

**Call for a Decade of Action for Road Safety
Launch of the Second Report of the Commission for Global Road Safety
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Response on behalf of the World Bank

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Lord Robertson, Ministers, distinguished partners and colleagues,

On behalf of the World Bank, I am honored to be given the opportunity this morning to present our view and response to the important issues of global road safety that have been highlighted by Lord Robertson and the eminent speakers preceding me

In the spirit of moving from advocacy to action, I will make two points related to what has been presented and then address three challenges to be overcome by our future actions. I will then conclude with a sketch of four World Bank road safety priorities over the coming decade.

First, the scale of the public health crisis unfolding on the roads of low and middle-income countries is undeniable. The numbers

speak for themselves. They are dramatic and the previous presentations paid testimony to this. But we need to put this in broader context as we look into the future. By 2050 the world's population is expected to reach nine billion people, having increased by almost 50% from today, with almost all of the increase coming in developing countries. The world economy is set to grow four-fold by 2050. Combining projected world population trends over the next 50 years with increased urbanization, there is a need to fundamentally re-think our uses of transport systems.

And unfortunately, over the first 50 years of this century we can expect around 75 million road deaths and 750 million serious injuries, unless new measures are taken to prevent them. Meeting the 50% reduction target called for by Lord Robertson's Commission would save an estimated 5 million lives and avoid 50 million serious injuries, with a social benefit of \$3 trillion. In this regard the successful implementation of the proposed Decade of Action for Road Safety would be one of the most significant global public health achievements of the early 21st century.

Second, this is no longer a public health crisis we can turn away from. The projected losses in life and life quality over the coming decades and the resulting pain and suffering inflicted on the victims and their families are unacceptable. We must eliminate these huge losses in life and life quality as a development priority. While they are an unintended consequence of the development process, they can be anticipated, planned for and prevented. We can no longer acquiesce to the fatalistic view that low and middle-income countries must repeat the historical road safety experience of the high-income countries and take 50 years or so to bring their road safety outcomes under control.

As highlighted in the Second Report of the Commission for Global Road Safety, the last decade of raising global awareness and building the platform for action has been impressive. You have all contributed to this and it has required sustained leadership which today's event exemplifies. It has been a necessary and vital process. It has set the agenda. However, we agree that the coming decade must be one of action, a decade of deeds and results to justify the effort that went into making such action possible.

Ladies and gentlemen, we need a vision of success and the proposed Decade of Action for Road Safety provides the foundation for this. We must be bold, ambitious and responsible and the proposed reduction target is ambitious. Its achievement will not be easy. Hence, we must be sure-footed in the measures we have to take to get there, and we would like to outline three challenges we must surmount, if we are to be successful.

We at the World Bank believe that in moving from advocacy to action we must implement measures that are 1) sustainable over the longer term, 2) integrated with key development goals, and 3) inclusive of all road users and citizens. I will briefly discuss each of these challenges.

Let's first start with sustainability. We cannot expect immediate results. It will take several decades to bring road safety outcomes under control in low and middle-income countries on a sustainable basis. So, we must make a *long term* commitment to this endeavor. But, we need to speed up and scale up actions.

Measures taken will require proper *sequencing*, and we believe that institutional capacity strengthening is a precursor to effective institutional delivery of safety services. For example, sustainable general deterrence road policing will require strong commitment, leadership and accountability from the Police high command and this capacity must be built. In this regard, we welcome our eminent leaders from the international Police community here today. It will also require robust entry and exit controls for vehicles and drivers, and these systems must be in place before the full power of safety compliance regimes can be felt.

And, let us be clear, measures taken must be *systematic* and *at scale*. We cannot continue with the fragmented and partial responses of the past thirty years. Simply preparing guidance manuals and funding small scale initiatives, for example, will not suffice. Much more is needed. The road safety crisis is a crisis that deserves more attention, more bold actions and commitments, and more focused work. Road safety should not remain the “silent” crisis. It has to be tackled as any crisis, openly and boldly.

Second, Road safety measures taken must be integrated with key development challenges and priorities.

The world is rapidly *urbanizing*. *Climate change* is an urgent and major development challenge. *Energy security* is vital. *Good governance* underpins effective progress. *Global health* is paramount.

So, road safety cannot be addressed in isolation of these development priorities; without risking being displaced by them and be perceived as part of the trade off rather than the priority. Road Safety is a development challenge. Systematically addressing congestion, local air pollution, energy security and road safety can strongly increase the opportunities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to the achievement of a sustainable development path. For example, safer facilities for walking and cycling and lower vehicle speeds would result in reduced greenhouse gas emissions, local air pollution and energy consumption. As a consequence we would see less road deaths and injuries, and less deaths and loss of life quality arising from poor air quality and sedentary lifestyles.

