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Item 12 of the provisional agenda

ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY

Proposal to hold a Global Ministerial Conference in 2008

Note by the secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 2 November 2006, the Director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Transport Division received a letter from Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, Chairman of the independent Commission for Global Road Safety^{1/}, asking for the support of the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) and the Committee on Inland Transport (ITC) for the idea of holding a Global Ministerial Conference on road safety in 2008 under the auspices of the United Nations.

2. The text of the letter from Lord Robertson is reproduced in the annex to the present document.

II. CONSIDERATION BY WP.1

3. At its 50th session (Geneva, 7-10 November 2006), the WP.1 considered this proposal and decided as follows:

^{1/} The Commission for Global Road Safety is made up of the following members: Mr. Rosario Alessi (Italy); Dr. Andrey Kortunov (Russia); Dr. John Llewellyn (UK); Dr. Mark Rosenberg (USA); Professor Gérard Saillant (France); Mr. Michael Schumacher (Germany); Ms. Tayce Wakefield (Canada) and Mr. Shigeo Watanabe (Japan).

“In principle, WP.1 considered that the idea of organizing a global ministerial conference on road safety in 2008 deserved to be supported, but questioned its relevance in the absence of any clear orientation regarding its objectives. If the holding of the conference were to be approved, it agreed that the objectives should be clearly defined beforehand and set out in an agenda targeting the problems. The conference should, in the opinion of WP.1, stress as a priority the problems encountered by developing or transition countries. Moreover, the WP.1 noted the suggestion that the Conference could be held in the framework of the annual Verona conference. Whatever the final decision, the WP.1 considered that the Conference should bring together Ministers responsible for road safety in countries, whether it be the Minister of Transport or the Minister of Interior.

The idea of developing a new road safety Convention for low and middle-income countries was not supported by WP.1, which was of the opinion that the existing Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals were quite sufficient and that the priority was to encourage countries to adhere to those Conventions. In this respect, WP.1 underlined that the consolidated versions of the Vienna Conventions currently under preparation would help to facilitate such new accessions and that the Consolidated Resolution on Road Traffic (R.E.1) which was being completely updated as well as the consolidated versions of the Vienna Conventions would be important reference tools for such a global conference.”

III. POINT OF VIEW OF THE SECRETARIAT

4. In the opinion of the secretariat, this Conference, although representing a considerable organizational challenge, could nevertheless contribute significantly to the development of road safety in countries which need it the most and could promote wider application in those countries of the Vienna Conventions and other instruments (like R.E.1), which have been developed by the ITC and its subsidiary bodies.

IV. REQUEST TO ITC

5. In light of the discussion in WP.1 reflected above, the ITC is also requested to consider the proposal made by the Commission for Global Road Safety regarding the holding of a global ministerial conference in 2008. To this end, the secretariat has, at the request of WP.1, prepared the present note in order to facilitate discussion during the session.

Annex

Letter from Lord Robertson, Chairman of the Commission for Global Road Safety

As you know, I am currently serving as the Chairman of the independent Commission for Global Road Safety. I am pleased to enclose a copy of the Commission's report, *Make Roads Safe*, which was published this summer, and I am grateful to you for providing valued input to the report during its preparation.

Our report highlights the potential of the international community to work together to reduce the rising number of people killed and seriously injured in road traffic crashes worldwide. *Make Roads Safe* identifies a number of priority actions that we recommend in order to begin to reverse the rise in road traffic injuries in low- and middle-income countries.

One of our key recommendations is to propose that a global Ministerial Road Safety Conference be held under the auspices of the United Nations to review progress in meeting the recommendations of the WHO/World Bank *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*, to examine road safety's contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and to promote good practice in road traffic injury prevention. Such a meeting would also be an important opportunity to encourage wider participation in the 1968 Vienna Convention and perhaps to develop a new Convention based on best practice that could take into account the circumstances of low- and middle-income countries.

Our Commission has been in contact with a number of Governments about this proposal. We have now received the support and encouragement of the Italian Prime Minister, Mr. Romano Prodi, who has indicated that the annual Verona Road Safety Conference might be reconfigured to become a global meeting of road safety ministers in the future. The British International Development Secretary, Hilary Benn, has also given his support for a proposed global Ministerial meeting and has written to Kofi Annan to confirm this. Meanwhile, the UN Ambassador for Oman, Mr. Fuad Al Hinai, who has played a key role in securing UN resolutions on global road safety in the UN General Assembly, is also supportive of the proposal.

Clearly, much work would need to be done to clarify the date, location and output of a proposed Ministerial meeting. However, the current work of the UNECE, together with the other regional commissions, the UN Collaboration led by the WHO, and the new World Bank Global Safety Facility provides a very strong platform for a Ministerial meeting.

Given the longstanding role of the Working Party in leading international initiatives on road traffic safety as exemplified by the Vienna Convention and, more recently, in proposing next year's UN Global Road Safety Week, we would be very grateful for the provisional support of the Working Party to further examine the possibility of a Ministerial Meeting. Assuming that WP.1 agrees that the proposal is of interest, we would ask that WP.1 refer the question to the next meeting of the Inland Transport Committee in February 2007.
