

“Fifth United Nations Partnership Meeting for Road Safety”

9 December 2021, Virtually

ESCWA note on recent activities and initiatives on road safety in the Arab region

29 November 2021

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Introduction

According to the Global Status Report on Road Safety, published by the WHO in 2018, the target 3.6 of the Sustainable Development Goal 3 will not be met by the end of 2020. The number of road crashes remains unacceptably high, and road crashes still represent a serious problem of public health around the world, killing more than 1.35 million people and injuring more than 50 million a year. In addition, road crashes still represent the leading cause of death for children and young people between 15 and 29 years old.

The present paper examines the progress made on road safety in the Arab region as presented in ESCWA 20th session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, held in Amman, Jordan on 9 and 10 December 2019.

A. Status of Road Safety in the Arab Region

Figure (1) below presents the number of road traffic fatalities in the Arab region as per WHO estimates for 2016. It is noted that the total number of road crashes fatalities in the top five countries (Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq and Morocco) accounts for 67% of the total number of fatalities from road crashes in Arab countries in 2016 (43,379 fatalities).

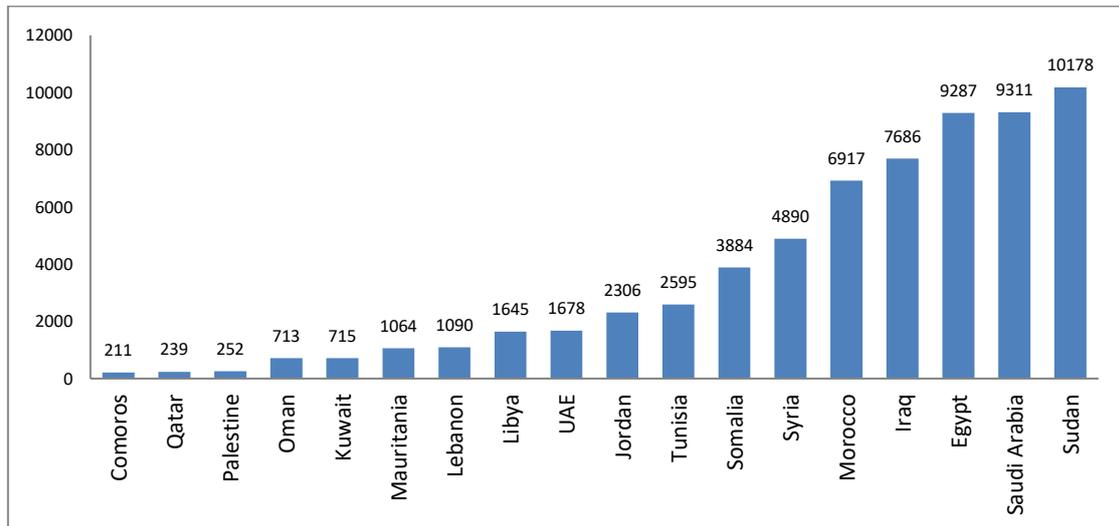


Figure 1: Estimated Road Crash Fatalities in the Arab countries for 2016

However, based on the comparison of fatality rates per 100,000 inhabitants, the ranking changes. The Arab countries that occupy the top five ranks are the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (28.8), Somalia (27.1), the Syrian Arab Republic (26.5), Comoros (26.5) and Libya (26.1) (figure.2).

