reflect on what should be prioritized with respect to road safety at this time. The following points were made:

- Stefanie Holzwarth, UN-Habitat, emphasized that it is important to have an integration of policies for road safety to face any crisis so that road safety and COVID-19, climate change, and social injustices are approached as integrated issues to combat.
- Romain Hubert, UNRSF, made a call for financial support to fund important and impactful projects like the Scaling-up Safe Street Design project in Ethiopia.
- Saul Billingsley, FIA Foundation, said this is a great opportunity to improve our streets design and build protective infrastructure for walking and cycling.
- Seble Samuel, Menged Le Sew, concluded that we must shift our joint aspirations so as to have a road safety goal that is safe, healthy, and sustainable.

Video of the webinar is available here



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