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**Strategic questions of a horizontal and cross-sectoral policy
or regulatory nature: Road safety**

Activities of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety

Note by the secretariat of the Special Envoy for Road Safety

Summary

Recognizing the need to take urgent action towards addressing one of the most pressing sustainable development challenges of our time, the United Nations Secretary-General appointed on 29 April 2015, Mr. Jean Todt as his Special Envoy for Road Safety.

Taking 1.35 million lives annually and leaving 50 million more seriously injured and often disabled for life, the ever-growing road safety crisis leads to multidimensional and irreversible consequences. A leading cause of death among 5–29 years old, road crashes undermine economic growth, contribute to growing inequality and present a serious threat to youth, disproportionately affected in low- and middle- income countries. Moreover, increased motorization, population growth and rapid urbanization contribute to the gravity of the issue even further.

The recent global health crisis of COVID-19 has showcased the importance of mobility, especially in the developing world where many live on a hand-to-mouth basis and where “staying at home” was not an option. Mobility will play a critical role in economic recovery from the virus, and thus road safety becomes as relevant as ever.

This report from the Special Envoy contains the activities which contribute to the four key priorities of his mandate, as implemented between February and December 2020.

The Committee is invited **to take note** of this report and **to express its support** for the continuation of the important work and momentum built so far by the Special Envoy to improve road safety.



I. Background

1. The severe impact of road traffic crashes on the well-being of all people and the huge economic consequences for societies, particularly in low- and middle-income countries prompted the United Nations Secretary-General to appoint on 29 April 2015, Mr. Jean Todt as his Special Envoy for Road Safety, with secretariat hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE); the mandate was further extended by the newly elected Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres.
2. In response to the worrying situation of road safety on the development agenda, specific goals on road safety were included in the Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015. Target 3.6 calls for halving of the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes, and target 11.2 aims to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all by 2030.
3. In August 2020, Member States recommitted themselves to urgent action for road safety by adopting the latest UNGA Resolution on Improving Global Road Safety (A/RES/74/299). The resolution calls for a second Decade of Action for Road Safety, setting a new target to halve the number of road deaths and injuries by 2030. Among key calls for action are further support for the United Nations Road Safety Fund (UNRSF), request to the UN Secretary-General to consider the extension the Special Envoy for Road Safety function through 2030 and reaffirmation of the value of the UN legal instruments on road safety. It also asks the WHO and the UN Regional Commissions to work with stakeholders to develop a Plan for the Second Decade of Action. Most importantly, it invites Member States to invest in road safety at all levels, including by allocating appropriate dedicated budgets for institutional and infrastructural improvements for road safety.
4. To date, the Special Envoy visited 89 Member States, where he held bilateral meetings with 26 Heads of States and 196 Ministers.
5. This report of the Special Envoy contains the activities as they contribute to the four key priorities of his mandate (see Annex) implemented since the Special Envoy's previous report (ECE/TRANS/2020/11).

II. Summary and highlights of activities implemented by the Special Envoy

A. Promoting global partnerships to support the design and implementation of strategies and activities to improve road safety

6. This goal has been high on the agenda of the Special Envoy, and in concrete terms, was addressed by the Special Envoy through more than 250 meetings, consultations, and participation in various awareness-raising initiatives, such as the following.

1. United Nations Road Safety Fund

7. The Special Envoy has continued to lead fundraising efforts, informed the Office of the Secretary-General about the progress of its operations, and served in his role as Advisory Board member. Special Envoy raised the visibility of the fund by hosting a high-level lunch during Third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in Stockholm, organizing events for the Friends of Road Safety Network meetings, and during missions to countries. Due to the Special Envoy's direct advocacy, four new donors joined the UNRSF, which include the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Republic of Mauritius and two private sector companies, Essilor

and the Spanish TV Nuez Audiovisual Productions. Hungary made a second generous donation to the Fund aligning with the Special Envoy's mission to Hungary in 2020.

8. In July 2020, the Special Envoy delivered opening remarks during the Advisory Board's fourth session, issuing a decision on the funding cycle parameters for the 2020 Call for Proposals, extending the term of UNRSF through 2030, and advising on fundraising priorities. The Special Envoy also participated in the Fund's first webinar, "Road safety at the time of COVID-19" in July as well as its First Session of the Informal Working Group on UNRSF Fundraising in August.

