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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT

OF THE WORKSHOP FOR SETTING REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ROAD TRAFFIC CASUALTY REDUCTION TARGETS IN THE ESCWA REGION ABU DHABI, 16-17 JUNE 2009

Summary

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the National Transport Authority (NTA) of Abu Dhabi organized a workshop for setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets in the ESCWA region. The workshop took place in the context of the Global Road Safety project of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA), and was held to assist low and middle-income countries to develop regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets and provide them with examples of good road safety practice that could help them to: achieve road safety targets by 2015; review current road safety statistics; set ambitious but achievable targets for reducing road traffic deaths and injuries by 2012; take appropriate measures to meet these targets; and discuss road safety management in ESCWA member countries. A set of recommendations was adopted at the end of the meeting.

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Introduction

1. A workshop for setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets in the ESCWA region was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the National Transport Authority (NTA) of Abu Dhabi. The workshop was held on 16-17 June 2009 at the Shangri-La Hotel in Abu Dhabi. More than 75 participants from 13 ESCWA member countries attended the workshop. Participants included Government delegates and representatives of private sector companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
2. The workshop was held to assist low and middle-income countries to develop regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets and provide them with examples of good road safety practice and to help them achieve selected targets by 2015. The workshop was also organized to: review current road safety statistics; set ambitious but achievable targets for reducing road traffic deaths and injuries by 2012, adopt appropriate measures to meet these targets; and discuss road safety management initiatives in developing countries, especially in ESCWA member countries. This workshop is the fourth in a series of workshops that have been held to deal with road safety issues. The three other workshops dealt with the Implementation of Good Practice in Road Safety (Muscat, 28-29 November 2005), Capacity-Building of the National Focal Points of the First United Nations Global Road Safety Week (Cairo, 20-21 December 2006), and Building the Arab Mashreq Road Safety Partnership (Doha, 21-22 October 2008).

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Workshop participants agreed on the need to set regional and national road traffic casualty figures. The participants highlighted the importance of road safety measures and proposed the adoption of the following recommendations:

(a) Disseminate the lessons and good practice adopted in other developing countries to achieve road safety targets at low cost and within short time frames to Government authorities responsible for road safety in the ESCWA region;

(b) Ensure that ESCWA member countries maintain reliable databases on road crashes. Countries should therefore adopt and improve existing methodologies for data collection and establish or enhance existing national computerized databases on road crashes. Member countries are also encouraged to become members of the International Road Traffic and Accident Database (IRTAD) or to use the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) glossary and database on road traffic accidents;

(c) Set a regional (ESCWA) target of 30 per cent reduction of road crash fatalities by 2015. Member countries are encouraged to initiate and activate national road safety councils and implement appropriate interventions, including speed enforcement, use of seatbelts and helmets, treatment of accidents locations, improved training and licensing of drivers, and establish proper emergency and first aid services, etc.;

(d) Encourage member countries that have not yet set road safety targets to produce evidence-based casualty reduction targets for 2015 and beyond;

(e) Invite member countries to provide ESCWA with national reports on their respective road safety management programmes, plans for setting targets to reduce traffic fatalities, and the activities, actions and legislation they have implemented or adopted since 2005 – the year which ESCWA initiated road safety activities in the region. Contributions should reach ESCWA before 30 August 2009 to make it possible for a report to be prepared on the progress and achievements in road safety in the ESCWA region to be presented to the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety (Moscow, 19-20 November 2009);

(f) Encourage member countries to become contracting parties to United Nations legal instruments on road safety and ensure that they implement these instruments once they adhere to these instruments;

(g) Request the ESCWA secretariat to continue to provide capacity-building and technical support to member countries on road safety issues and all other related issues;

(h) Request the ESCWA secretariat to consider participating in working structures in other United Nations regional commissions and other regional, interregional and international fora, in order to represent the interest of member countries;

(i) Advise member countries to send high-level delegations to the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety (Moscow, 19-20 November 2009) as it will be the First Global United Nations Decade Ministerial meeting on road safety issue.

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Two sessions were held on the first day to discuss the progress made in setting targets and strategies in the ESCWA region and review recent data on road traffic accidents. On the second day, two other sessions took place to review the progress in the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) Project and examine the role of NGOs in road safety related issues. The meeting ended with a round table discussion and the adoption of the final report.

