

GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY – DRIVEN BY PEOPLE WHO COUNT!

OCTOBER 26, 2017

BY EUGENE HERBERT

Road Safety is a global issue which, if not addressed by all role players, will see millions more fatalities.

It is therefore heartening to hear a commitment from, none other than Jean Todt, the President of the FIA and UN Special envoy on road safety.

The following is the full transcript of Jean Todt's speech at the 2017 GRSP Conference in Cape Town. Comments from a press interview will be covered in next weeks newsletter.

2017 Africa Road Safety Conference

Global Road Safety Partnership

Cape Town, South Africa – 23 October 2017 – 10:00am

Introduction

Director General,
Dear friends,

I am delighted to join you today for the opening of the 2017 Africa Road Safety Conference. I would like to express my thanks to the Global Road Safety Partnership and its CEO, Dave Cliff for inviting me to this important event and for placing priority on the African region.

As we near the end of 2017 just shy of two years to reach our Decade of Action and Sustainable Development Goal target of halving road deaths and injuries by 2020, there is a

need for concerted and renewed efforts on all levels. I am pleased to see the participation of many countries, communities, cities, and public and private sector representatives here today.

Road Safety in Africa

Ladies and gentlemen, Director General,

Too many lives are lost on the roads on this great continent. Globally, 1.25 million people die on the world's roads and one fifth of those fatalities are accounted for here in Africa. Furthermore, the continent suffers from the highest road traffic fatality rate than any other region – despite having less than 5% of the world's registered vehicles.

We lose an estimated 35 lives each day on the roads in South Africa; 30 lives each day in Uganda; 100 in Nigeria, and the list goes on. Bringing us to an estimated 650 road deaths each day on the continent. This is simply unacceptable. Half of these deaths are to the most vulnerable road users; pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

As we discuss the challenges that we face to achieve our ambitious targets, we must continue to be motivated by the value we place on every human life.

I would like to highlight three big opportunities to significantly reduce road traffic fatalities in the region.

- 1) Opportunities exist as we implement the Global Plan for the Decade of Action and the African Road Safety Action Plan;
- 2) Opportunities exist as we do a better job of collecting data, which allows us to develop strategies, monitor needs, and assess impact.
- 3) Opportunities exist as we secure more resources for road safety through higher priority placed on global and national agendas.

Decade of Action for Road Safety

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that change is possible. UN Sustainable Development Goal target 3.6 calls for road fatalities and injuries to halve by 2020, while target 11.2 calls for safe and affordable access to sustainable transport systems for all by 2030.

It may look like an impossible mission, but I firmly believe the tide can be turned with the right level of political commitment and investment.

In my own country, France, 18,000 lives were lost in the early 1970s before road safety became a national priority. You can now divide that number by five: it stands at just over 3 000 today. This trend is despite car numbers going up threefold during the same period.

The turnaround is a result of improvements on the key pillars in the Global Plan for the Decade of Action and the African Road Safety Action Plan. It has a focus on safer roads, vehicles and road users; improved post-crash care and stronger road safety governance including enforcement of strong legislation.

This includes accession to and implementation of the UN Road Safety Conventions, particularly those on road traffic, on road signs and signals, on vehicle safety and on transport of dangerous goods by road.

Today, over one billion people currently live in countries where none of these conventions are in place. These legal instruments are the basis for enforcing laws that address top risk factors such as drunk driving, seatbelt and helmet use, child restraints and speed. On their own, they can significantly decrease the number of road traffic fatalities. South Africa is a contracting party to three of six UN Road Safety Conventions.

As much as strong legislation is important, a national vision and leadership are essential to lasting improvements in road safety.

Only about half of the countries in Africa have a national road safety strategy with full or partial funding. Forty African countries report that they have a lead road safety agency. As I speak with Ministries and road safety agencies across this continent, there is unquestionable opportunity to make improvements in both of these areas.

First, every country should have a national road safety strategy. This provides a vision for and political priority on this issue. The strategy must be achievable with tangible targets and funding. It is pleasing to hear that South Africa has a strategic plan through 2020 as well as a strategy up until the end of 2030 – with targets to halve the number of road traffic fatalities through the course of its timeline.