And measures taken must be aligned with this bigger picture and the *co-benefits* of an integrated development strategy must be clearly articulated and quantified to the extent possible. In other words, making the linkages and showing the co-benefits between improved road safety and the achievement of other higher profile development goals will be crucial to achieving the support needed for the proposed Decade of Action for Road Safety and its ambitious performance targets. In one sentence, road safety needs to be perceived and implemented in an integrated fashion and not in isolation. This would make road safety sit among the major development challenges.

Third, we believe measures taken must be inclusive of all road users and citizens. We are a global development agency and our dream is a world free of poverty. Development aims to promote higher living standards for all, with an emphasis on improved access to infrastructure services, health, education and people's ability to participate in the economy and society. This inclusiveness is central to how we view *country development* which has broadened from a narrow focus on income and

spending to include education and health, and social, and stakeholder participation. As the absence of development, poverty must be understood from a similar perspective. Poverty is the inability to achieve basic prescribed standards in most or all of these areas. Hence, the sheer scale of the health losses alone from road crashes makes road safety a development priority.

The cruel irony is that the consequences of road deaths directly impact the poor in low and middle-income countries even though generally they have done the least to cause them. The majority of road deaths and injuries in these countries are and will be among the poor – the ‘vulnerable road users’ –pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. Children are particularly at risk. Yet *the poor and those thrust into poverty* as a consequence of road crashes are often left powerless in the face of large-scale infrastructure provision and rapid motorization.

So, we believe that measures taken must be responsive to the *priorities and rights* of the poor who should not bear the burden of scaling up investment in road transport systems. Infrastructure solutions should meet the requirements of all users, especially

those most vulnerable and least protected, and more inclusive planning and service provision is vital to make roads safe for everyone.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished panelists, the lessons learned from past experience have shaped our appreciation of these three challenges of sustainability, integration and inclusiveness. In general our projects and more so those of our partners have been too small and too fragmented to achieve measurable results, and they have been focused on safety interventions alone and not taken account of the institutional capacity required to implement them effectively. It is fair to say that these practices still continue with the belief that low-cost improvements in the absence of strong institutional commitment and sustained country investment will suffice. We are working to change this.

In conclusion, I would like to sketch out our road safety priorities for the coming decade.

At the World Bank we acknowledge our responsibility to promote improved road safety in our client countries. We have around 30

years experience in working with our clients on this and the lessons learned are shaping the new initiatives that we are now rolling out.

First, in May last year the World Bank Group issued a new Transport Business Strategy, *Safe, Clean and Affordable Transport for Development* which places a high priority on improved road safety. The emphasis is on a proactive approach of doing no harm, rather than the traditional approach of reacting to the lack of safety when it reveals itself. For example, the benefits of having median barriers to eliminate deaths and injuries from head-on crashes can be anticipated and captured with their immediate installation, rather than waiting several years for these deaths and injuries to occur in sufficiently high numbers to warrant intervention. Likewise deaths and injuries occurring at road junctions can be largely eliminated by the adoption of roundabout designs, rather than signalized or sign-posted junctions which result in more catastrophic injury outcomes.

Second, under the new strategy we are looking to *accelerate road safety knowledge transfer* and *scale up road safety investment*.

This requires a shift from smaller fragmented road safety components that cannot produce measurable improvements, to larger scale, systematic investments that produce measurable and sustainable results, and which encompass institutional capacity building as a core objective. It also places a higher priority on finding and earmarking sources of road safety financing, and the priority inclusion of road safety improvements in country assistance strategies.

Third, we have created the Global Road Safety Facility as the first funding mechanism designed to support *global, regional and country capacity building*. A recent independent evaluation of the Facility has confirmed the early achievement of its goals and the need to scale up its activities.

Fourth, in the spirit of improved aid effectiveness, we are committed to *harmonizing policies and practices* for quality assuring the safety of road infrastructure across international financial institutions and related agencies. We have made a start on this in partnership with the African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and

Development, European Investment Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

In addressing these four priorities, we recognize that we must act purposefully on a hitherto unprecedented scale. We must have a vision that calls for the mobilization of sufficient funding and expertise to bring under control the otherwise shocking road safety outcomes impacting disproportionately on the poor in low and middle-income countries.

Dear participants, we have come a long way, and we have a long way to go. As we head to the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in Moscow let us work together and commit to taking action that will make a real difference over the coming decade.

Thank you for your kind attention.