

A World Free of High Risk Roads

Speech by Jean Todt, UN Special Envoy for Road Safety

Dear John,
Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

Firstly, John, let me thank you for inviting me to speak here today in my capacity as UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Road Safety and FIA President. I'm delighted to do so.

It is a very special global conference examining new evidence on how safe the world's road infrastructure is today, and what must be done to manage its safety performance. I want to thank and congratulate all those who organised this event, as well as the senior Ministers and executives who travelled a long way to participate.

We are halfway through the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety. Next week in New York, the UN is set to endorse new Sustainable Development Goals, and reducing road deaths is part of these new goals. I do believe that choosing an ambitious, specific, early goal to halve road deaths by 2020 is the right target.

Every day really does count. At current rates, more than 250 million people could potentially be killed or seriously injured between now and 2030.

This year, the United Nations celebrates its 70th anniversary. The organisation was established to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations and promote social progress, better living standards and human rights.

Safe mobility is essential for better living standards; it must be seen as part of human rights. Nonetheless, the world's roads are far from safe. Our fight is a noble fight; it is to save lives and ensure safe mobility.

We know how to organise and manage transport and mobility in a safe way, and many countries have the results to prove it. At the same time, around 90% of the 1.3 million killed annually on the roads are in low- and middle-income countries. It is in these countries where basic action is yet to be taken.

The UN Decade of Action for Road Safety identifies what must be done. This includes action on safer roads, safer vehicles and safer behaviour.

Underpinning all this is institutional capacity. Road Safety Management begins with effective data, as well as sound and well-enforced regulations.

Speaking about the data, here in London this morning we can review the new colour coded maps showing changing risk on 45, 000 kilometres of road here in the UK. We could do this because crash

and other data is good enough. However, even in some European and US states – let alone low income countries – the data is poor. This needs to improve.

We are here today to focus on what specific contribution safer road infrastructure can make to road safety. Today, maps and results from dozens of countries have been released. We have heard reports from Chili to China, from Iceland to Australia. Some 900, 000 kilometres of roads have been Star Rated for safety. Many of these assessments have been led by FIA clubs.

These Star Ratings results tell us about the safety of the world's roads. They do so separately for traveling by vehicle, by foot, by bicycle and by motorcycle. There is a widely quoted statistic that 88% of roads with high speeds and pedestrians have no footpath. This alone gives us an important insight that we have a problem of management as much as engineering.

Many low- and middle-income countries are using this inspection system, and it is helping them to quickly identify the most pressing measures needed on their networks.

Taking into account footpaths, crossings, road markings, junction improvements, and shoulder sealing, the Star Ratings results tell us which of these elements of the road environment will save the most lives for the money available. Often casualty reductions could be by a third or even half across the network.

This is the order of magnitude of injury prevention we need to see if we are to achieve the SDG targets that have been set for road safety. We will not achieve these new targets if we continue with business as usual.

In my role as the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Road Safety and FIA President, I will do all I can to support this agenda for safer road infrastructure. The case for adopting the 3-star goal has been well put today.

I look forward to building a strong partnership with everyone in the room here today, and am fully available to meet with you to discuss our shared goals for road safety.