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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT
**OF THE WORKSHOP ON BUILDING THE ARAB MASHREQ ROAD
SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (AMRSP)**
DOHA, 21-22 OCTOBER 2008

Summary

The workshop on building the Arab Mashreq Road Safety Partnership was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) and Shell. The workshop was held to discuss the progress made in developing national road safety strategies, the establishment of national lead agencies for road safety, and reviewing the proposal for an Arab Mashreq Road Safety Partnership (AMRSP) to increase regional collaboration in this field and support road safety initiatives. The main outcome of this workshop was the initiation of a regional road safety partnership that will act as a road safety 'centre of excellence' to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and support road safety efforts throughout the region.

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Introduction

1. A workshop on building the Arab Mashreq Road Safety Partnership was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) and Shell, in collaboration with the Traffic and Patrols Department and Public Relations Department of the Ministry of Interior, Qatar. The workshop was held on 21-22 October 2008 at the Sheraton Hotel in Doha, Qatar. More than 150 participants from 14 ESCWA member countries attended the workshop. Participants included Government delegates, private sector companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
2. The workshop was held to discuss the progress made in developing national road safety strategies, the establishment of national lead agencies for road safety, and to review the proposal for an Arab Mashreq Road Safety Partnership (AMRSP) in order to increase regional collaboration on road safety and support road safety initiatives. This workshop is the third to deal with road safety issues to be held in recent years; the two other workshops dealt with the Implementation of Good Practices in Road Safety (Muscat, 28-29 November 2005) and Capacity-Building of the National Focal Points of the First UN Global Road Safety Week (Cairo, 20-21 December 2006).

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

3. At the conclusion of the workshop, the participants agreed to:
 - (a) Establish a regional road safety partnership for countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The partnership would be composed of representatives from Governments, the business community and non-governmental organizations;
 - (b) Form a task force composed of representatives from the different sectors to review the proposed details of the partnership within a period of six months. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Global Road Safety Partnership and Shell will support and facilitate the work of the task force through a secretariat;
 - (c) The task force will validate a name for the partnership and communicate on a regular basis with interested parties through the secretariat;
 - (d) Prioritize potential projects and invite members to participate in the projects that have been chosen;
 - (e) Invite members to initiate national road safety partnerships in their respective countries.

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Four meetings were held on the first day to discuss issues related to road safety in the ESCWA region and the Arab Mashreq region and the creation of the Arab Mashreq Road Safety Partnership. On the second day, four parallel working groups met to discuss different aspects of the partnership.

A. PROGRESS IN ROAD SAFETY MANAGEMENT: PLANS AND STRATEGIES

5. Ms. Shawqiya Humidan, Chief of Traffic Engineering, Ministry of Works, Bahrain reported on the study conducted for the development of the road safety strategy in Bahrain. The study included an evaluation of road traffic safety and the identification of strengths, weaknesses and other critical issues. Ms. Humidan also presented a summary of a proposed road safety strategy to reduce road traffic fatalities by 30 per cent in 10 years.

