

CALL FOR A DECADE OF ACTION FOR ROAD SAFETY

Launch of the Second Report of the Commission for
Global Road Safety: 5th May 2009, Rome, Italy

Response on behalf of the Government of Uganda

By

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Minister of Works and Transport

Your Excellencies, Ministers and Representatives of Governments

Representatives of the Development Partners

Lord Roberts of Port Ellen, Chairman Commission for Global Road Safety

HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO, Patron, Commission for Global Road Safety

Michelle Yeoh, Global Ambassador, Make Roads Safe Campaign

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to thank Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, Chairman Commission for Global Road Safety for inviting me to be with you here today.

I also thank the Commission for the welcome and the excellent arrangement made for me and my delegation since our arrival in Rome.

I bring you warm greeting from The Government and the people of Uganda. We recall, with appreciation, the **"Make Roads Safe Africa"** conference held in Kampala in April last year that was sponsored by the **FIA** Foundation and the Commission and jointly organised in corroboration with **AA** Uganda. We appreciate the **FIA** Foundation for its efforts in road safety campaigns, research and its work with global networks of partners in this noble cause. On behalf of my Government, I appreciate the efforts the Commission for Global Road Safety is undertaking and your leadership in the **"call for a Decade of Action for Road Safety"**. Let me also congratulate you for launching your Second Report.

I would like to emphasize that Making Roads Safe is not only the responsibility of Governments but each and every person including road users, road safety activists and the entire public. It is only this view that will make all people accountable and committed to this noble cause. It is important that we make roads safe because death and serious injury on the road have become a global epidemic. It with sadness that I say that Africa once again leads the rest of the continents in this epidemic.

Situation on Road Safety in Uganda

The road safety condition in Uganda is still unsatisfactory and road accidents, fatalities and injury have been increasing during the last 10 years. In 2000 there were 14,390 reported accidents with 1,438 fatalities and 12,946 injuries compared to 2008 which had 2,334 fatalities, 18,250 reported accidents and 12,076 injuries. During the period 2000 to 2008, the vehicles on our roads doubled. The fatalities per 10,000 vehicles reduced from 88 in 2000 to 64 in 2007.

According to Injury Control Centre Uganda (ICCU) community survey, the top three causes of severe injuries among urban children (less than 18 years) in Uganda are traffic (46%), falls (14%) and burns (11%). In Uganda, about 400 children die, and about 1,200 are seriously injured on our roads every year.

It has been estimated that road accidents in Uganda cost about 2.7% of our GDP in terms of lives, injury, vehicle and other property lost. The road safety situation in countries in our East African region and indeed, in Sub-Saharan Africa is not any different.

Causes of Accidents

Analysis of accident statistics reports in Uganda indicate that the major causes of road accidents are:

- **Human error which accounts for about 80% of the road traffic crashes.** (This includes reckless driving, over speeding, inconsiderate use of the road, careless or ignorant pedestrians, incompetent drivers and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.)
- **Defective vehicle condition which accounts for about 10%,** (include defective brakes, steering, suspension, worn out tyres, defective lights, indicators and engine among others.)
- **Environment factors which account for about 5%,** (include weather conditions and activities along the road such as road repairs, grazing of cattle along side the road and road side markets.)
- **Road condition which also accounts for about 5%,** (include bad road surface, pot holes and poor road designs and inadequate road furniture. Road geometrical characteristics also influence accident occurrence at points like sharp corners, steep hills and intersections.)

Government Interventions for Road Accident Reduction

The Government of Uganda has undertaken short, medium and long term measures to reduce accidents on our roads through the 3 "Es" of education, engineering and enforcement and issuing appropriate regulations. In 2000 the Government of Uganda developed a five year road safety programme with a three year **National Road Safety Action Plan** whose implementation started in 2004. This action plan has a three pronged approach namely:

- Capacity building in the form of institutional support

- Physical improvement of some critical black spots on major road corridors and,
- Enhancement of enforcement

Education

This involves building the road safety culture in the youths, sensitizing the public on road safety and in this regard my Ministry has undertaken the following measures:-

- My Ministry together with the Ministry of Education in 2008 introduced road safety education in the primary school curriculum.
- The syllabus for drivers/instructors and testing was completed in 2008 in order to produce competent drivers and to regulate the operations of driving schools. We shall start implementation mid – this year.
- A new Highway Code was introduced in April 2004. It has been translated into local languages in order to provide for all sections of our society. The Highway Code is sold at a minimal and subsidized fee to ensure it is affordable.
- My Ministry through its organs of National Road Safety Council and Transport Licensing Board regularly conducts road safety education and sensitization programs covering the entire country by holding workshops and the mass media.

Engineering (Improvement of Infrastructure)

Government takes the road sector as one of its key priorities, many new roads have been constructed and old ones rehabilitated to improve on the efficiency and safety of transport in Uganda. Road markings and signs have been put in place. There is also a programme to improve on the “black spots” along our major road corridors. Currently 12% of our national budget is committed to the development and maintenance of the road network.

Enforcement

My Ministry supplements the Ministry for Internal Affairs (Police) to strengthen and improve on enforcement of the traffic regulations and to ensure high levels of compliance of the regulations. (The use of speed guns, breathalyzers, increased personnel and mobile traffic control vehicles have gone a long to reduce in speeds and the carnage on our roads.)

Regulations

A number of regulations to mitigate accident occurrence and improve on road safety have been made. The regulations address the use of vehicles on the road, the driver and driving habits among others. They include:

- Speed limits regulations,
- Drunken driving regulations,
- Use of mobile phones while driving regulations,
- Safety belts regulations,
- Rules of roads regulations,
- Motor cycles regulations,
- Speed governors regulations,
- Driving permits regulations,
- Weighbridges regulations,
- Express penalty scheme.

The Transport Licensing Board under my Ministry regulates the quality and safety of public transport services.

Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs

My Ministry works in corroboration with Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs in the drafting and amending of rules and regulations used to supplement the Traffic and Road Safety Act and the prosecution of traffic offenders once they are brought before the courts of law.

Health

My Ministry is in partnership with the Ministry of Health to mitigate the post accident effects of the causalities. Under this arrangement staffs from ten referral hospitals in the country are being trained in the care of accident victims.

Pre- inspection of motor-vehicles

The Ministry will introduce early next year mandatory motor vehicle pre inspection before registration as a measure to remove vehicles in dangerous mechanical condition on our roads and to regularly inspect vehicles already on the road for their road worthiness. For public service vehicles carrying passengers they will be inspected twice a year.

National Road Safety Policy and Strategy

A national road safety policy and strategy are being prepared with the assistance of the World Bank. This policy will help define current weaknesses and how to address them, assign responsibility, monitor performance and evaluate road safety policy needs. The current National Road Safety Council under my ministry is to be transformed into an independent Authority.

Challenges

Despite government commitment to improve and make roads safe, inadequate resources still remains a challenge. It is for this reason that we continuously encourage partners such as Federation of International Automobile (FIA) Foundation, World Health Organization (WHO) and others to team up with our Government in order for us to realize our common goal of making our roads safe.

Africa has the world's highest road deaths and injuries, and this imposes a huge economic burden on our developing economies amounting to over 2% of our GNP. I wonder why the goal to reduce carnage on our roads was never considered among the UN's Millennium Development Goals. A global Decade of Action for Road Safety supported by UN is the best opportunity we have now.

I once again thank the organizers of this conference, and you distinguished delegates for your attention.