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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

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ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY

Follow-up to General Assembly Resolutions on the Global Road Safety Crisis

Note by the secretariat

The present note has been prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairman of WP.1 as requested by the Bureau of the Committee at its session in December 2003.

I. Background

1. On 29 May 2003, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/57/309, which in its preamble affirmed “the need for a worldwide effort to raise awareness of the importance of road safety as a public policy issue, especially through education and the dissemination of information”. It also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly (GA) on the global road safety crisis taking into consideration the views expressed by Member States and the relevant organs and agencies of the United Nations system.

2. The report of the Secretary-General recommended that the GA “*call for efforts by the UN system to address the global road safety crisis. In particular it is recommended that the relevant agencies be assisted in the development of additional activities commensurate with the magnitude of the problem and that a coordinating body be identified within the United Nations system to facilitate and coordinate these efforts within the United Nations and among United Nations and multilateral agencies*” (document A/58/228^{1/}, paragraph 44 (a)).

^{1/} Available at this address: <http://www.unece.org/trans/roadsafe/rs crisis.html>

3. On 5 November 2003, upon consideration of the report of the Secretary General, the General Assembly adopted a second Resolution on the global road safety crisis (document A/RES/58/9)^{1/}. The Resolution announces, in particular, that the GA will hold a plenary meeting on 14 April 2004 in connection with the World Health Day and the launching of the World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention. It also requests that a meeting of experts, the private sector, relevant non-governmental organizations, members of the civil society and other interested parties, including the media, be organized on the morning of 15 April 2004, in conjunction with the plenary meeting, to raise awareness and exchange information on best road practices. In addition, in operative paragraph 3, the Resolution “*invites the Economic and Social Council, working with other relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, and through its regional commissions, to facilitate the exchange of information on best road traffic safety practices and the development of recommendations for road traffic injury control*”.

4. Several countries and organizations at the session of the GA requested that the Resolution also identifies the coordinating body recommended in the report of the Secretary-General and proposed the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) for such a global role. However, there was no consensus at that time and the Resolution makes no reference thereto.

5. The subject of the global road safety body might, nevertheless, be raised at the plenary session of the GA on 14 April 2004 and, therefore, it is important that WP.1 itself and the Inland Transport Committee discusses this issue before that session. The present note intends to be a basis for such a discussion. However, for problems of timing, it is presented first to the Committee. The Committee may provide guidance to WP.1 and, subsequently WP.1 will take a final and more detailed position on the issue.

II. The Case for a Global WP.1

6. Road safety is increasingly a global issue. In all countries of the world, road transport is growing at a fast pace. One of the unfortunate consequences of this development is the growth in the number of road traffic accidents and victims. While, at a global level, there are very different situations from one country or group of countries to another, all Governments face similar types of problems. In particular, the establishment of road traffic regulations that ensure a high level of road traffic safety is a common endeavour of all Governments worldwide. The question of a global body to deal with this issue is, therefore, an appropriate one. This body should rather be an organization within the United Nations system. What UN organ has experience and expertise in road safety? Only the UNECE, and more particularly WP.1. Could WP.1 take up successfully this global challenge?

7. To judge the results, it certainly could. In the past three decades in the UNECE region, while road traffic increased roughly by a factor of 3, the number of persons killed on the roads per year has been reduced to about one half. It can be said that participation of Governments and relevant organizations in the work of WP.1 and the implementation of the road traffic regulations

negotiated in its framework have notably contributed to such a reduction. Those regulations are contained mainly in the Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals and in the European Agreements supplementing them. It can, therefore, be assumed that participation in WP.1 activities and effective implementation of those regulations could also help other countries reduce the number of accidents and victims on their roads.

8. The basic instruments, i.e. the Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals, which are already applied in more than 50 countries, including many non-UNECE countries, are open to all UN Member States. In addition, WP.1 is currently restructuring and updating Consolidated Resolutions RE.1 on Road Traffic and RE.2 on Road Signs and Signals in order to encompass all regulations that are not mandatory and, therefore, develop a compendium of best road traffic practices, which could be used at global level. Governments and relevant NGO's participate in the work of WP.1 (see annex).