An effective national road safety lead agency is a challenge across the continent. While many report having a lead agency, they also share about barriers in conducting their work. For example, in Uganda, where we are supporting a Road Safety Performance Review, the National Road Safety Council exists but has little man-power, funding or authority in its current structure under the Ministry of Transport. It is not able to perform the cross-

ministerial and multi-sectoral functions a lead agency must undertake to be successful. We are encouraging the government to improve these conditions.

However, Kenya and Nigeria, where the lead agencies operate essentially autonomously, see positive results. I urge all governments to evaluate and address both of these core elements of strong road safety governance.

Data Management

It is difficult to speak about road safety management without addressing the issue of data.

The opportunity to improve how we collect, manage and report road safety data is evident during every conversation I have with government officials.

In August, I had heated discussions with Ministers in Nigeria about the differences between their reported figures and the WHO estimates. They believe the national figures were correct and I insist there is still work we need to do. We agree there are obvious gaps and that further investigation is necessary to identify and bridge them.

I hope that you will address some of these gaps during this conference. This includes the need to harmonise definitions and indicators. For example, at the very basic level – within how many days after a crash can a death be classified as a road traffic fatality? Can we as a global community come to an agreement on data issues like these?

Closer cooperation and the exchange of experiences between key agencies (police, health, and transport) will advance the common understanding of data issues and inconsistencies. Reliable road traffic crash data is key to identifying risks, developing strategies and interventions — as well as evaluating impact of interventions.

Furthermore, reliable data will help us monitor the progress we are making towards national, regional and global goals. For example, to be confident in our assessment of how close or far we are to achieving Decade of Action and Sustainable Development Goal targets.

The interest expressed by the global community in developing regional Road Safety Observatories can help us develop these stronger data collection systems. And has the potential to improve data comparability and quality in regions and across the world. I understand that regional road safety observatories will be under discussion later today.

Funding for Road Safety

Ladies and Gentlemen, we all know that we can achieve very little without adequate resources and investment. One of the indicators in the African Road Safety Action Plan in terms of resource mobilisation is that 10% of funds allocated for road infrastructure goes to road safety. How many African countries can or will claim to meet this target?

As much as I advocate for governments to invest more in road safety, I also advocate for an increase in funding on the global scale.

It is undisputable that resources devoted to road safety on all levels are far too low.

Estimates between 2012 and 2014 say that HIV/AIDS attracts 1 000 times more funds than road safety. And the comparison with other global scourges like malaria and tuberculosis is in a similar order of magnitude.

In order to address this shortfall, and to facilitate better contribution to this cause, work has been underway to establish a new UN Road Safety Fund. If followed through, the Fund will be an important resource for everyone working on road safety. This work follows recommendations from a United Nations Resolution for improving global road safety adopted last April.

A paper with a proposal of the structure of the Fund is compiled by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in collaboration with other UN agencies such as UN Economic Commission of Africa and the WHO.

The proposal provides, for the first time, a clear indication of the amount of funding required to attain our SDG targets; the potential uses of the funding; key partners; and the governance framework.

This will be of huge significance in the fight to turn the tide of rising fatality numbers. Only, however, if national investments made by governments towards road safety complement the catalytic funding. The report also emphasises that within these pillars, there is a strong need to support national and local governments. Authorities also need to ensure the effective development and implementation of national road safety plans, strategies and legislation.

We hope that you will support the proposal for a UN Road Safety Fund.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, Director General, in closing I would like to remind you that there is projected increase in urbanisation, motorisation, infrastructure development projects and vehicle ownership in the region over the coming decades. The toll of road traffic fatalities and injuries will continue to rise in countries – if no significant changes occur.

In Cameroon, estimates in 2008 say that road crashes account for 1% of its GDP: 100 Billion Cameroonian Francs annually. Cameroonians estimate this loss equates to 10 000 equipped classrooms. Alternatively, it is nearly 250km of tarred roads or eight hospitals that can be built each year. Road crashes can strip a country from realising their true development potential.

Estimates say that 90% of people and goods on the African continent move on the road. New roads and more vehicles in developing settings often link with a higher number of traffic fatalities. At the same time, transport and mobility, which roads make possible, allows for access to jobs, education, health care. It connects goods and services. It connects us to each other.

The role of transport and mobility will only grow over the next decade. Nations have the choice to reap long-term economic benefits by making it safe and preserving the livelihood of its users. I have highlighted a few of the opportunities, among many others. I know we can be successful because so many others, like my own country, prove it's possible to save lives on the road.

Thank you