

Distr.: General
21 January 2011

Original: English only

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Seventy-third session

Geneva, 1–3 March 2011

Item 10 (c) of the provisional agenda

Issues that need consideration and require decisions

by the Committee: Scaling up of the UNECE road traffic safety work

Priorities of the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1)

Note by the secretariat

I. Sixty years of road traffic safety activities at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) pioneered road safety activities in the United Nations system with the establishment of an Ad Hoc Working Group on the prevention of road accidents in March 1950 followed by the establishment of Group of Experts on Road Traffic Safety (GE.20). The present Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) - an intergovernmental body - was established in 1988. Its primary function has been to serve as a administrator of the United Nations international legal instruments aimed at harmonizing road traffic regulations.

2. As the only existing UN intergovernmental body concerned with road safety, UNECE's work focuses on improving road safety through developing and updating legal instruments aimed at internationally harmonized traffic regulations, construction and technical inspection of vehicles as well as for the transport of dangerous goods. These regulations have assisted many countries in harmonizing and enforcing traffic rules and measures, producing safer and cleaner road vehicles, reducing the risk of accidents with dangerous goods and hazardous materials and ensuring that only safe and well-maintained vehicles and competent drivers are allowed to participate in traffic. Transport infrastructure agreements developed under the UNECE auspices have given Europe coherent pan-European and safe road transport networks.

3. In September 2010, the 60th anniversary of road traffic safety activities at the UNECE coincided with the sixtieth session of the WP.1 and was celebrated at the joint meeting of – WP.1 and SC.1 – two working parties which, through the development of legal instruments and best practices, have made the considerable contribution in improving

road safety and road transport operations across the world. The joint session identified some common areas of interest and it is hoped this new co-operative effort will bear fruit.

4. The issue of improving road safety has been on the agenda of the UNECE and its members for 60 years, but other international organizations have also been active in this field. Road safety work has been carried out by various global and regional organizations such as the World Health Organization, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the World Bank.

II. United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/255

5. The United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/255 of 2 March 2010 proclaimed the period 2011-2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety with a goal to reduce the level of road fatalities around the world by increasing activities at national, regional and global levels.

6. The UN GA resolution 64/255, among others:

(a) Requests the World Health Organization and the United Nations regional commissions, in co-operation with other partners in the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration and other stakeholders, to prepare a plan of action of the Decade as a guiding document to support the implementation of its objectives;

(b) Invites all Member States to set their own national road traffic casualty reduction targets to be achieved by the end of the Decade, in line with the plan of action;

(c) Invites the World Health Organization and the United Nations regional commissions, in co-operation with other partners in the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, to organize the second United Nations Global Road Safety Week to launch the Decade.

7. The UNECE as one of the UN regional commissions is contributing to the preparation of a Plan of Action of the Decade. The draft Plan of Action is publicly available (http://www.who.int/roadsafety/Decade_of_action.pdf) and will soon be finalized. The UNECE will invite, as per GA resolution, governments to set their own road traffic casualty reduction targets as well as will encourage its member to implement road safety activities, particularly in the areas of road safety management, road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behaviour and post-crash care. The organization of the second United Nations Global Road Safety Week will be discussed with the WHO and, at present, it is intended to coincide with the launch of the Decade of Action in May 2011.

III. Launch of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020

8. The international community, largely through the WHO-led UN Road Safety Collaboration (UNRSC), is planning the global launch of the Decade for 11 May 2011.

9. The general objectives identified and proposed by the WHO/UNRSC are:

(a) to draw attention to the Decade and more generally to the impact of the global road safety crisis and the prospects for prevention;

(b) to provide an opportunity for governments, international agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders to announce their respective plans for the Decade.

10. At the global level, the WHO considers organizing a 24-hour "rolling" event across the world's time zones, beginning in Fiji or New Zealand and ending in Mexico, involving

national dignitaries and celebrities. Certain events are to be broadcast live through a social media website (still to be developed). It is also expected that the main objective of these events will be to announce national Plans for the Decade and publicity.

11. The UNECE, apart from participating in the initiatives noted above, is planning to organize other activities for launching the Decade of Action. Presently, one event has already occurred while two others are being considered. In addition, the UNECE secretariat intends to scale up UNECE Road Safety Forum's activities in two areas: safety at level crossings and multidisciplinary crash investigations.

