

Statement by
Mr. Jean Todt
United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety
at
Opening of the 3rd Ministerial Conference on Road Safety
Waterfront Congress Centre, Stockholm
19 February 2020, 09:00-10:15

Your Majesty, King Gustaf,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

It is my great honour to represent the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Antonio Guterres at this opening ceremony.

I wish to thank the Government of Sweden, the World Health Organization and all stakeholders for organizing this conference.

In his message to mark the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims last November, the Secretary-General reminded us that saving lives by improving road safety is one of the many objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

While the scale of the challenge is enormous, he said, collective efforts can do much to prevent these tragedies.

Just last month, in his New Year's address to the UN General Assembly, the Secretary-General launched the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

And he committed the entire system of the United Nations to work with all partners to expand the global movement for the Goals; to unlock financing; and to generate the ambition, innovation and solutions needed to deliver a better life for everyone, everywhere.

Today, we are gathered in Stockholm to kickstart the Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals as it related to road safety – to join forces to secure drastic reductions in road traffic fatalities and injuries over the next ten years.

Road safety is one of our greatest development challenges. Each year, some 1.35 million – too many - drivers, passengers, cyclists and pedestrians are killed on the world's roads. Up to 50 million are severely injured. These numbers stubbornly do not decrease over the years. This is devastating for many families across the world and it sets us back from achieving the current SDG target.

Road accidents represent the leading cause of death for young people. Lower income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are disproportionately affected. All of this makes road deaths even more of an injustice, that needs to be urgently addressed.

This is so unacceptable, particularly given that these fatalities can be often prevented and their impacts reduced.

This is unacceptable because roads should instead be the avenues to greater prosperity, better education, accessible health services and cleaner air; not a means for disability, death, burden on health systems and families. Road safety death record is shocking when compared with the maritime, air, and rail sectors where together there are less than 10,000 deaths each year.

In recent years, Member States, United Nations, other intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental partners, multilateral development banks, and academic institutions have been acting to reduce the dangers of the world's roads. The UN system has been mobilized, legal instruments developed, good practices and policy recommendations published, a Special Envoy for Road Safety appointed, and a UN Road Safety Fund established.

This is a solid foundation, but it is clearly not enough.

As we play our part in the Decade of Action, we need to approach road safety differently because we should not expect different results by doing more of the same.

We need to ensure that safety is a measurable indicator and outcome in the building our transport systems; in the vehicles, infrastructure and related technologies that are developed and introduced to markets. If we continue to flood our transport systems with unworthy elements, which bring devastation to our citizens, we will not achieve our vision of safe and sustainable transport for all.

I count on all private, public and civil society stakeholders to take ownership of their respective responsibilities – putting safety at the forefront of your actions, investments and products. Safety determines quality and value, in transport.

I commend your urgent call to make the world's roads safe and to put safety as the cornerstone of our relevant efforts.

Thank you.