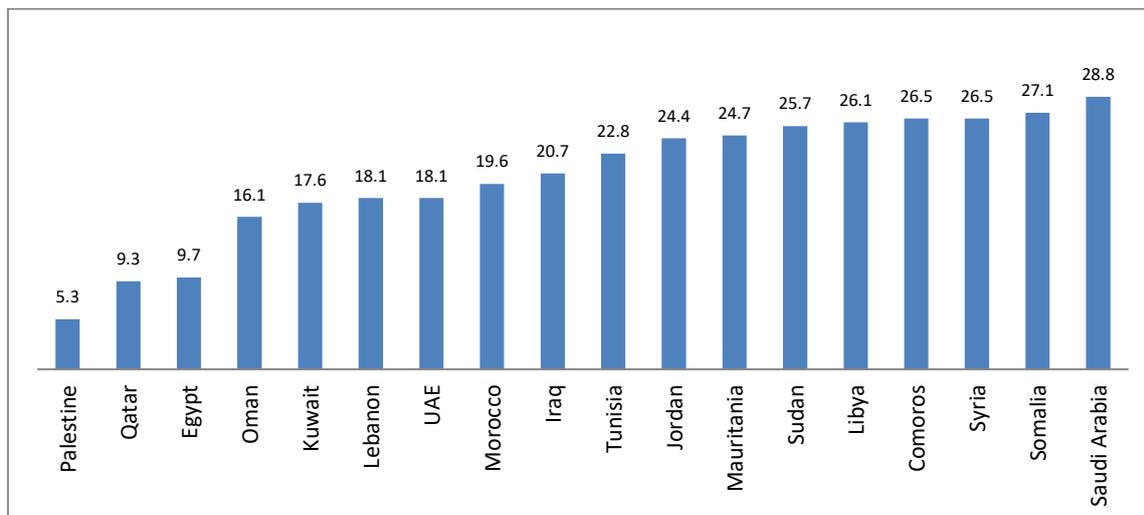


Figure 2: Estimated Road Crash Fatalities in the Arab countries per 100,000 inhabitants for 2016

Table.1 illustrates the WHO estimated number of road crash fatalities in Arab countries (for which data are available during 2010, 2013 and 2016). This table reveals that the percentage change of the number of fatalities between the years mentioned, and shows that the total number of fatalities in the countries decreased in 2013, but increased again in 2016 (with an increase of 6% compared to 2013 and 4% compared to 2010).

Table 1: Percentage change of the Estimated Road Crash Fatalities in the Arab countries

Country	Estimated fatalities (2010)	Estimated fatalities (2013)	Estimated fatalities (2016)	% change (2010-2016) %	% change (2013-2016) %
Egypt	10,721	10,466	9287	13-	11-
Iraq	9,962	6,826	7686	23-	13
Jordan	1,414	1,913	2306	63	21
Kuwait	452	629	715	58	14
Lebanon	942	1,088	1090	16	0
Mauritania	970	952	1064	10	12
Morocco	5,759	6,87	6917	20	1
Oman	845	924	713	16-	23-
Palestine	131	241	252	92	5
Qatar	247	330	239	3-	28-
Saudi Arabia	6,800	7,898	9311	37	18
Sudan	10,935	9,221	10178	7-	10
Tunisia	1,974	2,679	2595	31	3-
UAE	956	1,021	1678	76	64
Total	52,108	51,058	54,031	4%	6%

Source: WHO Global Status reports on Road safety 2018, 2015, 2013.

B. Road Safety Management in the Arab Countries

ESCWA, in cooperation with the University Saint Joseph in Beirut, conducted a survey related to road safety data systems in Arab countries. As part of this survey, which was conducted between August and November 2018, ESCWA received responses from eleven Member States regarding the existence of the following entities of road safety management (Table 2):

- The higher road safety council headed by the Prime Minister;
- The technical road safety committee headed by the minister responsible for road safety affairs (i.e. the Minister of Transport or the Minister of the Interior);
- The lead agency responsible for planning and monitoring road safety measures in coordination with various stakeholders;
- The national observatory responsible for collecting and analyzing road safety data;
- The national strategy dedicated to improving road safety.

Table2 : Status of Road Safety Management in the Arab Countries

Country	Higher Council	Technical Committee	Lead Agency	National Observatory	National strategy
Jordan	No	No	No	No	Yes
UAE					
Bahrein					
Tunisia	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Tunisia	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Syria	Yes				Yes
Iraq	No	Yes	No	No	No
Oman	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Palestine	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Qatar	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kuwait	No	No	No	No	Yes
Lebanon	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Libya					
Egypt					
Morocco	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Saudi Arabia					
Mauritania					
Yamen					
Total	6	6	3	2	7

The table above reveals that seven Arab countries have a national strategy to improve road safety, noting that ESCWA received a copy of the national strategy from Jordan and the State of Palestine only. The table also shows that only two countries have a national road safety observatory, namely Tunisia and Qatar, although the observatory is essential for producing comprehensive and reliable data that help in developing effective policies, strategies and action plans to improve road safety.

