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**REMARKS OF THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC
SAFETY ADMINISTRATION ON THE NEED TO IMPROVE VEHICLE SAFETY
WORLDWIDE**

Submitted by the representative of the United States of America

Note: The text reproduced below was prepared by the representative of the United States of America and contains the remarks made by the Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) during its one-hundred-and-fortieth session. It is based on informal document No. WP.29-140-23.

1. One of the major concerns of the United States of America Department of Transportation is the burden that traffic crashes pose in terms of human and economic losses on the American people. Over 40,000 people die on our roads each year (43,443 in 2005). The situation is just as serious on the global scale-about 40,000 in Europe, over 100,000 in China and over 90,000 in India. Overall, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than one million people die and 2 million are injured in traffic crashes worldwide and the global annual economic cost of road crashes is nearly \$600 billion.
2. The motor vehicle industry is a global industry. Consumers in the United States of America can now choose among new vehicles produced in North America, Europe, or Asia. It is expected that producers that do not currently sell in the United States of America will begin doing so over the next several years. The same thing is true for parts suppliers, with North American, European, and Asian companies supplying original equipment to the vehicles sold in all countries.
3. Since the global safety problem is associated with global industry, a global solution is needed. WP.29 has stepped forward to take on this global role. Its contributions in helping to transform WP.29 into a true World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations are praiseworthy.
4. During the one-hundred-and-fortieth session of WP.29, another global safety technical regulation and two more environmental ones under the 1998 Agreement were adopted. And while having only a few global technical regulations (gtrs) is insufficient to satisfy skeptics, the process of establishing each one adds to the pool of knowledge on how to better implement the 1998 Agreement.
5. The first safety global technical regulation (gtr) on door locks was a test case. It taught involved parties how to work together and highlighted the difficulties every gtr encounters. The motorcycle braking gtr, the second safety gtr, reflected the commitment to taking a science-based, data driven approach. In developing this regulation, it was assumed that the mere existence of a requirement was no sufficient justification for including it in the gtr. Instead, each requirement was included only after the necessary research and evaluations were conducted to demonstrate that it was necessary and appropriate.
6. The momentum toward effective global harmonization has to be maintained. Efforts should focus on the lessons learned from successful and not so successful efforts to develop gtrs; the program of work should be reassessed on a regular basis; gtrs that are resource intensive with no chance of success or no safety benefits should be dropped; and challenges with greater benefits should be pursued.
7. And on the subject of greater benefits, a unique and major opportunity has arisen to deliver on the full promise of the 1998 Agreement. Coming to agreement on the common wording of regulations saves money; that's vitally important for manufacturers and consumers. But it has now become possible to save lives on an almost unprecedented scale on highways around the world.
8. Indeed, the electronic stability control (ESC), which is the greatest life saving technology since the safety belt, works to reduce deadly single vehicle crashes. It does so by assisting drivers in maintaining control of their vehicles and keeping them in lane and on the road.

9. Researchers around the world, in Europe, Japan and the United States of America, have studied the actual experience of different vehicle populations in different driving environments and yet come to remarkably similar conclusions about the high level of ESC effectiveness in the real world. This unusually strong body of supporting research led the United States of America to issue a proposal this past September to require the installation of ESC as standard equipment in all new light vehicles in the United States of America by the 2012 model year. Engineers and economists tentatively concluded that ESC in the United States of America reduces single-vehicle crashes of passenger cars by 34 percent and single vehicle crashes of sport utility vehicles by 59 percent.
10. Responsible regulators must move forward thoughtfully, but also promptly. If it is true that time is money, in the area of vehicle safety, time is also lives. This is particularly true for a high benefit technology like ESC. The faster we act, the more lives we can save.
11. NHTSA estimates that ESC would save 5,300 to 10,300 lives and prevent 168,000 to 252,000 injuries in all types of crashes annually if all light vehicles on United States of America roads were equipped with ESC systems.
12. Technology is costly. While some countries will find ESC to be the right answer right now, others may have other safety priorities that need to be addressed first.
13. Nevertheless, moving ahead now with a gr on ESC will not only contribute to saving lives, but also, by establishing common requirements and helping to increase demand for ESC, it will promote additional product improvements and cost reductions. Accordingly, the United States of America plans to submit a proposal for a gr on ESC. WP.29 has to make ESC a top priority.
14. Efforts should be made to move forward in developing all new grs. While quantity is important, quality is even more so. Quality regulations are necessary, whether it is ESC or anything else. Safety problems should be addressed in a way that is rational and justified, taking into consideration the relevant research and the economic well being of all of our societies.
15. This involves employing a common set of principles that call for measures such as using data and analysis to carefully select worthwhile projects, compare alternatives, and develop streamlined and effective regulations.
16. The United States of America is committed to the 1998 Agreement process. The lives of all of our citizens depend on improved vehicle safety worldwide.
