



Statement by Mr. Jan Kubis

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(UNECE)

Delivered at the

UNECE Conference

“Launching the Decade of Action (2011-2020) for Road Safety in the

UNECE region”

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**It is a great pleasure and honor for me, on behalf of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, to welcome you all to the UNECE Conference “Launching the Decade of Action (2011-2020) for Road Safety in the UNECE region”.**

**I should like to express our gratitude to the Serbian Government for hosting this event, in particular to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Mr. Ivica DACIC, and the Road Traffic Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia, to Mr. Milutin MRKONJIC, Minister of Infrastructure and Energy of the Republic of Serbia and to the Road Traffic Safety Agency of Serbia.**

**I should also welcome and thank for the participation Deputy Minister Mr. POLUDZEN from Belarus, Deputy Minister Mr. VOUGIAS from Greece and Deputy Minister Mr. ASAUL from the Russian Federation. Their countries are teaming up with us in our efforts to properly address road safety issues at national, regional and global context and have initiated and hosted very important road safety events in the past two years.**

**And further thank Ambassador Leonidas CHRYSANTHOPOULOS, General Secretary of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, for his participation, personal commitment and support of the strengthened UNECE-BSEC cooperation.**

**Finally, I should also like to thank you all for your participation.**

**As you all know, road crashes claim the lives of more than 1.3 million people and at least 50 million people are injured or disabled on the roads every year worldwide causing in addition to human suffering, overwhelming costs running into hundreds of millions of dollars amounting to 1.5 to 2.5 % of most countries’ annual GDP.**

**Developing countries and economies in transition bear the majority of this burden so that road traffic crashes are a development issue that disproportionately affects the poor in low and middle-income countries. Only in Europe as many as 127.000 people die every year and 2.4 millions more are injured or disabled. With the forecasted trends, which unfortunately, are suggesting dramatic deterioration of the situation around the world, particularly in low-and-middle income countries where road traffic fatalities are expected to increase by almost 90% in the next decade, road safety remains an enormous global social, economic, development and health concern.**

**However, road traffic risks are known and can be prevented. These include excessive speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol, non use of seat belts, child restraints and helmets, as well as non respect of pedestrians and cyclists. Poorly designed or insufficiently maintained road infrastructure and the use of old vehicles are only added to the list of road traffic risks.**

**Improving road safety is vital for society and a top priority for the United Nations. The need for action to improve global road safety has been acknowledged by the first global Ministerial Conference, held in Moscow, in November 2009, as well as by several resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, including the resolution 64/255 of March 2010, proclaiming the period 2011-2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety with a goal to reduce the level of road fatalities around the world by increasing activities at national, regional and global levels.**

**The resolution requested the United Nations regional commissions in cooperation with other partners in the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, to prepare a Plan of Action for the**

**Decade and to coordinate regular monitoring of global progress in meeting the targets identified in it. Resolution 64/255 called on Member States to implement road safety activities and invited them to set their own road traffic casualty reduction targets while fostering a multi-sectoral collaboration. A Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 has now been elaborated.**

**The conference held here today is therefore timely and important. First, as marking the launch of the Decade in the UNECE region, a highly diverse region which includes the most mature world economies and at the same time some of the countries that need the most assistance in achieving these goals. And second, as a platform for discussions of the most important elements for road safety improvements and sharing of best practices.**

**UNECE pioneered road safety activities in the United Nations system in the course of the last 60 years. As the only existing UN intergovernmental body on road safety, our work focuses on improving road safety through developing and updating legal instruments aimed at internationally harmonized traffic regulations, construction and technical inspection of vehicles, as well as for the transport of dangerous goods. These regulations have assisted member States all over the world to harmonize and enforce traffic rules and measures, produce safer and cleaner road vehicles, reduce the risk of accidents with dangerous goods and hazardous materials and ensure that only safe and well maintained vehicles and competent drivers are allowed to participate in traffic. Moreover, transport infrastructure agreements developed under UNECE auspices, have given Europe coherent pan-European and safer road transport networks.**

**UNECE and the other sister UN Regional Commissions around the world, through a variety of initiatives and projects and in collaboration with major global road safety partners are contributing in increasing road safety activities and advocating for enhanced political commitment to road safety. In this context the continuing commitment of the Economic Commission for Europe to global action through elaborating and amending safety-related technical regulations and recommendations is of utmost importance. The Conventions on Road Traffic and on Roads Signs and Signals of 1968, and other related legal instruments addressing the main factors of road crashes i.e. road user behavior, the vehicle and the infrastructure, are real contributors to improved road safety and promotion of global actions in a systemic and proactive way.**