IV. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe activities

A. UNECE-BSEC Conference on Improving Road Safety in the BSEC Region, Ioannina, 18-19 November 2010

12. Road safety performance in 12 members of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Organization was the subject of the "UNECE-BSEC Conference on Improving Road Safety in the BSEC Region" in Ioannina. The Conference held under the Greek Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC and hosted by the Ioannina Chamber and the Hellenic Chambers Transport Association examined critical road safety issues in the BSEC region.

13. The UNECE-BSEC Conference contributed towards the implementation of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety and towards the recently completed UNECE project on "Improving global road safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets". Representatives of BSEC countries discussed the global and European road safety issues in the context of five pillars: road safety management, safer road and vehicle design, safer road users and post crash care.

14. The delegates of BSEC countries also issued a joint "Ioannina Declaration" where they reaffirmed the importance of addressing road safety in the region as a matter of urgency and express support for the work of the UNECE and its Road Safety Forum (see http://www.unece.org/trans/roadsafe/events/BSEC/Ioannina-Declaration_e.pdf).

B. The Inter-Parliamentary meeting on road safety

15. This high-level meeting is planned by the Verkhovna Rada (parliament) of Ukraine in April 2011 in Kiev. The meeting is to be organized under the auspices of the UNECE (with the Executive Secretary and senior officials attending).

16. The parliamentarians from some 20 countries as well as representatives of the United Nations, World Bank, WHO, EU, Global Road Safety Partnership, Ukrainian Road Safety Association and private sector will participate. The objective is to share best practices on "comprehensive road safety legislation", motivate members of parliament into action of strengthening road safety legislation and to serve as a platform for discussion. Signing of the Kiev Declaration on Road Safety and development of a road safety handbook for parliamentarians is also planned.

C. Road Traffic Safety Agency, Republic of Serbia

17. In Serbia, there has been a downward trend in road traffic deaths, but the fatality rate per 100,000 is still higher than in most West European countries. The key risks are speed (58 per cent of deaths), lack of seat belts, alcohol and road infrastructure deficiencies. There

is no national road safety strategy in place, but Serbia has just established a lead agency in charge of road safety (with no measurable targets). Legislation on speed limits, drink/drive, motorcycle helmets, and seat belts exists.

18. The Government of Serbia has informally approached the UNECE for assistance in the area of road safety, in particular in organizing a high-level capacity building event. If it materializes, the UNECE, in co-operation with Serbia's Road Traffic Safety Agency, will organize a national capacity building conference on the subject of establishing "measurable targets" as one of the events coinciding with the launch of the Decade.

D. Safety at level crossings

19. A level-crossing is a level intersection between a road and a railway or tramway track (sometimes level-crossings include an intersection between a rail line and a pedestrian walkway). Crossings represent serious risks despite warning signals and/or protective barriers. Generally, given the difference in mass between a train and a road vehicle, it is the road vehicle/pedestrian that is at risk. However, a collision with a heavy goods road vehicle can also have serious consequences for rail traffic.

20. Despite many measures taken to indicate level-crossings and make them safe, too many road users and pedestrians are killed or injured at such crossings. Almost all accidents at level crossings are due to road users failing to observe mandatory stop lights, signals and basic traffic safety rules.

21. A UIC-led International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD) is a joint initiative consisting of rail undertakings, road transport sector, national governments, road safety agencies and non-governmental organizations. The ILCAD has approached the UNECE to join forces and work together on making level crossings safer. Should the member governments endorse this initiative, the UNECE is prepared to host a multi-disciplinary group of experts including experts from road traffic safety, railways, road and railway infrastructure organizations and other stakeholders.

E. Multi-disciplinary crash investigation: a tool to improve road safety

22. The Multidisciplinary Crash Investigation (MDCI) is about the reconstruction of a crash and a study of the factors that may have contributed to it. The factors include environmental, human and mechanical and are associated with the three phases of a collision which are pre-collision, at-collision and post-collision. The objective is to prevent crashes of a similar nature from recurring. Multidisciplinary crash investigations already take place in many countries. It appears that the countries where such investigative mechanisms exist are the best road traffic safety performers.

23. WP.1 has considered the subject of multi-disciplinary crash investigation. It appears that the MDCI offers many benefits in terms of enhancing road safety, but the establishment of a MDCI mechanism is complex as it requires co-operation and co-ordination among national ministries, agencies and other relevant entities. The subject of MDCI was considered at WP.1 in September 2010. There was no consensus on how to proceed except by presenting MDCI mechanism as a best practice (in the Consolidated Resolution on Road Traffic (R.E.1) or separately). The UNECE secretariat will continue to encourage governments to contribute information on the existing national practices in this area with a view of preparing a document on possible follow-up options, including a creation of an expert group.