C. Road Safety Priorities in the Arab countries

ESCWA, in partnership with the UNSG's Special Envoy for Road Safety, organized a regional workshop on road safety management in the Arab countries, in Beirut on 27 and 28 November 2018 embedded within the activities of the 19th session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics. The event was attended by high-level officials from the ministries of Transport and Interior of fifteen Arab countries, a representative from Algeria, in addition to university experts and representatives of a number of regional and international organizations as well as non-governmental organizations.

In parallel with the workshop, an exhibition was organized to raise awareness on road safety issues such as the importance of wearing seat belts and the consequences of distracted driving or driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol. This exhibition was organized in cooperation with the National Council for Road Safety in Lebanon, the Lebanese Internal Security Forces, University Saint Joseph in Beirut, the Lebanese Red Cross and a number of specialized government agencies and NGOs concerned with road safety.

The dialogues and discussions held during the workshop ended with a set of regional priorities which define the general framework of action plans to improve the management of road safety in Arab countries during 2019- 2020 (Table.3).

Table 3: Priorities of Road Safety Management in the Arab Region

Components	Priorities	International Support
1. National Strategies and Action Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish or activate the national systems for road safety management, including the national lead agencies; b. Develop working relationships with counterparts in relevant ministries (In case of the absence of a national committee on road safety); c. Develop and implement action plans; d. Update/Adjust action plans e. Building partnerships at the national level (Between the public and private sectors). 	ESCWA, Euro Med, World Bank, IsDB; Best practices from other regions (i.e. EU).
2. Strengthening Regulatory Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Accession to six UN RS conventions b. Implementation of six UN R.S. conventions 	ESCWA, UNECE, the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Euro Med, WB, IsDB, IRU.
3. Road Safety Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Initiate the collaboration with vital registration national offices b. Strengthen basic registries such as vehicles, drivers, enforcement (tickets issued) c. Consider establishing a Regional Observatory that coordinates and facilitates national data improvements, for example: crash investigation 	ESCWA, FIA, WB, WHO, Euro-Med, ITF, AULT
4. Networking and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Facilitate the exchange of knowledge between experts, academia, research institutes and Member States. b. Determine the sources of financing 	ESCWA

D. ESCWA Participation in Stockholm Conference 19-20 February 2020:

As part of the international efforts on road safety, the Swedish capital, Stockholm, hosted the Third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety on 19-20 February 2020. It is the third such conference after the first conference held in Moscow in 2009 and the second in Brasilia in 2015. The significance of the third conference lies in its calendar since it coincides with the end of the United Nations Decade for Road Safety 2011-2020.

The Stockholm Declaration was the main outcome of this conference, which connects road safety to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also reflects the recommendations of the conference's independent Academic Expert Group and its scientific assessments of progress made during the last decade (2011-2020).

ESCWA participated in the preparation of Member States' participation in the conference. The conference details were also mentioned during the 20th session of the ESCWA Committee on Transport and Logistics, held in Amman on 9-10 December 2019. ESCWA submitted a draft of the conference declaration including comments and recommendations on this subject to all the ministers of transport and interior of its Member States.

The official sessions of the conference witnessed five interventions from delegations of ESCWA Member States, including:

- His Excellency the Minister of Transport in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Eng. Saleh Al-Jasser;
- His Excellency the Minister of Equipment, Transport, Logistics and Water in the Kingdom of Morocco Mr. Abdelkader Emara,
- His Excellency the President of the Public Works Authority in the State of Qatar, Dr. Saad Al-Mohannadi;
- Director of the National Agency for Traffic Safety in the Kingdom of Morocco, Mr. Nasser Boulajoul;
- A member of the Egyptian Parliament, Dr. Hala Abu Ali;

The conference also witnessed the announcement of the approved projects of the United Nations Road Safety Fund for 2020, with ESCWA's share being two projects worth \$ 585,000.

E. UNGA Resolution A/RES/74/299 on Road Safety

On 31 August 2020, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution [A/RES/74/299](#) related to road safety.