**The UNECE attaches great weight to this current effort of increasing road safety and it has ambitious plans for a series of road safety activities to educate, to raise awareness, to induce action and to create dynamic and effective responses. More recently, in support of the objectives of the Decade of Action for Road Safety and the importance of road safety in the UNECE region and worldwide, UNECE Ambassadors, and Heads of national delegations attending the UNECE's 64<sup>th</sup> commission session, signed a road safety poster "We drive by the rules". This initiative represented a symbolic, personal commitment to the objectives of the Decade and an open invitation in support of the United Nations regional commissions in their work to improve road safety during the Decade of Action for Road Safety, and beyond. UNECE has also prepared a film promoting the Decade, in which Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon participates together with children.**

**In the past 2 years only, a number of activities and projects were undertaken by UNECE, often jointly with other international actors. The UNDA funded project on "Improving Global Road Safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets" is among the best**

examples. Under this project, the United Nations Regional Commissions organized seminars, conferences and workshops and helped countries worldwide to develop road safety strategies and set national targets. Among them was a seminar kindly hosted by the government of Belarus, held in Minsk, in May 2009 for the CIS countries and the UNECE Conference on improving road safety in Southeastern Europe, kindly hosted by the Greek Government and the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Greece, in Halkida, in June 2009. Now we are following up to ensure that more countries will develop road safety strategies and set national targets.

Improving road safety in the BSEC region was the theme of a Conference held in Ioannina, Greece last year jointly organized by UNECE and BSEC under the Greek Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC. At this Conference, delegates of BSEC countries issued a joint “Ioannina Declaration” where they reaffirmed the importance of addressing road safety in the region as a matter of urgency and invited BSEC countries and BSEC bodies to take actions.

In cooperation with the Hellenic Basketball Federation and the Greek basketball champions, a first Declaration on “Team Work and Fair Play on the Basketball Court and on our Roads” was signed by the players of the Greek basketball national team, during the Halkida Conference. Thereafter, another Declaration on the “Respect of the rules” was signed by FIBA, FIBA Europe, UNECE and the Polish Government in Spodek Arena, in Katowice, Poland, in September 2009, on the occasion of the Eurobasket 2009 tournament. And this was not the end of the story. In partnership with FIBA, the Turkish Government and the Turkish Basketball Federation, a global road safety communication campaign under the motto “We play and drive by the rules” has been developed in the framework of the FIBA 2010 World Basketball Championship in Turkey, with great success.

The aim of these campaigns was to engage society, and especially the young people, in this cause, and to encourage respect for the rules on the road, as well as on the court. The motto of our joint UNECE-FIBA road safety campaign “We play and drive by the rules” suggested that road safety is the responsibility of each and all of us and that we should assume this responsibility for ourselves and for the others around us. In my view, this is among the fundamental messages around road safety that has to be communicated to the public - road safety is the responsibility of each and all of us.

However, it has to be clear that Governments have a primary role to play in creating safe road traffic conditions through safe infrastructure, legislation, enforcement, education and post crash care, and they also need to optimize their expenditures. Political will and commitment are key elements needed to properly address road safety as a priority under all its aspects, but mainly to secure funds for improving infrastructure, for education, training, and enforcement which are high-cost measures.

I should, therefore, call upon UNECE Member States to develop action plans and strategies in road safety at national and regional levels and to identify ambitious measurable casualty reduction targets. I should also invite UNECE Member States that have not yet done so to adhere to the Road Safety related UNECE legal instruments, and in particular to the conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals, of 1968, and to implement them. I should also like to encourage Member States to continue strengthening intersectoral dialogue, collaboration and initiatives aimed at road traffic injury prevention.

**I should like to also take this opportunity to note that Serbia is undertaking serious efforts in the field of Road Safety, and is further strengthening its related institutional and legal frameworks. We are happy to be part of this effort by launching the Decade of Action for Road Safety here in Belgrade.**

**I should like to also mention the contribution of UNDP Serbia, which is providing assistance to the Serbian Ministry of Infrastructure in the design of a project for strengthening the Disaster Risk Reduction and Establishment of Intelligent Transport Systems along the Serbian part of the corridor X.**

**Excellencies, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Despite some recorded success in the last years towards raising the political profile and addressing this epidemic of traffic-related deaths and injuries, the road towards reducing the global death penalty in road crashes will be long and difficult. The UN Decade of Action on road safety is the 7th decade for UNECE contribution in addressing road safety and saving lives. We take it seriously and are committed to eliminating the negative externalities of mobility.**

**The Belgrade Conference offers a great opportunity to address the road safety problems and to contribute towards the implementation of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety in the UNECE region.**

**I wish all success to our Conference, and thank you for your attention.**

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