2. Cultivation of the Friends of Road Safety Network in Geneva and New York

9. The delegation of the European Union in Geneva and the delegation of Italy in New York launched an informal network of Friends of Road Safety, in March and June 2019 respectively. The aim of the network is to increase engagement of the diplomatic corps and relevant organizations in both locations through awareness-raising, mobilizing funding and increasing development cooperation for road safety.

10. In February, during the margins of the UNECE 82nd session of the ITC, the Special Envoy hosted, in collaboration with the EU delegation, the "Post-Stockholm side-event for Geneva "Friends of Road Safety Network". Alongside the ECE Executive Secretary and the Head of EU Delegation in Geneva, the Special Envoy summarized the outcomes of 3rd Global Ministerial Meeting on Road Safety and the Stockholm Declaration, which outlined the way forward for the next decade. The Special Envoy emphasized the importance of embracing safe systems approach and placing safety as a core value when developing mobility policies and infrastructure design. The Special Envoy called for a "transformational thinking" and commitment of every stakeholder to make roads safer and for the vision zero to become a reality.

11. In September, the Special Envoy along with H.E. Mr. Walter Stevens, Permanent Representative of the European Union to the United Nations Office and Other international organisations in Geneva, chaired the Geneva Friends for Road Safety Network event "A New Decade for Road Safety", hosted by H.E. Mr. François Rivasseau, Permanent Representative of France to the Office of the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva. This occasion was an opportunity for the Friends to further strengthen efforts in promoting road safety as members of the Network during the next Decade of Action (2021–2030). Nearly 30 participants, among Ambassadors, UN officials and stakeholders, joined the event, representing thirteen Member States and seven different organizations and departments.

12. In summary, the diplomatic corps are encouraged to contribute by: (a) promoting the UNRSF call for proposals towards the capitals and respective national bodies, particularly to submit project ideas according to the provided guidelines; (b) supporting General Assembly resolutions on improving road safety and promoting calls of action in capitals, (c) proactive engagement with capitals, colleagues and international and national actors on the issue of road safety, and linking international efforts with national initiatives, including accession to the United Nations legal instruments and implementation thereof, and (d) promoting greater mobilization of funds for road safety, both to support of UNRSF and also to place a higher priority on road safety in development cooperation spending.

3. Fourth United Nations Partnership Meeting for Road Safety

13. Following three previous UN-wide meetings held by the Special Envoy and in the spirit of greater strategic coordination efforts on road safety by the UN, that the Special Envoy convened the Fourth UN Partnership Meeting for Road Safety on 4 November 2020. Due to COVID-19, the event was held virtually and attended by nearly 70 high-level

representatives from 31 UN organizations and departments, including a contribution by the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed through a video message.

14. The main topics covered during the meeting were the UN agenda for the new Decade of Action for Road Safety; the positioning of the UN Road Safety Fund (UNRSF) for maximum impact; as well as the sharing of participating Agencies on their global efforts.

15. High-level engagement included the personal participation of the Executive Secretary of ECE, Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Executive Secretary of ECA, Assistant Director-General of WHO, USG of UNDSS, Executive Director of UN Habitat, Secretary-General of ITU, Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Special Adviser on Africa.

B. Advocating with governments, civil society and the private sector for the promotion of road safety, particularly in countries with a high rate of road fatalities and injuries

1. Advocacy with governments and other stakeholders for increased attention on road safety

16. The Special Envoy meets with high-level government officials in mostly low- and middle-income countries with poor road safety records. Since 2015, the Special Envoy has held meetings with government officials and relevant stakeholders in 89 countries: twenty countries in Asia/Eurasia/Oceania, fifteen countries in Africa, eight countries in the Middle-East, twenty-five countries in Europe and North America, and twenty-one countries in Latin American and the Caribbean. These discussions focused on the status of the road safety situation in each country and encouraged accession to and implementation of the United Nations road safety conventions. The Special Envoy continues to keep the United Nations road safety conventions, the importance of strong governance and the need to build complete national road safety systems on the agenda of his bilateral meetings and messages in his speeches at conferences.

17. Furthermore, during his visits, the Special Envoy has been persistently encouraging contributions to the UNRSF, with resulting contributions from Bahrain, Hungary and Mauritius in 2020.

18. Given that Private sector engagement is a high priority of the Special Envoy, meetings with key partners are arranged during his missions. In 2020, contributions have been made to the UNRSF by Essilor and Spanish TV Nuez Audiovisual Productions. The Special Envoy also engages the FIA High Level Panel for Road Safety, comprised of an array of private sector stakeholders in discussions and potential contributions to the UNRSF.

