



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

# NOTE FOR THE PRESS

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Note for the media N°21  
1 October 2004

## WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, OTHER UN AGENCIES, BUILD ON MOMENTUM OF WORLD HEALTH DAY TO IMPROVE GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY

**Geneva** - The momentum created by the campaign to improve road safety, launched on World Health Day (April 7) 2004, has led to sustained activity in countries across the world. Now, six months on, the World Health Organization (WHO) is hosting a meeting of more than 40 road safety experts\* from United Nations agencies and other international organizations to combine their global efforts to prevent road traffic injuries and death.

The efforts on World Health Day to raise the profile and importance of road safety have been sustained over the last six months. Countries have launched new or invigorated on-going road safety campaigns (e.g. Australia, Cambodia, Iran, Pakistan), issued new road safety legislation (e.g. Costa Rica, Hungary, New Zealand), and announced new research, prevention and advocacy initiatives, (e.g. The National Institutes of Health in the USA issued a call for proposals for training in road safety).

On the Day itself, the international community, national governments and local groups in more than 130 countries around the world celebrated World Health Day. In addition, WHO and the World Bank released the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, the first report of its kind issued by these two agencies providing concrete recommendations to countries on how to improve road safety.

Since then, thousands of copies of the report have been distributed in English and French. The document has also been translated into a number of additional languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese, and will be launched at sub-regional levels. Many countries are beginning to identify ways to implement the recommendations of the report.

World Health Day raised the profile of this major and growing public health problem, which leads to the deaths of more than 3 000 people around the world each day and results in serious injuries to 15 000 more.

At an international level, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution on 14 April 2004 in which it invited WHO, in collaboration with UN Regional Commissions, to coordinate road safety efforts across the United Nations system. This resolution on "Improving global road safety", also took note of the recommendations of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* and underlined the need for further strengthening of international cooperation in this area.

On 22 May 2004, the World Health Assembly adopted a resolution on "Road safety and health" - the first in 30 years - in which it accepted the General Assembly's invitation to act as coordinator,

and called upon Member States to prioritise road safety as a public health issue, and to take steps to implement measures that are known to be effective in reducing road traffic injuries.

"Taken at the global level these are important steps forward given the gravity of the burden caused by road traffic injuries in all countries of the world," stated Dr Catherine Le Galès-Camus, WHO Assistant Director-General, Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health. "As the ninth leading cause of all deaths, and with increasing motorization predicting a bleak future for road safety in many countries, time is of the utmost urgency for all of us to act upon these resolutions."

Today's meeting in Geneva fulfils an initial step requested by the United Nations General Assembly. This meeting of road safety experts will allow for the development of mechanisms to implement a host of initiatives such as a series of "how to" manuals that can be used by countries to facilitate implementation of road safety programmes, including how to plan, implement and evaluate speed control, seat-belt, helmet, and drinking and driving laws, some of the key factors identified by the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. The meeting will identify a number of other joint products needed to tackle the road traffic injury problem to maximize output and minimize the overlap of efforts across agencies.

"Since World Health Day, momentum and commitment to road safety have increased considerably at all levels of society," said Dr Etienne Krug, Director of the WHO Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention. "This meeting will be an opportunity to build on this momentum and commitment to plan several strong international initiatives which will help prevent hundreds of thousands of needless deaths and injuries on the roads."

#### Related links

World Health Day 2004: Road Safety is No Accident  
<http://www.who.int/world-health-day/2004/en/>

World report on road traffic injury prevention  
[http://www.who.int/world-health-day/2004/infomaterials/world\\_report/en/](http://www.who.int/world-health-day/2004/infomaterials/world_report/en/)

United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/58/289  
[http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/media/news/en/unnga\\_58\\_289\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/media/news/en/unnga_58_289_en.pdf)

World Health Assembly resolution WHA57.10  
[http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/publications/road\\_traffic/en/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/road_traffic/en/)

\* Association for Safe International Road Travel, The Bone and Joint Decade, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (USA), European Commission, European Federation for Road Traffic Victims, FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society, Global Road Safety Partnership, Institute of Transport Economics, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Labour Organisation, International Organization for Migration, International Road Transport Union, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (USA), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, Sultanate of Oman, Task Force for Child Survival and Development, Transport Canada, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Regional Commissions, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, The World Bank, The World Food Programme, World Road Association

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