

**Remarks delivered by
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At the

**WP. 1 & Meeting with Regional Commissioners
On Global Road Safety**

[Request the floor from Chairman Perriset]

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and good morning everybody.

Mr. Chairman, Director Capel Ferrer, distinguished delegates, I am delighted to be with you at this WP.1 session. I am especially excited to see the other UN regional commissions' Directors attend this session.

Your participation is extremely valuable because many countries where the problems are most severe are unable to attend these meetings. You are needed as a critical conduit for sharing information and practices to improve road safety in the countries in your region. Your presentations today very poignantly illustrate the need for your continual collaboration with this group and the ECE in general.

First, let me begin by congratulating WP.1 on its accomplishments. Much has happened since I last met with you a year ago.

Several UN resolutions passed addressing global road safety. This demonstrates the UN's commitment to this worldwide challenge.

In February of this year, the Inland Transport Committee adopted its own resolution on a global role for WP.1. I would like to thank Director Capel Ferrer, Chairman Perriset and the members of WP.1 for their vision and willingness to take on this role

And in April, as a follow up to the November UN General Assembly Resolution, 20 countries from around the world spoke about the need for global road safety at a special session of the General Assembly dedicated to Road Safety.

At that April session, a second General Assembly resolution, passed co-sponsored by more than 60 nations, inviting the World Health Organization to work with the regional commissions and act as coordinator on road safety issues with the UN system. Dr. Lee Jang-Wook, Director-General of the

W.H.O. accepted the challenge, and indeed the WHO accepted the invitation during their annual assembly in May. This is very appropriate since Road Traffic Safety is truly the nexus of transportation and health; and must be approached as such.

This issue is, in fact, a disease epidemic, and the principles of disease control, dealing with human, vehicles or vectors, and the environment, must be applied.

Every year on the roadways of the world an estimated 1.2 million people die as result of road crashes. 25 to 35 million more are injured. The economic and social cost of these crashes to the global community is estimated at \$518 billion U.S. dollars.

They are not accidents, they are incidents, and not the inevitable consequences of living in a motorized society.

My boss, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta said in April "...we need not accept morbidity as the price of mobility – anywhere in the world."

Once the UN resolution recognizing the WHO as the coordinator was passed, the United States offered assistance to the WHO to

create a database of road safety legislation and practices in each country. The WHO is already working on a template for this database, and WP.1 has provided information from its member states for inclusion in the database. They have compiled a World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention, which needs to be implemented and actually contains nearly all the needed elements described by the Regional Commissions.

Very briefly, the United States is also working with other partners in the international arena to promote road safety.

For example, we are working with the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation to establish a road traffic safety data system in a volunteer nation. Already five nations have come forward with the desire to establish a traffic data system.

A globally harmonized data system can serve to identify road safety problems unique to each country and monitor progress as solutions are implemented. The APEC project is a first step in establishing such data system.

We have worked with several countries, most recently Jordan and Egypt, on improving their emergency transport and trauma care, to improve the outcomes of road traffic crashes.

Secretary Mineta takes every opportunity to raise the issue of road safety internationally, . . . in Indonesia with the APEC minister Slovenia with the European Council of Ministers of Transport, or the United Nations in New York. Secretary Mineta has also included road safety in every bilateral meeting this year.

However, I want to get back to the focus of this meeting – the future role of WP.1. We believe it is time for all United Nations member states to make global road safety a top priority and move forward.

I firmly believe that the United Nations and this multi-national forum are well positioned to help implement the WHO World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention, by establishing best practices, and through discussions of the technical issues needed to implement those practices.

I know this can be done because, on the vehicle side, although painstakingly slow, WP.29 is now ready to establish its first global technical regulation under the 1998 agreement. WP.1 can work faster by accessing current best practices, and developing similar guidance on best practices for the behavioral aspects of road traffic safety.

I also have full confidence that the health experts in the WHO can work with the road traffic safety experts to coordinate the efforts of the various parts of the United Nations system and can establish the knowledge base in nations around the world.

Each organization in this room has strengths. WP.1 has the history and experience in road traffic safety regulations. The WHO has the history of working with the health sector throughout the world to control disease and injury is such a disease.

WP.1's expertise in collecting program information can be used to develop best practices on issues such as safety belt use, child occupant protection and impaired driving. The WHO's expertise in working with the other UN regional commissions can be used to gather injury control resources in nations of the world.

Both organizations can work together to establish a globally harmonized data system that can serve to identify road safety problems unique to each country and monitor progress as solutions are implemented. As I mentioned earlier, the APEC project is a step forward in establishing such a data system.

There are new faces around this table and I am delighted that the heads of the transportation divisions of the regional commissions are at this meeting. The regional commissions are vital to the participation of every nation across the globe, especially those who cannot attend the WP.1 sessions.

The regional commissions are critical to the promotion and implementation of road safety programs throughout the world. For many nations, participation may be limited to the regional level. It is critical for regional commissions' transport and health offices to adopt Road Traffic Safety as a mission for saving lives, preventing injuries and reducing costs worldwide.

I encourage the regional commissions to continue to work with WP.1 and the WHO to ensure that all countries in the world have access to best practices on road traffic safety that are sensitive to differences that exist among regions of the world.

So my challenge to all of us is to redouble our efforts on road safety throughout the world. In the months ahead, we must be inclusive in our approaches, recommendations and solutions. All of us are needed – members states, regional commissions, WHO, WP.1, other UN agencies, non-governmental organizations – to work together in the cause of road safety. I am optimistic that this meeting will mark that beginning.

The lives of 1.2 million of our neighbors every year depend on our success.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.