9. The UNECE Inland Transport Committee has experience with global bodies. It supervises the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29). Although the nature of the work of WP.29 and its implementation is different from those of WP.1, WP.29 is a global body. In addition, the Committee follows closely the work of the ECOSOC Committee and its two Sub-Committees of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the GHS, which are also global. The UNECE Transport Division ensures the secretariat also to these bodies.

10. In addition, it can be considered that the combination of WP.29, which deals with vehicle safety issues, and WP.1, which covers traffic rules and the human component, could create powerful synergies for addressing road traffic safety at the world-wide level.

III. Possible Role of a Global WP.1

11. The main goal of WP.1 is to set up the conditions for minimizing the risk of road accidents and reducing their consequences. To this end, it develops and updates the Conventions and Agreements that establish the rules of the road for road traffic. **This task would remain the central task of a future global WP.1.** Although adapted so as to make other countries benefit from its work, the future functions of WP.1 would remain basically the same as today, namely:

- (a) Development and updating of the Agreements and Conventions aimed at improving road traffic safety, including the Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals and the European Agreements supplementing them;
- (b) Updating of Consolidated Resolutions on Road Traffic (R.E.1) and on Road Signs and Signals (R.E.2);
- (c) Collection and dissemination of information on national road safety legal provisions;
- (d) Organization of Road Safety Weeks every four years. These campaigns would not limit themselves to the UNECE region but would be organized in other countries as well;

(e) Exchange of experiences and best practices on road traffic and road traffic safety. This aspect would assume greater importance given the very different levels of expertise in this area that global participation would entail. One half day or a day of WP.1 sessions could be devoted to in-depth discussion of a specific road safety issue of interest to, e.g. developing countries.

12. As a new function, there may be a need for advisory services, training and technical assistance to countries in need thereof, in particular as to accession to and implementation of the Vienna Conventions and other relevant instruments.

13. The mandate/terms of reference of WP.1, including a more detailed and refined description of this role and functions would have to be rewritten by WP.1.

IV. Resource implications

14. WP.1 could become a global forum without additional resources, at least at the beginning. The present staff members could absorb the tasks of: addressing letters to all Governments members of the United Nations and organizations concerned in order to obtain the nomination of focal points on road safety; extending the list of recipients of WP.1 documents to those focal points; ensuring the sending of WP.1 documents to all of them. Volunteers from WP.1, who would be ready to travel to these countries, possibly using their country's development assistance budget, could provide advisory services, training and technical assistance to countries in need thereof and on their request. This could also be done by organizations under the supervision of WP.1.

15. The effectiveness of this arrangement would, however, be relatively limited. Providing more substantial value added and assistance at the global level would require some additional resources. For the additional substantive and administrative work to be carried out and for the organization of, e.g. one workshop a year in a different region, possibly hosted by a UN regional commission, a minimum of an additional P post would be needed. Financing of the travel costs of participants and the secretariat to the workshops would also be necessary.

16. Another activity that would be worth undertaking would be the world-wide collection of accident statistics. However, this task would be better ensured by WP.6. To this end, the secretariat would send the current road accident questionnaire to all countries and publish a global bulletin. The UNECE would be the only body providing such information, which is essential to understand the scope of the road safety problem. However, this task would require a further P post and a GS (Statistical Assistant) post in the secretariat.

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Annex

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN WP.1

The Members of WP.1 are the representatives of the 55 UNECE Member States.

The following international organizations participate in WP.1 work: European Commission (EC), European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT), the World Health Organization (WHO).

The following non-governmental organizations also participate in the work of WP.1: International Organization for Standardization (ISO); International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; European Federation of Road Traffic Victims (FEVR); International Federation of Motorcyclists (IFM); International Touring Alliance/International Automobile Federation (AIT/FIA); International Road Federation (IRF); International Motorcycle Manufacturers Association (IMMA); Federation of European Motorcyclists Associations (FEMA); International Road Safety Organization (PRI); International Driving Tests Committee (CIECA); the Institute for Traffic Care (ITC); International Road Transport Union (IRU); Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP); International Federation of Pedestrians (FIP); Liaison Committee for the Manufacture of Automobile Equipment and Spare Parts (CLEPA); the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF); FIA Foundation; Confédération internationale des Associations d'Experts et Conseils (CIDADE).