A. PROGRESS IN ROAD SAFETY MANAGEMENT: PLANS AND STRATEGIES

5. Mr. Bassam Anani, Officer-in-Charge of the Transport and Trade Section, Economic Development and Globalization Division at ESCWA, thanked the NTA of the United Arab Emirates for hosting the workshop. He presented the overall situation of road safety in the ESCWA region and the current major road safety obstacles. He reviewed recent ESCWA regional and global conferences, meetings and workshops and their role in assisting countries in the region. He also gave an overview on the feedback from the questionnaire on the status of road safety in the ESCWA region, and stressed the need to identify road safety targets, and gave examples of potential interventions.

6. Mr. Abdelnaser Al-Awamleh from the Public Security Directorate, Ministry of the Interior, Jordan presented the activities of the Supreme Council for Road Safety and the important role it played in the implementation of policies and strategies. He indicated that as part of the national road safety plan, a new strategy has been adopted. He pointed out that the number of accidents decreased by 8.6 per cent between 2007 and 2008. The Council is currently working towards increasing the role of the private sector in order to achieve these goals.

7. Mr. Abdullah Salem Al-Kathiri, Executive Director of Land Transport at the NTA gave a presentation on the NTA and the Roadway, Transportation and Traffic Safety Research Centre at the United Arab Emirates University. The presentation contained important statistical data, information on the road traffic data collection methodology used by the NTA and a description of the strategies and studies prepared by road safety stakeholders in the United Arab Emirates. He concluded by presenting key recommendations for achieving road safety targets.

8. Mr. Hassan Al-Muhandes, Director of Roads Planning and Design Directorate, Ministry of Works, Bahrain indicated that his country had taken the initiative to be at the forefront of Arab countries in developing a road traffic safety strategy. The year-long project was launched in 2006 and has been adopted by the Higher Committee for Road Safety in Bahrain. A vital aim of the project was to reduce serious and fatal injuries by 30 per cent between 2006 and 2016. As part of the project, a new unit was established to follow up on strategic matters and manage the implementation of a 5 year road safety plan.

9. Mr. Rajeh Sarea, Deputy Minister of Land Transport, Ministry of Transport, Syrian Arab Republic noted that several agencies were responsible for road safety in the country. He indicated that the target for 2009 is to reduce the number of road fatalities by 10 per cent, compared to 2008. This goal could only be achieved by, among others, improving road conditions and through law enforcement, awareness-raising campaigns and better health services. He reported that the total number of accidents decreased by 9.33 per cent in 2008.

10. Mr. Malik Munir Ahmed Mohamed from the Ministry of Transport, Roads and Bridges, the Sudan gave an overview of the main reasons for car crashes in the Sudan. He reported that roads in the Sudan are

mostly highways and that one of the main causes for car crashes in the country is the poor vehicle conditions of drivers and companies. Mr. Mohamed indicated that weak infrastructure and poor, and sometimes inexistent road lighting within urban areas, are also responsible for this situation. These conditions are directly related to the lack of financial resources and the difficult economic situation faced by the country. In addition, careless and dangerous driving and a lack of attention to road signs on the part of pedestrians, contribute significantly to the problem.

11. Mr. Ahmad Ben Sultan Al-Nabhani, Assistant Director General Traffic, Directorate General of Traffic, Royal Oman Police, Oman gave an overview on the progress of road safety initiatives in his country. He pointed out that the legal system has been updated to achieve the greatest degree of traffic control on the roads. The introduction of fixed and mobile speed controls helped to identify more than two million road traffic violations in 2008. He presented the activities of the Traffic Safety Institute in Oman which is specialized in training and rehabilitation and said that by the end 2008, 3,132 students had graduated from the Institute and that 245 programmes had been implemented.

12. Mr. Mazen Abulsoud, Road Safety Advisor in the Ministry of Transportation of Palestine presented the activities and objectives of the Higher Traffic Safety Council. The main objective of the Council is the establishment of a strategic road safety plan and the reduction of road casualties. These objectives would be guaranteed by implementing existing and legislating new traffic laws. The Ministry of Transportation also aims to create an electronic database of road crashes and related injuries. Mr. Abulsoud indicated that the Council will introduce road traffic check points and fines for traffic violations, and that traffic information will be disseminated through the media. An awareness-raising campaign will take place at schools to educate school children on road safety issues.