Among other issues, the new resolution includes the following key provisions:

- Endorsement of the Stockholm Declaration ;
- Proclamation of the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021 – 2030, with a goal to reduce deaths and injuries by 50% by 2030 ;
- Request from WHO and the UN regional commissions in cooperation with UNRSC partners and other stakeholders to prepare a plan of action of the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021 – 2030;
- Decision to convene a high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly no later than the end of 2022.

ESCWA has actively participated in the proceedings of the inter-agency task force in charge of the preparation of the plan of action of the new decade. The task force made regular meetings and achieved a global Plan for the Decade of Action 2021-2030 which was launched officially on 28 October 2021.

ESCWA presented the recommendations of the resolution during the 21st session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, held on 8 December 2020, and the draft Global Plan of Action of the new Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 in a regional workshop held on 18 May 2021.

F. UNRSF Projects in the Arab region.

ESCWA is actively participating to the activities of the United Nations Road Safety Fund. ESCWA was reelected Chair of the Fund Steering Committee for a second term 2021/2022.

As following to the two calls for proposals of the Fund, in 2019 and in 2020, ESCWA is leading the implementation of three road safety projects financed by the UNRSF for a total amount of US \$ 865,709:

- **Jordan:** “Reducing road deaths and injuries in Jordan through increasing restraint use”, with a budget of US \$ 267,550 over 18 months. This project focuses on increasing the percentage of use of seat belts and child restraint systems. The project aims to review the regulatory framework for the use of seat belts and child restraint systems and to raise awareness on these 2 topics.
- **Tunisia:** “Transformative Action for Safe Motorcycle in Tunisia”, with a budget of 317,284 USD over 24 months. Through its activities, the project aims at changing the behavior of motorcycle users towards a better perception and understanding of the highway code. The Project will initially target three pilot regions as part of a progressive approach that can be extended to other regions. It will also target vulnerable populations like young people and rural women workers.
- **Regional Project:** “Strengthening evidence-based interventions for road safety in the Arab region through effective and reliable data recording, processing and analysis”, with a budget of 280,875 USD over 22 months. This project aims to strengthen the technical capacities of Arab countries to establish an effective and sustainable evidence-based policymaking for road safety through establishment of common and standardized processes, methods and tools for efficient recording, processing and analysis of disaggregated data on road crashes fatalities and injuries in the Arab region. The project will provide adequate training, capacity building and technical assistance to ESCWA Member States through the exchange of experiences and lessons learned between three pilot countries representing the geographic diversity of the region (Tunisia in North Africa, Lebanon in the Mashreq and Qatar in the Gulf, as self-financing.).

G. Additional ESCWA Initiatives

a. The GIS of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab States (ITSAS-GIS)

Road Safety indicators for each country are integrated within ITSAS-GIS platform. Knowing that the platform aims to follow up and develop the components of the integrated transport system in the Arab countries, ESCWA asked its Member States to update these indicators remotely and regularly, via Cloud GIS, in order to conduct the analysis and provide the necessary guidance for the national road safety strategies.

In this context, ESCWA in cooperation with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), UN ECE, and CETMO had organized two coordination/trainings workshop in Beirut in addition to two remote coordination/trainings workshop.

