

Seventh United Nations Partnership Meeting for Road Safety, 13 December 2023

Background note/updates from the Department of Peace Operations (DPO)

General background

In September 2020, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/74/299, titled “Advancing Global Road Safety,” inaugurating the commencement of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030. The primary goal of this initiative is to reduce road traffic fatalities and injuries by a minimum of 50 percent by the year 2030. Collaborating with partners in the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations regional commissions played a key role in formulating the Global Plan for the Decade of Action, which was released in October 2021.

Aligned with the Stockholm Declaration, the Global Plan underscores a comprehensive approach to road safety. It advocates for continual enhancements in road and vehicle design, advancements in laws and law enforcement, and the timely provision of emergency care for the injured. Furthermore, the plan actively promotes walking, cycling, and public transport as healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transportation.

Building upon the achievements of the previous Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020), the new Decade provides an opportunity to expedite efforts. Notable accomplishments include the integration of road safety into the global health and development agenda, widespread dissemination of effective guidance, strengthened partnerships, and successful resource mobilization. The Global Plan encourages governments and stakeholders to embrace an integrated Safe System approach, positioning road safety as a pivotal driver of sustainable development. The plan outlines five pillars for action: safe road infrastructure, safe road use, multimodal transport and land-use planning, safe vehicles, and post-crash response.

Nevertheless, data regarding road vehicle accidents within the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) remains incomplete, particularly in low-income countries with post-conflict societies that are vulnerable to high rates of accidents and mortality. Establishing an effective system of vehicle and road traffic safety is imperative for the United Nations Police to promote sustainable law and order, signaling a return to normalcy for conflict-affected communities.

The United Nations Police, through daily operational activities, community-oriented policing, and community engagement, assumes a pivotal role in addressing reckless human behavior on the roads. This encompasses issues such as failure to wear seat belts, helmets, excessive speeds, and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Within the context of the Action for Peacekeeping Plus strategy, the DPO places paramount importance on the safety and security of peacekeepers, recognizing road traffic accidents as a significant contributor to fatalities and injuries. DPO employs a range of strategies to mitigate safety risks, encompassing driver training and certification, rigorous vehicle maintenance, adherence to speed limits, utilization of technology (such as speed governors and GPS tracking), provision of protective gear, effective road traffic management, comprehensive security briefings, well-defined escort and convoy procedures, thorough incident reporting and analysis, and active community engagement. This involves raising awareness about safe driving practices and potential risks, as well as collaborating with local authorities to address road safety concerns specific to each community.

The DPO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) jointly chair the Inter-Agency Task Force on Policing (IATF-P), established in May 2021. This task force aims to enhance strategic-level coordination, standardize guidance, strengthen planning and partnerships, mobilize resources, and facilitate

communication and dialogue. Meetings at both principal and director levels have transpired, with key stakeholders, including the WHO European Region Programme Manager for Road Safety, Violence, and Injury Prevention. The collaboration between DPO, UNODC, and other IATF-P members is anticipated to propel joint activities in the realm of road safety.

The mission of the United Nations Police is to enhance international peace and security by supporting Member States in conflict, post-conflict, and other crisis situations to realize effective, efficient, representative, responsive, and accountable police services that serve and protect the population.

The DPO has aligned its mission with the Global Plan for Decade 2021-2030, which calls for all agencies to prioritize and implement an integrated safe system approach that positions road safety as a key driver to sustainable development. To that end, United Nations Police build and support, where mandated, host-state police capacity to prevent and detect crime, protect life and property, and maintain public order and safety in adherence to the rule of law and international human rights law.

Summary of DPO Efforts towards Road Safety Agenda

- DPO participated in the Road Safety Retreat in Geneva in July 2023. The retreat brought together various actors and agencies to develop a UN Road Map for Road Safety 2023-2026. The road map outlined the activities of different UN agencies, projects, initiatives, and new opportunities for improving road safety. It allowed agencies to align, coordinate, and collaborate to generate synergies.
- DPO attended the 1st European Regional Meeting on Road Policing in Istanbul in November 2023. The conference aimed to establish a cooperative and collaborative network of road policing agencies. The UN Police Advisor Commissioner Faisal Shahkar gave his speech highlighting the role of road policing and law enforcement in achieving the objectives of the Global Plan for Decade of Action.
- The United Nations Police continue to provide technical support to law enforcement agencies in peacekeeping and political missions and strengthen the capabilities of host state police services in the country of operation. The United Nations Police, in their daily operational activities in the missions, take measures to enhance road safety by implementing reform and restructuring initiatives to host states and build their capacities through community-oriented policing and intelligence-led policing activities. These actions, among other policing tasks, aim to promote road safety enforcement, training, effective management of road safety data, community engagement, leverage on digital technologies for more effective road safety planning and responses, and raising road safety awareness.
- The DPO remains committed to promoting and supporting road policing in all its operations where it is mandated. DPO recognizes that road policing is a key factor in achieving road safety objectives and acknowledges a huge gap in road policing within the UN system. As such, in our 2024 plans, DPO aims to establish a framework that will facilitate the development and expansion of road policing within the system and remains open to exploring synergies with other agencies towards this end.
- The DPO Police Division plans to convene a doctrine development group in 2024, comprising Member State-nominated experts to collaboratively develop a manual on road safety and traffic management for UNPOL.