13. Mr. Joseph Doueihy, General Directorate of Internal Security Forces, Ministry of Interior of Lebanon, described traffic accidents in Lebanon as a national disaster. In 2008, the Internal Security Forces reported 4,770 traffic accidents, which resulted in 478 fatalities and 6,882 injuries. The age of the victims ranged between 18 and 40 years. The number of injuries and fatalities increased between 2000 and 2008. The cost of road crashes in Lebanon exceeded 1.8 per cent of the national income, or about US\$ 770 million annually. He pointed out that national authorities in Lebanon are now striving to develop and implement road safety initiatives through road safety awareness-raising campaigns in various educational establishments, enhancing roads and strengthening the role of the police.

14. Mr. Tarek Mostafa Gosty, Director of the Department of Traffic Engineering and Safety, Ministry of Transport, Saudi Arabia said that there is an ongoing effort to improve road traffic safety in the country and this will be achieved through the introduction of a new traffic system. This system will mainly focus on safety measures and sanctions. He pointed out that the General Department of Traffic is responsible for the strategic implementation of the Arab Traffic Safety plan. He presented the national transport strategy, which includes guidance and procedures on transportation and safety. He clarified that, since the introduction of this strategy and its implementation traffic accidents in Riyadh decreased from 420 to 315 incidents in the five years following the adoption of the strategy. Road traffic authorities will soon be implementing a new traffic control system and automatic monitoring of irregularities.

15. A discussion followed on the assessment of progress in road safety management, the need for more reliable data, and the challenges facing the implementation of road safety strategies.

B. REVIEW OF CASUALTY REDUCTION: FACTS AND TARGETS

16. Ms. Janelle Grady, Managing Director of Educating Global, New Zealand, outlined her country's experience in setting targets. She highlighted the essential steps that were needed to move from the formulation of targets to the implementation of a vision. The number of road traffic fatalities in New Zealand has been falling in recent years. The target for 2010 is to reduce road casualties to no more than 300 deaths per year. Education must be seen as an integral component of all initiatives, this was supported with an example of a school-based education initiative involving police and teachers.

17. Dr. Junaid Razzak, Assistant Professor, Head of Emergency Medicine, Aga Khan University, Pakistan discussed a system-based approach to trauma care. He highlighted the difference between setting up trauma centres and trauma systems. Discussing available evidence on effective trauma systems and its components, he identified an 8 per cent mortality reduction over 10-15 years as a more realistic target. He suggested that a trauma system will be only effective if it is based on solid research and contains a strong education component and involvement in injury prevention activities.

18. Ms. Lina Shbeeb, ESCWA Consultant, presented a cross-country comparison of road traffic safety indicators and reviewed road traffic safety management in Bahrain, Egypt and Jordan. She highlighted the characteristics of road safety targets. Ms. Shbeeb reviewed the status of road safety in the ESCWA region in the recent years. She concluded by introducing the best laws and initiatives adopted in various ESCWA member countries.

19. A discussion followed on casualty reduction, particular emphasis was given to the importance of data as it forms the backbone to setting and evaluating targets.

C. REGIONAL PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNDA PROJECT

20. The second day of the workshop was dedicated to an assessment of progress made in the implementation of the UNDA Project and reviewing international support to help countries reduce road traffic casualties. The main outcomes of these two sessions are summarized below.

21. Ms. Virginia Tanase, Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), introduced the UNDA Project and the expected outcomes. In response to interventions by participants who stressed the need for harmonization of road safety initiatives, Ms. Tanase gave a comprehensive presentation on United Nations legal instruments and sets of best practice on road traffic, road signs and other road safety components. All these legal instruments, along with participation in the ECE Road Traffic Safety Forum, are open to United Nations Member States, irrespective of their geographical location.

