



ROAD SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT

A week after World Health Day 2004, the United Nations General Assembly discussed and adopted an historic resolution A/RES/58/289 on "Improving global road safety" urging countries around the world to take up the challenge of road safety, begin implementing the recommendations in the joint WHO/World Bank World report on road traffic injury prevention and also inviting WHO to coordinate road safety efforts across the United Nations system, in collaboration with the United Nations regional commissions. This invitation was formally accepted by the World Health Assembly in May 2004 in resolution WHA57.10 entitled "Road safety and health". This resolution's recommendations broadly reflect those of the World report on road traffic injury prevention, including those related to the designation of a lead agency for road safety, preparation and implementation of national strategies for road safety, and putting in place of specific prevention measures, but also focus on the added value that public health can offer, particularly with regard to epidemiology, research, prevention, trauma care and advocacy.

In August 2005, The UN Secretary-General released his report on the global road safety crisis in advance of the 60th UN General Assembly. The Report provides an update on recent international efforts to improve global road safety. The report indicates how the coordinating mandate conferred upon WHO, in collaboration with the UN Regional Commissions, led to the establishment of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, a working group of 42 agencies committed to tackling road safety. The report also provides examples of the ways in which these partners are working together on joint products to address road safety. It concludes by proposing a number of recommendations for the consideration of the UN General Assembly to accelerate the implementation of road safety activities around the world.

In October 2005, The United Nations General Assembly adopted another resolution on road safety which invites Member States to participate in the First United Nations Global Road Safety Week; and to recognize the third Sunday in November of every year as the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims.

The theme for the Week will be "young road users" - as young people constitute a major group at risk of death, injury and disability on the road. While the focus is on young road users, it is hoped that the actions resulting from the Week will benefit road users of all ages. During the course of the Week which will be held from 23-29 April 2007, it is envisioned that a large number of local, national and international events will be hosted all over the world. Many partners will participate in these events including governments, United Nations agencies, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector.

The main objectives of this First United Nations Global Road Safety Week 2007 are to:

- Raise awareness about the societal impact of road traffic injuries, highlighting the risks for young road users.
- Promote action around key factors which have a major impact on preventing road traffic injuries: helmets, seat-belts, drink driving, speeding and infrastructure.

The slogan for the Week, "Road Safety is No Accident", highlights the fact that road safety happens not by accident, but through the deliberate efforts on the part of many individuals and many sectors of society - governmental and nongovernmental alike.

Global Road Safety Week was called for in the October 2005 United Nations General Assembly resolution A/60/5 on Improving global road safety. The Week, which will focus on young road users, is an historic

opportunity to raise the issue of road traffic injuries to a higher level. During the Week, it is expected that hundreds of initiatives – local, national, regional and global – will take place around the world, organized by governments, nongovernmental organizations, United Nations and other international agencies, private sector companies, foundations and others working for safer roads. The key global event will be the World Youth Assembly for Road Safety, bringing delegations of young people together from many countries to discuss and adopt a youth declaration on road safety and define ways to better serve as road safety advocates in their countries. The Week will be marked in all countries and by many communities. It is hoped the events of the Week will serve as launching points for new and effective road safety initiatives in the years ahead.





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Message on the occasion of the First UN Global Road Safety Week, 23-29 April 2007



Former United Nations
Secretary-General Kofi
Annan

The First United Nations Global Road Safety Week is an important opportunity for improving safety for the hundreds of millions of young people who travel the world's roads every day.

Since World Health Day 2004 and subsequent discussions in the United Nations General Assembly, governments and their partners have paid increased attention to road safety. But we still have a long way to go. Road traffic collisions kill nearly 1.2 million people worldwide every year, and injure millions more. They are the second leading cause of death for people aged 5 to 25, with devastating impact on families and communities. Among this age group, young men -- as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, novice drivers and passengers -- are nearly three times more likely to be killed or injured on the roads than young women.

Fortunately, there is a growing recognition that road traffic injuries can be prevented. It has been demonstrated in a number of countries that by acting on key factors, in particular drunk driving, speeding, infrastructure and the wearing of helmets and seat-belts, a significant number of lives and financial resources can be saved even as motorization continues to rise.

Road safety is no accident. Road safety happens through the deliberate efforts of many individuals and many sectors of society, governmental and non-governmental alike. Every one of us has a role to play: ministers of transport, health and education; health care providers; automobile associations; educators; students; insurers; vehicle manufacturers; the media and victims of road traffic crashes and their families. But a strong commitment at the political level is crucial. Today's success stories often result from a decision at the highest level of government to improve safety on the road.

Through the World Youth Assembly for Road Safety -- the key global event of the First United Nations Global Road Safety Week -- the World Health Organization, UN Regional Commissions and their partners are giving a voice to young people. Let us listen to their advice. And let us improve safety on the world's road, for their sake and for ours.