C. Participation in global and regional conferences, and meetings on road safety

19. Even amid the global health crisis, the Special Envoy participated in in-person and online meetings and conferences in efforts to highlight road safety, including events where road safety may not have been previously covered.

20. On 19–20 February 2020, the Special Envoy participated at the Third Global Ministerial Conference for Road Safety, hosted by the Government of Sweden which gathered 1,700 delegates from 140 countries. The Special Envoy spoke on behalf of the Secretary-General at the opening, hosted a high-level lunch for 130 ministers, private sector, UN and others, and presented the way forward in the closing plenary.

21. In his remarks, the Special Envoy expressed appreciation to conference organizers and reminded the delegates of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development objectives, which include road safety. Considering the newly announced Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals, the Special Envoy presented road safety as one of the greatest development challenges and pressing emergencies. Reiterating his strong commitment to the issue, he called for strong and well-coordinated action of all stakeholders, including private and public sector as well as civil society and academia, and to place safety as a non-negotiable outcome of investments, activities and products of the transport system.

22. The Ministerial Conference culminated in the forward-looking “Stockholm Declaration”, which calls for a new global target to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries by 50% by 2030.

23. Additional engagements during the conference included side events, including:

- 2020 Innovation Workshop, panel on “A global Structure to Deliver the 2030 targets”, organized by the World Bank, International Transport Forum and iRAP
- 2nd World Youth Assembly for Road Safety, organized by NGO, Youth for Road Safety
- Legal framework governing the international application of emerging automotive technologies for the benefit of road safety and Sustainable Development Goals, organized by UNECE and the Russian Federation
- Vision Zero in Cities Round Table, organized by NGO, European Federation of Road Traffic Victims
- Bilateral meetings with 15 high-level officials

24. Other in-person and online conferences include:

- World Economic Forum's 50th Annual Meeting in Davos
- 82nd Annual Session of the Inland Transport Committee
- Future Networked Car Symposium (FNC-2020)
- IDB Webinar: "Mobility and Covid-19: A Blessing in Disguise for Road Safety?"
- UNECE WP.6 Transport Statistics Meeting
- Meeting with the European Union Heads of Mission in Geneva
- UNICEF & FIA Foundation webinar “Guidance on safe and healthy journeys to school during COVID-19 pandemic and beyond”
- Global Forum for Road Safety: Working Party 1 (WP.1) Meeting
- Ambassadorial Briefing at UNECE Members States
- World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims global event
- Multilateral Development Banks High-Level Joint Statement on Road Safety webinar
- World Bank “Road Safety in South Asia – Rethinking Urban Mobility amid COVID-19” webinar
- TransMEA 2020 – Third Smart Transport & Logistics Fair & Forum for the Middle East & Africa
- International Transport Forum “Monitoring and Fostering Progress in Urban Road Safety: Safer City Streets” webinar

- Africa Sustainable Urban Mobility Online Course
- From Global Commitment to Local Action. A roundtable towards accountability for safer roads, by Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety
- Global Meeting of Regional Road Safety Observatories

D. Advocating the accession to, and more effective implementation of the United Nations road safety legal instruments

25. This objective has been addressed at meetings of the Special Envoy with governments, representatives of international organizations and United Nations system organizations, as well as civil society representatives in countries he visited in his capacity as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety, as highlighted above. For this purpose, for each mission, the Special Envoy's secretariat, hosted by UNECE Office of the Executive Secretary, prepared a briefing package with the road safety profile of the country, the main road safety legal instruments, specially designed and customized policy messages, and other details relevant for the meetings of the Special Envoy with the officials.

1. Promotion of United Nations road safety conventions

26. The Special Envoy produced brochures which summarize seven of fifty-nine United Nations transport-related legal instruments which specifically focused on improving road safety, and have been translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. The brochures overview the seven, core United Nations road safety conventions, the accession status of each Member State and the steps needed for accession. The brochures are distributed and used at meetings worldwide. As a result of the Special Envoy's advocacy, Thailand and Oman became contracting party to the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic in May and June 2020, respectively.