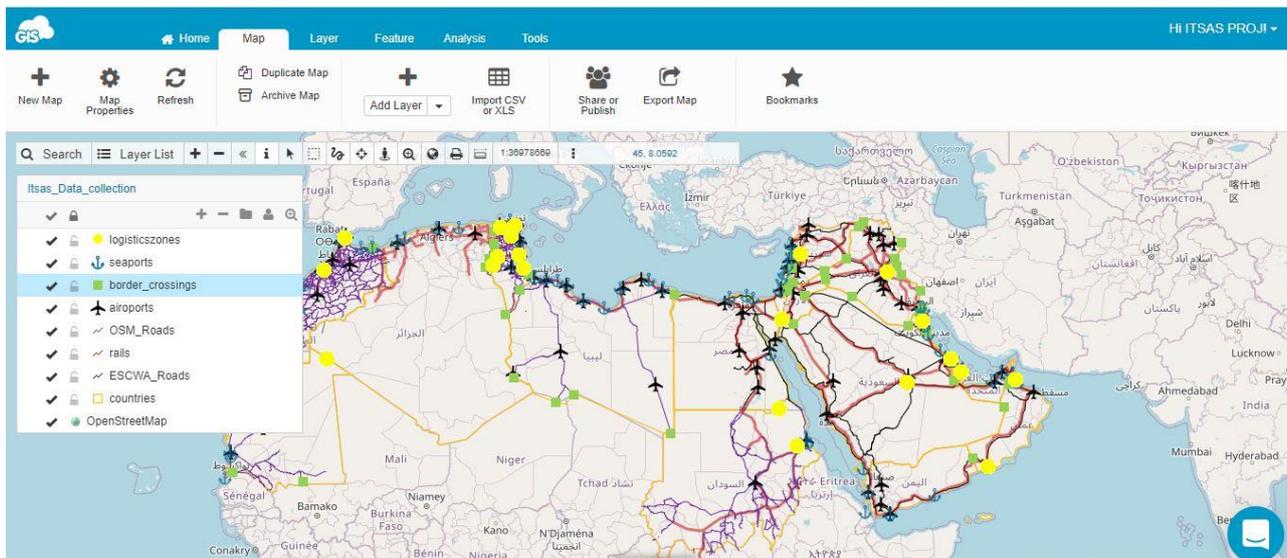


Figure 3: Extract from ITSAS GIS, Roads Network Layer

b. Advocacy for the Arab Integrated Road Safety Observatory

ESCWA is currently advocating for the creation of an Arab Integrated Road Safety Observatory to play a coordination and homogenization role to improve the quality of data related to road crashes and their results, in term of injuries and fatalities. ESCWA is currently seeking the necessary funding for the implementation and the operation of the Arab Road Safety Observatory.

ESCWA presented a draft concept note of the project at the regional workshop on road safety in the Arab countries that was held virtually on 18 May 2021. The concept note was then sent to ESCWA focal point ministries on 30 June 2021, asking member States to express their interest in joining the project, and to nominate two focal points, one for policies and the other for data , as well as the country potential wish of hosting the technical secretariat of the Observatory after the interim period during which ESCWA will tackle this task.

c. Integrating Road Safety in all sessions of the Committee on Transport and Logistics

During the previous sessions of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, road safety issues in the Arab region were discussed during the 18th session (20-21 December, 2017, Beirut), the 19th session (27-28 November, 2018, Beirut), as well as the 20th session (9-10 December, 2019, Amman).

By the end of November 2020, ESCWA will hold the 21st session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, where a special presentation will be dedicated to Road Safety. Moreover, a parliamentary paper is prepared to inform countries about the new decade of action, the recommendations of the GA resolutions, as well as the 2020 Call for Proposals of the UNRSF.

Updates on road safety will be presented at the 22nd Session of ESCWA committee on transport and logistics, scheduled on 6 and 7 December 2021 in Cairo, Egypt.

d. Supporting Academia

Since 2012, ESCWA has supported a Master's program on road safety management at the University Saint-Joseph of Beirut (USJ), created with the financial support of the Renault Foundation. ESCWA supports the Master by welcoming certain students as interns, offering teaching activities and jointly organizing conferences, seminars and training workshops.

Besides the Master's program, ESCWA signed an MOU in 2018 with the same university to conduct more advanced research projects. As a result, ESCWA received a Ph.D. candidate to work on the conception of the information system of the Arab Road Safety Observatory.

e. Supporting UNSG's Special Envoy visit to the region

ESCWA provided substantive support for the facilitation of the visits of the UNSG's Special Envoy for Road Safety to countries of the region, including background notes, and key messages. ESCWA also suggested names of high dignitaries to meet with. The Special Envoy's visits included Bahrain on 24 March 2021, Qatar on 21 November 2021, UAE on 1 December 2021, and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia from 2 to 5 December 2021.

Conclusion

The objective of the past decade of action was not achieved in the Arab region. Road Safety should remain a priority within the next decade. Therefore, the current conflicts and crises dominating the scenery in the Arab region should not lead to ignore the persistent problem of road safety, with its human, social and economic burden.