

## **OICA comments on the draft gtr on Head Restraints**

OICA herewith wishes to submit some comments regarding the development of the draft gtr on Head Restraints, following the AC3 decisions of June 2007 and the 8-9 November 2007 meeting of the GRSP Informal Group.

At that November meeting, OICA raised serious concerns regarding the draft gtr and these concerns are reflected in the following comments, in order to draw the attention of AC3 to the serious difficulties the auto industry will be faced with, unless solutions are found.

Basically, OICA does not consider that the draft gtr fulfils the 1998 Agreement, since it does not offer a harmonised framework in which the auto industry can operate.

### **I. Options in the draft gtr**

As things stand today, the draft gtr contains many options, at the choice of the Contracting Parties, unfortunately often leading to contradictory designs. The draft gtr therefore cannot be considered as a harmonised solution at this stage and is in OICA's view simply not acceptable for the time being.

Examples of the above mentioned options are as follows:

#### **1. Backset**

The draft gtr foresees options to the Contracting Parties, to use two different measurement methods for the backset measurements: either the R-point method with a backset limit at 45 mm, or the H-point method with a backset limit at 55 mm.

This will result in possible contradictory requirements, since there is no guarantee at all that a seat meeting one option will also meet the other option. During the development of the draft gtr, OICA repeatedly submitted data showing that in some cases, the backset may be larger with the R point method than with the H-point method. Therefore, a Head Restraint meeting the 55 mm limit with the H point method may well fail the limit of 45 mm with the R point method. Unfortunately, these data were not taken into account; the same applies to the many data submitted by OICA demonstrating that the R-point method results in a much better reliability of the measured values, in terms of repeatability and reproducibility. Without substantiated evidence that the two test methods actually result in the same effective design solution, the GTR should only measure backset in one manner. OICA recommends that this is one method be based on the 'R' point.

## **2. Height**

The draft gtr foresees options to the Contracting Parties, to require two different minimum heights of the head restraint, namely 800 mm or 850 mm.

When implementing the future gtr, several Contracting Parties are expected to use the limit of 800 mm, while others will likely prefer the limit of 850 mm. This will in fact lead to unnecessary increased severity for all seats intended for an international market: these products will indeed, de facto, have to be designed to meet the limit of 850 mm, in spite of the fact that this increased severity would not be required in individual markets.

Such increased severity will obviously result in increased costs, with no clear justification for the regions only requiring 800 mm.

Moreover, the 850 mm will very likely lead to serious design problems in several cases, among other due to the interaction with vehicle interior parts. This will in some cases affect the whole vehicle structure which will need a re-design in order to accommodate these higher head restraints.

OICA strongly supports limiting head restraint height to 800 mm until such time as further data has been collected on vehicle seats complying with the new GTR requirements

## **3. Dynamic Test**

As things stand today, it appears that for the dynamic test, Contracting Parties would have the choice, at least in a first step, between the Hybrid III method, as foreseen in the USA requirements (FMVSS 202a), and the BioRID method, as favoured in Europe (although this method still needs to be further developed).

Taking into account the well known fact that the USA are not (yet) in a position to adopt BioRID, the USA will continue to require the use of Hybrid III and the associated test procedure and criteria.

On the other hand, Europe clearly will use the BioRID dummy.

Manufacturers will therefore be faced with contradictory requirements, without any benefit. As a matter of fact, while the dynamic test of the gtr is crucial especially for the active head restraints, these same active systems already can be certified today, using the current UNECE R17. This means that, in the absence of a gtr, active systems would be able to be certified in the USA using the FMVSS method (possibly with some further improvements) and would equally be able to certified using the current UNECE R17; the absence of the gtr would consequently have no effect on these active systems. Once the gtr would be implemented under UNECE R17, the gtr would create a much more complicated situation. Due to the difference of the dummies it cannot be expected that a positive test result with one dummy would guarantee the same outcome with the other. In fact, the situation would be no more harmonized than it is today.

OICA continues to believe that a 2 phase approach could solve this issue. Under Phase 1, the Hybrid III dummy would be used (based on FMVSS 202a), while Phase 2 would foresee the use of BioRID, once the test procedure and associated criteria have been finalised and approved. OICA understands that the USA is willing to actively participate in the development of Phase 2, such that this 2 step approach would ensure harmonised solutions in both the short and the medium term.

Should Phase 1, with Hybrid III, however remain unacceptable for Europe, possibly the current UNECE R17 could remain in place (at least as alternative to the gtr), until completion of Phase 2.

#### **4. Other options**

In addition to the above crucial issues, the draft gtr currently foresees at least 2 more options, regarding the backset retention test and the labelling for non-use positions. This increases the number of issues containing options to a staggering five!

OICA does not wish to enter into all details, but stresses that the draft gtr clearly contains several contradictory requirements, totally in opposition to the spirit of global harmonisation.

## **II. Cherry picking**

In addition to the contradictory requirements, as explained above, the draft gtr also risks favouring so-called cherry-picking, since various Contracting Parties would, for each of these issues, have a choice. Taking into account the fact that each of the 5 issues contains 2 options, this in effect results in up to 32 different versions of the gtr, compared to the current UNECE R17 and FMVSS 202a. Clearly, the draft gtr does not promote harmonisation, quite on the contrary.

## **III. Conclusion**

OICA obviously cannot support a gtr which results in more non-harmonisation than is currently the case.

Under the current circumstances, OICA believes that the draft gtr needs to be further developed before adoption, until adequate solutions are found. Clearly the issue of Head Restraints is more difficult than originally foreseen and this again illustrates the fact that parallel rulemaking complicates the global harmonisation activities. In this respect, OICA wishes to draw AC3's attention to document TRANS/WP.29/2005/53, submitted in 2005 by OICA; OICA believes that several of the points in this document merit a renewed detailed consideration by AC3.

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