2. Capacity-building

27. Due to the COVID-19 situation the Special Envoy was limited in providing capacity-building workshops for government officials. The Special Envoy continued to support performance reviews in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe to further achieve this objective:

- Two United Nations Road Safety Performance Reviews are being supported in Africa, namely Ethiopia and Zimbabwe at the request of the respective Governments. The reviews, supported by the Special Envoy, are carried out by the Special Envoy Secretariat in collaboration with ECE and ECA, as well as other partners. These were in synergistic relationship with the United Nations Road Safety Performance Reviews implemented in the framework of the UNDA¹-funded project led by ECE in collaboration with and ESCAP and ECLAC.
- The United Nations Road Safety Performance Reviews pay special attention to regulatory governance for road safety, and they start with an assessment of the needs of the country in review, using the UNRSF Global Framework Plan of Action for Road Safety. In practice, a Road Safety Performance Review assesses the current status of the national road safety system in place, helps the Government to identify the most critical safety aspects and recommends actions to be taken to address the gaps. Based on the identified priority needs, capacity-building seminars and workshops are organized for national road safety stakeholders. The project thus raises general awareness of road safety issues by sensitizing experts as well as the

¹ United Nations Development Account

public sector and non-governmental sectors, of the need to set ambitious road safety targets and to implement specific measures to improve road safety. Following the finalization of the road safety performance review reports, the Special Envoy, jointly with the Executive Secretary of ECA, are expected to publicly launch the reports in 2020, to promote findings and recommendations with the highest levels of Government and to provide capacity-building to support the recommendations of the report.

- The Road Safety Performance Reviews which are supported by the Special Envoy, also include the WHO Emergency Care System Assessment, that helps to assess national or regional emergency care systems, identify gaps and set priorities for system development.
- A one-day validation workshop was conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on January 2020, at the premises of the UN Economic Commission for Africa. Relevant stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the draft road safety performance review report, which analysed the current road safety situation and provided recommendations on improvements. Nearly 100 representatives of national and local government attended the workshop, to validate and provide feedback on the draft report. Feedback is being incorporated into a finalized report, which was expected to be presented to the Government of Ethiopia by the Special Envoy, jointly with UNECA Executive Secretary in August 2020. The launch event has been postponed to early 2021 along with that of Zimbabwe.

III. Conclusion

28. The Special Envoy has ensured that road safety is not forgotten during the COVID-19 crisis. With a mix of in-person and virtual meetings and events, as well as missions to most affected countries (as the situation allowed), the Special Envoy was successful in continuing to deepen engagement and increase visibility of the cause among governments, the private sector, the United Nations system and other stakeholders. As travel restrictions improve, the Special Envoy will prioritize supporting regional and national capacity-building workshops as well as in-country missions, to compensate for the lost opportunities in 2020 due to COVID-19. In the meantime, online engagements, and travel where possible will be explored. The Special Envoy remains committed to raising the visibility of road safety and of the United Nations road safety legal instruments and to inspiring stronger action from governments to address road safety. The Special Envoy's main calls for action in the immediate future is for all stakeholders, especially governments, to firmly commit to achieving our 2030 targets on road safety, by implementing required strategies and activities that are well resourced.

Annex

Priorities of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety (extract from the Terms of Reference)

1. Promoting a global partnership to support the design and implementation of strategies and activities to improve road safety

The Special Envoy will support the attainment of the overall goal of the Decade, by leveraging his or her professional expertise and experience. In this regard, the Special Envoy is expected to develop a global partnership with a particular emphasis on raising levels of political commitment. The Special Envoy will work with key funding partners – including governments, financial institutions and the private and non-governmental sectors – to secure adequate resources to implement the global partnership strategy.

2. Advocating with governments, civil society and the private sector for the promotion of road safety, particularly in countries with high level of road fatalities and injuries

The Special Envoy will advocate for road safety, identifying achievements and challenges at the global, regional and national levels, as appropriate. He or she will highlight the challenges and needs for technical and/or other assistance which may be required, particularly by low- and middle-income countries, to improve road safety.

3. Participating in global and regional conferences and meetings on road safety

The Special Envoy will participate in global and regional conferences on road safety, including the second high-level global conference on road safety to be held in November 2015 in Brasilia, Brazil. On specific request and case-by-case consideration by the Secretary-General, the Special Envoy may represent the Secretary-General in relevant meetings.

4. Advocating the accession to, and more effective implementation of, United Nations road safety legal instruments

The Special Envoy will raise the visibility and awareness of the United Nations road safety legal instruments, including the Conventions on Road Traffic, and Road Signs and Signals, and the 1958, 1997 and 1998 Vehicle Regulations Agreements as well as other related instruments including driving times and rest periods for professional drivers and transport of dangerous goods. The Special Envoy will also promote the accession to and the improved implementation of these legal instruments by Contracting Parties.
