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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 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 an exchange of views on a possible future expansion of its activities for road safety cooperation and knowledge sharing globally. Among those activities is the exchange of best practices in road safety accumulated in developed countries with economies in transition in or outside the UNECE region.

4. WP.1 agreed that broadening its scope might be a positive development, provided that a comprehensive assessment of its possible future work is made and that subsequent steps are taken gradually and cautiously. Therefore, WP.1 asked the secretariat to prepare a roadmap on the possible ways for WP.1 to move forward and contribute to the Global Road Safety.
5. Based on that request, the UNECE Transport Division, acting as Secretariat to WP.1, has prepared for its fifty-fifth session a comprehensive Informal Document No.1 which is a reflection paper containing an analysis of the status and a list of possible steps to be taken.
6. The Working Party considered Informal Document No.1, indicated strategic directions to be followed and formulated a number of recommendations with regard to the feasibility, in terms of human, time and financial resources, of the proposed activities.
7. The present document was prepared by the secretariat, with support from a small group of volunteers. The documents present the strengths and weaknesses of WP.1, the opportunities for and threats faced by WP.1 in its efforts to contribute to global road safety, as well as an Action Plan containing actions feasible in the short, medium and longterm.
8. At its fifty-sixth session, WP.1 is expected to consider the present document, drafted in accordance with the guidance given, and possibly approve it, with a view to submitting it to the approval of the Inland Transport Committee at its seventy-first session in 2009.

I. STRENGTHS OF WP.1

9. 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.
10. The achievements of WP.1 may be summarized as follows:
 - (a) Elaboration and constant updating of the Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals of 1968, 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 World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Regional Commissions, which took place from 23 to 29 April 2007;

- (e) Regular compilation and dissemination by UNECE road traffic accident statistics in Europe and North America (<http://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp6/transstatpub.html>). 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.

11. 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.

12. Interest in improving road traffic safety among United Nations member states from all the regions has constantly increased.

II. WEAKNESSES OF WP.1

13. Some of UNECE road traffic safety activities were financially supported by donors (e.g. Italy, FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society and the European Commission). However, 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.

14. The lack of adequate resources at national level as well as in the secretariat are significant obstacles 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.

15. The UNECE's road traffic accident statistics database is not publicized enough and is not used by WP.1 to improve the visibility of its work and reposition itself in the global road safety environment. The data coverage and the periodicity and reliability of data are highly depending on the feedback from countries.

16. Inadequate infrastructure is among the five major causes of bad road traffic safety. The UNECE has developed a web tool which could provide information on the actual technical parameters and standards of the European Agreement on main international traffic arteries (AGR) but the inventory of standards is not yet finalized for the E-road network in UNECE member States. Such an inventory can only be done based on reliable, timely feedback from countries.

III. OPPORTUNITIES FOR WP.1 CONTRIBUTING TO GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY

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

17. The project on “Improving global road safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets” has received funding of about \$US660,000 from the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) and it will 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.

18. 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. It is planned to hold a global ministerial conference on road safety under the auspices of the United Nations for the first time in 2010. The results of this project would be discussed by that Conference and might lead to the establishment of a global road safety target in the style of the MDGs.

19. The project will be 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.

20. 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

21. Seeking to best utilize WP.1 and United Nations Road Safety Collaboration (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 WP.1 working group consisting of Italy, the Netherlands and the USA proposed to create a supplemental instrument focusing on the high-yield areas of road user behaviors and countermeasures.

22. The proposed instrument is envisioned as a complement to operational rulemaking under the 1968 Vienna Conventions. The proposal, contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.1/2008/4, received support from the United Kingdom and FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society.

23. Under the proposed instrument, science-based best practices addressing road user behavior would be established. To allow countries at different levels of development to adopt the best

practices, a series of benchmarks would be established for each best practice to allow different countries to progress in stages to adopt best practices addressing behavioral road safety issues (e.g. seat belt use, alcohol and driving, speeding, etc.).

24. By explicitly combining WP.1's significant road traffic safety expertise and WHO's experience in designing and delivering public health solutions, the creation of such a strategy would be in line with directives from the Inland Transport Committee and United Nations General Assembly calling on WP.1 to work more closely with the UNRSC (ITC: ECE/TRANS162; UNGA: A/RES/58/289) to proactively develop solutions to the transport, economic, and social facets of the road traffic safety crisis. 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". The small WP.1 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 WP.29. In this potential option, the instrument is 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 behavior 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

25. 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

26. 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 could be shared and multiplied at the WP.1 level.