6. Mr. Imad Hajarat, Director of the Jordan Traffic Institute, gave an overview on road safety measures in Jordan. He presented data on road traffic crashes (number of road traffic crashes, fatalities, etc.), the economic cost and causes of such crashes and suggested solutions. Mr. Hajarat also pointed out that road safety measures had been endorsed by the Royal Family and have since gained significant attention at all levels of Government. In 2008, these new measures had succeeded in reducing the numbers of road traffic crashes and resulting injuries and deaths.
7. Mr. Abdel Aziz Al-Ghannam, Director of Strategic Studies, High Commission for the Development of Arriyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia presented the road traffic safety strategy for the city of Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. Since the implementation of the strategy in 2005, the fatality rate of road traffic crashes dropped from 480 in 2005 to 357 by the end of 2007, and the numbers of serious road traffic injuries dropped from 1,555 to 1,170 over the same period. Mr. Al-Ghannam pointed out that the goal is to reduce these numbers by 50 per cent in the next five years.
8. Mr. Taher Mahmoudi, General Manager, General Traffic Directorate of Libya presented the road safety strategy of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. This strategy was the result of a partnership between the General Department of Traffic Police and Shell Libya. The road safety strategy addresses the social and economic costs of road traffic crashes, as well as other issues such as infrastructure, road design and public awareness. The road safety strategy is about to be implemented and has been circulated to all interested parties and disseminated to the wider public through the local press.
9. Mr. Mohammed Al-Maliki, General Coordinator of the National Campaign for Road Accidents Prevention, General Administration of Public Security, Qatar described the measures taken by the Traffic and Patrols Department in the Ministry of Interior of Qatar to reduce road traffic crashes. Envisaged future recommended actions include: preparing a national road safety strategy and plan; installing cameras to monitor traffic on all highways and bridges; and training employees in the traffic and patrols department.
10. A discussion followed on the assessment of progress in road safety management, the need for more reliable data, and the challenges facing the implementation of road safety strategies.

B. REGIONAL ROAD SAFETY NEEDS

11. Mr. Syed Jaffar Hussain, Regional Advisor, Injury and Violence Prevention and Disability, World Health Organization Eastern Mediterranean Office (EMRO) affirmed that road traffic injuries are a huge public health and development problem, and that road safety is an economic, social, and equity issue, with the poor being the most vulnerable. Road traffic injuries and deaths would increase significantly without appropriate action; road safety is therefore a shared responsibility and should be addressed using a 'systems approach', which could ensure that common human errors do not lead to fatal outcomes. He noted that deaths resulting from road traffic crashes are just the tip of the iceberg – many more persons are injured, often with medium- to long-term disabilities. Road traffic injuries and the resultant deaths and disabilities can be prevented and evidence-based interventions are available. Partnerships can enhance the level of political commitment, engage multiple sectors, facilitate evidence-based interventions, and engage communities and media to raise their voice to promote road safety.
12. Mr. Wahid Al-Kharusi, Chief of Orthopedic Trauma and Rehabilitation, Oman presented a paper on the medical needs of victims of road traffic crashes and community prevention and outreach programmes. The United Nations now recognizes that road safety and road traffic crashes and injuries are public health concerns, and not simply a transportation issue. He stressed the need for serious political will, as well as capacity-building, knowledge-sharing, data collection, and a holistic approach to the management of road traffic injuries. He also highlighted the need for community involvement in road safety, especially youth participation as they are the most affected by such tragedies. Communities have to be kept abreast of the realities of road trauma and its negative impact, and how they can collaborate with other stakeholders to minimize the damage.

13. Mr. Amer Melhem, Disaster Management Coordinator at the Qatar Red Crescent Society said that Red Cross and Red Crescent societies can play in a regional road safety partnership and advocacy campaigns. He said that Governments can also benefit from available case studies and community-based approaches to promote road safety and raise awareness of the problem. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Society has launched a global alliance on risk reduction, and road traffic crashes tops the list of risks that urgently need to be addressed.

14. Mr. Basil Shaaban, Professional Formula 3 Racing Driver and United Nations World Ambassador for Road Safety, said that mitigating the global road safety crisis had parallels with car racing. The high-speed world of professional circuit racing called for the highest safety and responsible driving standards. These safety and driving standards could be used to promote road safety in the Middle East. To date, his efforts to promote road safety have focused on educating and motivating young people in the Middle East to take a responsible approach to their lives and ensure that they adopt safe driving habits.

