



## **The First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety**

**Moscow, 19-20 November 2009**

*REMARKS TO THE OPENING PLENARY SESSION*

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Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words at the start of this important event. The organisation I represent, the International Transport Forum, brings together Transport Ministers from over 50 Countries around the world. The ITF, and its predecessor the ECMT, have worked together with the OECD on Road Safety for over forty years, involving experts, civil servants and Ministers, mainly from Transport but also other areas like the police and interior. And all the world's best performing Countries in road safety are in the ITF. Thus, there is a large body of work and experience that has valuable lessons for those who would like to advance. This experience can be useful as it may allow Countries at the beginning of this journey to go faster than the developed Countries did. As a contribution, we have put together on a CD<sup>1</sup> for this event, all the recommendations made by Ministers over the last thirty years. These are still relevant and also show how policy and thinking have advanced. In the early years, these recommendations focussed on specific, and vital interventions like seat belts, drinking and driving, and speed limits. Only recently was a more comprehensive approach (which we now call a safe system approach) drawn up. This approach was the result of many years of experience and essentially means bringing all the actions and institutions and frameworks together to form a coherent policy across the entire Government and society.

With this extensive experience we can summarise some of the essential factors making a strong and successful safety policy at national level.

I would underline four:

The first is **political commitment**; this has worked best when it comes from the very top, when the Prime Minister or President takes the lead and insists on the measures and structures being put into place to deliver results. Commitment and support are also needed from politicians and parliamentarians, as road safety measures are not always popular and political leaders need their help in communicating and implementing them.

The second is **clear objectives and aims**; as we heard, quantitative targets for fatalities and serious injuries are important; but many other intermediate or indirect targets are also indicators of risk and need to be used, like percentage wearing seat belts or helmets, number of drink driving tests. Our own recent publication, *Towards Zero*<sup>2</sup>, provides information and analysis on this, and we are pleased that it is now also available in Russian.

Third, is **coordination of all the actors involved**; many Countries have coordination mechanisms between agencies; this is needed but is not enough.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/Pub/pdf/09CDsr/index.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/Pub/pdf/08TowardsZeroE.pdf> ( also available in Russian )

Experience shows that a lead agency is required. This agency must be charged, from the very highest level, with delivery. Too often we have seen disputes between agencies or Ministries, and one or the other not contributing. All agencies need to be committed and involved in delivering results, and must have the resources and capacity to do so.

Vertical coordination is also needed as regions and local authorities have a crucial role; plans and even competition between them on targets can help. Increasingly too, private actors (hauliers, distribution companies, insurers, manufacturers) are getting involved and making valuable contributions.

Finally, there are the **measures and plans** that work together to deliver the results. Though we have learned a lot, there is no surprise that the key measures still involve tried and tested actions like seat belt wearing, stopping drinking and driving and respecting speed limits. If we were to pick one measure that makes a concrete difference it is to get speeds down. The empirical evidence is that each 1% reduction in speed can bring a 4% reduction in fatalities. In recent years too, specific measures aimed at young drivers have been extremely effective.

Implementation of Safety Policy is a national matter of course, and here political courage and determination are needed. And it is a long battle. Countries with the best records, like Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway or the UK, have been working on this for over thirty years. And there can be no let up. France is seeing this year that it cannot be assumed that good progress will automatically be continued.

But while the main responsibility is a national one, there is a valuable role for international cooperation and coordination. Sharing good practice in all areas is an obvious example. Another is data; we collect and publish data, allowing comparisons between Countries; no Country wants to be at the bottom of the league table, so that too is a way to contribute to improvements. For Countries to improve, they need good analysis and data on their situation. International comparisons through our IRTAD<sup>3</sup> data base is one way to do this. Another activity of ours, has been detailed policy peer reviews carried out, at Countries' invitation, using outside experts to review and comment on national policies. A review was carried out in Russia<sup>4</sup> a couple of years ago, and we are glad to say that road deaths have been reduced by 6,000 since then. We have just done a revision to this review, praising Russia for the positive actions taken. However, Russia still has much to do, and its performance is still five times worse than the best Countries, so there is scope for improvement. The commitment of President Medvedev that we have just heard, and the concrete steps he announced, should make a significant difference.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/irtad/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> Road Safety Performance. National Peer Review: Russian Federation, Paris, 2006,  
<http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/Pub/pdf/06SafetyRussia.pdf> (also available in Russian)  
<http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/Pub/pdf/06SafetyRussiaRu.pdf>  
2009 Update will be available online soon

To end, I would like to emphasise that all Countries need to keep moving forward. The fact remains that if all Countries could get fatalities down to the level of the best performing Countries, which is around 5 deaths per 100,000 people per year, by 2050 there would still be around half a million deaths on the world's roads. That is still too many. So even the best must keep moving ahead. We need new ideas and innovations. The fundamental laws need to be examined, and technology needs to be used more. Roads need to become as safe as rail and air.

A combination of determined implementation of what is known to work and continuing innovation can dramatically reduce the global toll of deaths and injuries on our roads.

We will continue to contribute actively to this challenge, and our experience, knowledge and networks are at the disposal of all Countries who wish to use them.

Jack Short.