22. Ms. Thanattaporn Rasamit, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) summarized the road safety situation in ESCAP region. She presented the eight ESCAP goals included in the Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific, and the targets and indicators for monitoring progress towards the goal of saving 600,000 lives and preventing a commensurate number of serious injuries on the roads of Asia and the Pacific between 2007 and 2015. The presentation included updates on road safety actions and national goals and targets set by three ESCAP Member States, namely Indonesia, Japan and the Republic of Korea. The presentation concluded with some of the issues and challenges faced by ESCAP Member States.

23. Mr. Vojtech Eksler, European Transport Safety Council (ETSC), explained that in 2002, the European Union set an ambitious target of halving the number of road victims between 2001 and 2010. A large number of lives have been saved, especially in Western Europe, through improved road safety management practice in European Union countries and new European Union road traffic legislation. Yet, the European Union is very unlikely to meet the target by 2010, with only five countries at sight of 17. However, the experience of these five countries shows the way forward. The new European Union countries need to establish a road injury target and the 17 countries should introduce more accountability and professionalism.

24. Ms. Rita Cuyppers, Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) Foundation discussed the campaign for global road safety, aiming for a US\$ 300 million and launch a 10 year action plan to increase the road safety capacities of low and middle-income countries. Dedicating 10 per cent of funding to build new roads or upgrade existing ones on road safety design, engineering or evaluation, would lead to safer roads. The United Nations Decade for Road Safety Action (2010-2020) aims for a 50 per cent reduction in the estimated growth of road traffic fatalities and injuries by 2020.

25. After the presentations, a discussion took place on the need to adopt best practice in road safety. Such practice would help countries to set and formulate their own targets.

D. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

26. Ms. Nathalie Pereira, Road Safety Project Manager in the International Road Federation (IRF), pointed out that existing challenges to road safety can be addressed by developing clear policies and strategies and incorporating engineering, law enforcement, education and evaluation components. Simultaneously goals and targets must be established and measured while taking into account the input of stakeholders and aligning these policies/strategies under national programmes.

27. Ms. Nellie El-Ghussayni, Regional Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Road Safety Partnership (MENARSP) introduced the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) and MENARSP and said that they played an important role in reducing road fatalities and promoting regional collaboration on road safety. She stressed the importance of data collection for setting targets and identified road crash and injury indicators, and proposed a methodology to improve data collection and analysis.

28. After the presentations, a discussion took place on the need and role to adopt road safety strategies in the region. The discussion focused on the need to use electronic tools to monitor road crashes and establish links between existing databases.

29. A round table discussion took place on emerging issues and the principal recommendations and conclusions of the workshop. A series of proposed activities were also explored and debated.

III. OPENING OF THE WORKSHOP

30. Mr. Nasser Saif Al-Mansouri, General Manager of the NTA, on behalf of Sheikh Hamdan bin Mubarak Al-Nahyan, Minister of Public Works and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the NTA, welcomed the participants and highlighted the efforts of the United Arab Emirates in raising road traffic safety levels. He indicated that NTA objectives are to ensure the highest levels of traffic safety, to provide optimal health standards, and the development of laws regulating the rights and duties of road users. These objectives will be accomplished in cooperation with strategic partners to reduce accidents and mortality rates and match with the United Arab Emirates standards.

31. Mr. Nabil Safwat, Chief, Economic Development and Globalization Division at ESCWA delivered a statement on the behalf of Mr. Bader AlDafa, Executive Secretary of ESCWA. Mr. Safwat reviewed regional efforts of ESCWA to reduce losses from road traffic accidents in the region, and that developing countries are the most vulnerable to traffic accidents. ESCWA has issued reports, launched awareness-raising programmes and supervised a number of related activities, workshops and conferences, but the major responsibility remains on member countries who need to adopt relevant initiatives and strive to reduce the devastating effects of road traffic accidents, and prepare national strategies to reduce such accidents. This requires concerted efforts on the part of a number of institutions and governmental and non-governmental organizations at the national, regional and international level.

IV. CLOSING OF THE WORKSHOP

32. At the conclusion of the workshop, participants thanked ESCWA for organizing the workshop. Participants also extended their thanks to H.E. Sheikh Hamdan bin Mubarak for his patronage of the workshop, and to the NTA for their hospitality and co-organizing the workshop. At the end of the workshop, participants were invited to the Emirates Driving Company (EDC) for a technical visit.

Annex*

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