15. Ms. Nellie Ghusayni, Chairperson of the World Youth Assembly for Road Safety told participants that 1,049 young lives were lost every day in road traffic crashes – more than 30 per cent of road traffic fatalities yearly. Youth needed to become more involved in this issue as, tragically, they have earned the right to have a say in matters relating to road safety. Young people should be viewed as active participants, partners, and eventually leaders in this field. This is the best way to create a sustainable road safety movement and a culture of safety among a population that actively seeks out risk. She also shared her experiences as the Chairperson of the World Youth Assembly (23-24 April 2007, Geneva, Switzerland) where 400 young delegates from more than 100 countries adopted the Youth Declaration for Road Safety. She called on participants and organizations present at the workshop to continue supporting the global youth road safety organization, and attract, empower, and equip young people in the region to take responsibility for their safety, but also check to see if what is being done will achieve positive results.

C. ROAD SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS

16. Mr. Raoul Restucci, Executive Vice President of Exploration and Production, Middle East, Caspian and South Asia, Shell emphasized that road transportation is an integral part of Shell activities. Shell has comprehensive internal programmes to manage its exposure to road traffic crashes. However, despite these efforts, road transportation remains the number one cause of fatalities in Shell. The company is committed to improving its performance and recognizes that focusing on internal programmes alone will not mitigate the problem. Shell and the wider business sector, can play a vital role in supporting broader societal improvements. Through its regional office in Dubai, Shell is supporting the proposal for an Arab Mashreq Road Safety Partnership. He said that a partnership approach would bring real benefits to the region. He announced that Shell has offered to provide financial support to the partnership secretariat while it is established and developed.

17. Mr. Peter Elsenaar, Senior Advisor, Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) gave examples of GRSP road safety partnerships from around the world, and said that as road crashes are caused by society, the countermeasures should also be initiated by society. Governments, NGOs and the private sector need to join together to raise awareness and execute projects, particularly as joint efforts have been shown to be effective. He proposed that the GRSP constitution could be a source of inspiration for the organization of the Arab Mashreq Road Safety Partnership (AMRSP). He also suggested that his organization's experience in implementing successful projects, and that this along with the recommendations contained in WHO road safety manuals, could serve as starting points for AMRSP activities. Mr. Elsenaar stressed that regional projects should fit into national road safety plans in order to build synergies with national programmes, and work towards the objective of reducing risk on roads in the region, which are currently far higher than that of Europe or the United States.

18. Mr. Bassam Anani, First Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) highlighted that road transport, unlike other transport modes, suffers from

shortage of regulatory tools and enforcement. Road safety could be improved by avoiding duplication of efforts and making use of the good practices that have proven to be effective in combating road traffic tragedies. It is essential that all stakeholders play a role in road safety, especially NGOs and the private sector. As an impartial entity at an equal distance from all partners, the United Nations can play a key role in a regional road safety partnership. If present efforts in establishing the partnership are successful, they will represent a milestone in regional road safety and a major achievement to report to the First Global Ministerial Meeting on Road Safety to be held in Moscow, Russian Federation, on 19-20 November 2009.

19. After the presentations a discussion took place on the need and role for road safety partnerships in the region. The discussion focused on the need to involve local communities and victims of road traffic crashes in such partnerships.

20. The second day of the workshop was dedicated to the establishment of the Arab Mashreq Road Safety Partnership. Four parallel working groups focused on different aspects of the partnership. Guidelines for the working groups were sent to all participants prior to the workshop and also distributed on the first day. The main outcomes of each of the working groups are summarized below.

D. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARAB MASHREQ ROAD SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

21. Working group one discussed the need for road safety strategies and plans in the region, as well as the role of a regional partnership in supporting the preparation and implementation of these plans. A national road safety plan should be the leading framework for national partnership projects. Some countries already have road safety plans in place, others are currently in the implementation phase, while others plan to develop them. A common approach to road safety plans is recommended.

22. Participants discussed whether the AMRSP should provide assistance in drafting national road safety plans; whether national road safety plans should be drafted within the context of partnership projects; if data collection and evaluation of measures regional projects should be produced within the framework of an AMRSP partnership project; whether existing best practices in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, Jordan, Bahrain and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya could be applied in other countries; whether road safety plans should be formulated across the ESCWA region and if so, what they should be; and lastly whether facilities for training, academic education in road safety and professional development for existing staff be included in plans, and if so, how should the AMRSP support these activities.