E. World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility

27. 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. Financing at the country level has now commenced with stand-alone activities and through complementing new and existing multilateral development bank projects targeting road safety.

IV. THREATS TO THE CONTRIBUTION OF WP.1 TO GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY

28. 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. However, countries with economies in transition having many stringent priorities, the lack of financial resources, political will and commitment are significant obstacles to finding a solution to the road safety crisis.

29. 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.

30. The Vienna Conventions 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 such, preference being given to adapted softer versions.

31. 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.

32. Lack of will and resources to ensure sustainability of the road safety or related programmes/projects impede national and international efforts to improve road safety.

33. All the threats mentioned above are of a general nature but have an impact on WP.1 contributing to the Global Road Safety Crisis.

34. One of the difficulties faced by WP.1, as well as other working groups, is the low level of participation in the meetings by countries that have the most urgent need to have access to knowledge and information about the latest solutions in traffic safety. Unless the ways and means are found to support these countries participation in the WP.1 meetings, the results (even

of an ambitious and creative work program) would be limited.

V. ACTION PLAN

35. 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 play a major role in improving road traffic safety at global level.

A. Strategic directions

36. WP.1 should remain the custodian of the legal instruments that made its fame; at the same time, the creation of thematic ad hoc subgroups, inspired by the structure of the WP.29, are also envisaged, when needed and in a flexible organization. The outcome of their work will be approved by WP.1, which would deal with strategic road safety issues.

37. WP.1 ought to be a global guide in matters of road safety regulations and best practices, applicable at global level and particularly by developing countries. To do so, an in-depth research of the causes leading to bad road safety parameters, on a country-by-country and region-by-region basis would be most useful. 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;

38. 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.

39. 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; the next step could be to institutionalize this “one day joint meeting” practice. Organizing such joint meetings with other partners too should be envisaged, based on mutual interest and possible complementarities.

40. 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 behavior is most valuable and might be spread beyond the EU borders with the specific means of the WP.1.

41. Many of the developed ECE 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 should be shared and multiplied at the WP.1 level. Members of the

WP.1 should be invited to share with the other participants in meetings the lessons learnt as donor/recipient with regard to road traffic safety.

B. Actions feasible on short-term (2008-2009)

42. 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.

43. 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.

44. 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. 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. The Conference, inter alia, could offer the venue for countries to agree upon regional road traffic casualty reduction targets and possibly even decide on a global target, in the style of the Millennium Development Goals. Should this be the case, WP.1 could contribute to the preparatory work.

45. The UNECE’s road traffic accident statistics database is not publicized well enough but it constitutes certainly an asset that should be used by WP.1 to improve visibility and reposition itself in the global road safety environment. Action:

WP.1 will contribute to improving data coverage and the periodicity and reliability of UNECE’s road traffic accident statistics.

46. 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.

47. 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) 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 (2009-2010)

48. 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 "Spear heads" of 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 meetings in other locations than Geneva, under the umbrella 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.

49. 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 as a basis for the establishment of a global road safety target in the style of the MDGs.

50. In light of the fact that the road safety working group of European Conference of the Ministers of Transport (ECMT) has been closed down as part of the ECMT reform and the set up of the International Transport Forum (ITF), it is worth considering what activities that working group has pursued that the WP.1 would like to keep. Action:

Exploring the feasibility of promoting and participating in peer reviews of road safety performance in countries with economies in transition, in cooperation with relevant partners (e.g. the World Bank, donor countries).

D. Actions feasible on long-term (beyond 2011)

51. Road safety is a global problem which needs a global solution. Part of the global solution is given by the existing regulations and best practices but more needs to be done. Action:

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

52. 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:

Setting up cooperation with the iRAP and offering to be associated with it in road safety audits.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

53. WP.1’s achievements are well-known in the UNECE region and beyond. The 1968 Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals respectively have been modernized and their consolidated versions are published. The Resolutions 1 and 2, useful sets of best practices, have also been brought in line with the most recent developments in road traffic safety.

54. The proposed actions present 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.

55. 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.

56. 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.
