Road safety in the Arab States and challenges to implementing the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020

Summary

The present document reviews United Nations efforts since 2011 to improve global road safety, and key activities by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in that field since 2010.

The document considers the results of a survey conducted by ESCWA to gauge road safety and its management in member States in 2017, by tracking road accidents and their consequences over the period 2011-2015.

The document stresses the importance of holding a specialized workshop on road safety in the Arab region, in coordination with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Road Safety, to review road safety issues, notably data accuracy and homogeneity, harmonizing vehicle specifications and traffic safety equipment, and issues related to improving the behaviour of drivers and road users.
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Introduction

1. A 2015 report by the World Health Organization (WHO) on road safety states that road accidents result in the death of around 1.25 million people worldwide per year, and gravely injure approximately 1 million others.\(^1\) Road accidents therefore constitute a major public health issue in the modern world.

2. The United Nations declared 2011-2020 the Decade of Action for Road Safety, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/255 of 2 March 2010 adopted following a recommendation by the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, held in Moscow on 19 and 20 November 2009.\(^2\) The Decade on Road Safety 2011-2020 aims to stabilize the number of road traffic deaths around the world and gradually reduce the forecast level by half by 2020, from around 1.9 million to 900,000.\(^3\)

3. Following a request by the United Nations, WHO prepared a comprehensive report on implementing activities to achieve the objective of the Decade of Action for Road Safety under the following five main pillars: road safety management; safer roads and mobility; safer vehicles; safer road users; and post-crash response.\(^4\)

4. On 29 April 2015, Mr. Jean Todt, President of the International Automobile Federation, was appointed Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Road Safety to assist in securing the political will to make road safety a priority, to stimulate efforts to improve road safety globally, and to provide the necessary funding in coordination with related United Nations organizations and international and regional bodies involved in road safety.\(^5\)

5. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015 entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. Target 3.6 stipulates halving the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020, and target 11.2 stresses the need to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, and improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons by 2030.

6. The United Nations held the Second Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety in Brasilia on 18 and 19 November 2015. The Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety stresses the need to reduce road fatalities and injuries by half by 2020.\(^6\)

had increased by 1.05 per cent between 2010 and 2013, when they should have decreased by 9.3 per cent under the Decade for Action on Road Safety 2011-2020 (figure 1).

Figure 1. Road safety developments in ESCWA member States between 2010 and 2013

Source: www.unescwa.org/events/committee-transport-16th-session.

ESCWA also prepared a guide to establish or activate national road safety management systems, based on the formation of national road safety agencies guided by national observatories tasked with monitoring road accidents and their consequences by providing accurate data, so as to establish or activate coordination mechanisms, such as national councils and technical committees, and set out their functions and tasks (figure 2). It should be noted that national councils and committees on road safety do not supplant the specialized road safety agencies specified in the ESCWA guide, which is based on global best practices in this field.

Figure 2. Components of a proposed national system for road safety management


Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic were excluded because of a lack of data for comparison between 2010 and 2013.
9. Road safety has been included in the geographic information system (GIS) for transport in member States, which ESCWA is developing in collaboration with UNIFEL, where road safety is observed in the general information layer at the national level, and the road safety index is observed in the road layer of the GIS.

10. Road safety was also tackled under the SDGs at a technical workshop on strategic planning for sustainable transport in the State of Palestine, held in Beirut on 24 and 25 April 2017. The workshop was attended by high-level staff members from the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Palestine.

11. ESCWA participated in the second United Nations Coordination Meeting on Road Safety, held in Geneva on 3 November 2017. Participants discussed disparities in data and lack of homogeneity; the need to establish a regional road safety observatory to resolve such difficulties by coordinating national data and ensuring their accuracy and conformity with related WHO standards; and the importance of securing funding to establish the observatory. It was agreed with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Road Safety to organize a high-level workshop on road safety in the Arab region, attended by senior officials in that field in Arab countries, to be held at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut in May 2018. The workshop will review road safety challenges in the Arab region, notably data accuracy and homogeneity, harmonizing vehicle specifications and traffic safety equipment, and improving driver and road user safety.

12. ESCWA continues to support the Master on Road Safety Management programme, developed in 2012 at Saint Joseph University in Beirut with assistance from Renault. ESCWA conducts lectures and invites students to training sessions on road safety at its headquarters, and assists the University’s administration in organizing seminars and regional training sessions on road safety.

II. RESULTS OF THE 2017 ROAD SAFETY SURVEY IN ESCWA MEMBER STATES

13. In the summer of 2017, a survey was conducted to gauge the status of road safety in member States, to better understand road safety issues, monitor progress, and assist in developing plans to improve road safety and its management in the future. The survey was conducted online via Survey Monkey, following a written communication to national technical coordinators of the Committee on Transport and Logistics.

Deaths from road accidents in Arab countries, 2010-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responding country</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
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<td>2382</td>
<td>2494</td>
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<td>958</td>
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<td>2703</td>
<td>3118</td>
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<td>16565</td>
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</table>

Source: ESCWA survey on the status of road safety in member States, 2017.

Note: Countries are ranked by the date in which they participated in the online survey.
14. By 1 December 2017, 13 countries had sent full or partial responses to the survey, namely Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritanian Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen. The table shows changes in the number of deaths from road accidents over the period 2010-2015 in those countries.

15. The table indicates a 5.2 per cent increase in road deaths between 2011 and 2012, followed by a 4.8 per cent drop in 2013 and a 7.4 per cent decrease in 2014. Figure 3 reveals changes in total road deaths over the period 2011-2017 in participating countries. Figure 4 compares the number of road deaths in member States in 2013 and 2014.

Figure 3. Annual changes in road deaths over the period 2011-2014

Source: ESCWA, based on the results of the survey on the status of road safety in member States, 2017.

Figure 4. Road deaths in member States in 2013 and 2014

Source: ESCWA, based on the results of the survey on the status of road safety in member States, 2017.
16. The workshop to be held in May 2018 is expected to include a presentation on the survey results, in
view of responses from member States up until that date; on country explanations of significant increases or
decreases in the number of road deaths over the period of the survey; and on the relationship between those
developments and policies and measures under implementation over that period.

III. CONCLUSION

17. Given the importance of road safety globally and in the Arab region, the secretariat is coordinating with
the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Road Safety to hold a two-day high-level workshop on road
safety in the Arab region in May 2018. The workshop will consider road safety issues in Arab countries.
Representatives of member States are invited to participate in the workshop, and to prepare by completing the
survey on road safety and by reviewing key challenges and possible solutions.