23. Working group two discussed the objectives, membership, structure and finance of the AMRSP. Participants agreed that road safety is a shared responsibility and therefore required the participation of different sectors and stakeholders. Participants also focused on the short- and long-term objectives of the AMRSP and its priorities; its potential membership and the membership balance between the private sector, national Governments, local Governments and NGOs; the management and operations structure of AMRSP; the role and responsibility of members/partners; how operational funding of the partnership will be secured (administration, logistics, etc.); how can funds could be secured for national and regional activities/projects; and lastly how to ensure that the partnership can be self-sustainable in the longer term.

24. Working groups three and four discussed potential projects and activities. Participants proposed a number of potential projects such as: an international 'road show' to promote road safety, youth road safety clubs in schools; a campaign to promote the use of seatbelts; and capacity-building for professional drivers. Participants identified potential partners and target countries for each project and completed project forms for proposed projects. These proposed projects will be reviewed and worthwhile projects will be recommended to the task force for their consideration.

25. Discussions were held on the name of the proposed partnership. As the proposed name (Arab Mashreq Road Safety Partnership) only referred to countries in the ESCWA region, it was suggested that the partnership should also cover the Middle East and North Africa region. Participants were asked to propose projects that could be implemented by the partnership, and whether the partnership could base its work on the recommendations/actions contained in road safety manuals and practical guides prepared by the

Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, the Global Road Safety Partnership, World Health Organization and World Bank.

26. Participants were asked to list the specific needs of the region, and how these needs are related to the principal causes of road traffic crashes in their respective countries. Participants were asked if the proposed partnership should support existing initiatives or prepare their own initiatives, or both; whether there were any successful initiatives or good practices that could be replicated in other ESCWA countries; and what specific national and regional activities/projects the partnership should implement. Lastly, they were asked how the partnership could set about collecting and disseminating road safety information and good practices at a regional level.

III. OPENING OF THE WORKSHOP

27. Mr. Mohamed Al-Kharji, Director, Traffic and Patrols, Ministry of the Interior, Qatar welcomed participants to Doha and stressed the importance of road safety as a regional problem. He hoped that the decisions and recommendations emanating from the workshop will trigger positive changes in road safety in the region.

28. Mr. Bassam Anani of ESCWA thanked the Government of Qatar for hosting the workshop. He said that road traffic crashes had severe social and economic impacts and that young people are the major victims of such tragedies. ESCWA, in compliance with United Nations resolutions, has a significant role to play in promoting road safety and supporting initiatives, such as the establishment of road safety partnerships.

29. Mr. Andrew Pearce, Chief Executive Officer of the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) told participants that it was a critical moment for road safety – not only in this region, but globally. Road traffic crashes accounted for about 1.2 million deaths a year and many more injuries. This global crisis is a man-made disaster and could be controlled. If collective action was taken, deaths and injuries from road crashes could be greatly reduced by 2030. He said that the Global Road Safety Partnership is a global team of road safety professionals dedicated to working, in partnerships with Governments, business and civil society, at the front line of road safety. Its main strength lay in its desire and ability to create effective partnerships between people and organizations who want to contribute to road safety in a range of different countries and environments.

30. Mr. Raoul Restucci, Executive Vice President of Exploration and Production, Middle East, Caspian and South Asia, Shell said that the workshop presented an opportunity to go beyond taking stock of the tragedies resulting from road traffic crashes and making a decisive move towards identifying what was needed for all of us to work together to resolve this challenge through enforcement, education and engineering. Mr. Restucci emphasized that reducing road traffic crashes is possible, especially as encouraging developments have already been observed in several countries.

IV. CLOSING OF THE WORKSHOP

31. In the closing meeting, organizers launched the regional road safety partnership and presented the recommendations. Organizers also expressed their appreciation to all participants and thanked the Government of Qatar for hosting this event.

Annex*

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