

**The First Ordinary Session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee
on Transport, Intercontinental and Interregional Infrastructures, Energy and
Tourism**

THEME: Financing Infrastructure in Africa

**Road Safety: African Action Plan for the Global Decade of
Action for Road Safety**

I. Background

1. According to the 2015 World Health Organization report, road traffic injuries (RTIs) claim more than 1.2 million lives each year and up to 50 million people are injured on the world's roads and consequently they have a huge impact on health and development. Half of all road traffic deaths are among vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. Road traffic injuries are also the leading cause of death for young people aged 15 to 29 and the eighth leading cause of death globally. Beyond human suffering, road traffic deaths and injuries impose significant economic and financial losses to societies, disproportionately affecting low and middle income countries where 90 per cent of fatalities occur. Although having the lowest level of motorization in the world, the African region suffers from the highest estimated road traffic fatality rate at 26.6 per 100,000 populations.
2. RTIs cost governments approximately 3% of GDP. In spite of this massive – and largely preventable – human and economic toll, action to combat this global challenge has been insufficient. Africa continues to have the most dangerous roads in the world, with the risk of death from road traffic injury being highest on the continent (26.6 per 100,000 population) and the lowest in Europe (9.3 per 100 000 population) while the global average is 17.4 per 100,000 population. Furthermore, Africa has the highest proportion of pedestrian and cyclist deaths at 43 per cent of all road traffic death. On another hand, African countries experienced an unprecedented sustained economic growth in the past decade. The adoption of Agenda 2063 by the African Union as the blueprint for the continent's long-term development agenda signals the continent's commitment to transform its economies. Yet, this growth trajectory could be threatened if African countries continue to experience economic and social drains from RTIs¹. This growth has also increased the number of vehicles on Africa's roads which increases the risk of crashes and death from traffic injuries, especially in countries with inadequate traffic management and road safety management in general.
3. The UN General Assembly adopted resolution 64/255 that proclaimed 2011-2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety in March 2010. The global goal of the Decade is to stabilize and reduce the forecasted level of global road fatalities, by increasing activities conducted at the national, regional and global levels. Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (SDG) - Goal 3 - aligns with Africa's Action Plan for the Decade which sets out to halve the number of deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes by 2020. Goal 11 of the SDGs addresses the provision of access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons by 2030.

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4. Improving road safety in Africa requires robust data on road crashes as this would facilitate evidence-based policy formulation. In essence, countries need to improve their information on road crashes in order to develop effective prevention strategies. Challenges relating to road safety data in Africa include under-reporting of injuries and deaths from crashes, and lack of harmonized definitions of road safety indicators which limits the use of existing national data for cross-country analysis as such data is not comparable. Reliable data on road traffic fatalities are essential for monitoring country-level trends on deaths and non-fatal injuries in order to: assess the scope of their road traffic injury problem, develop targeted responses and prevention efforts, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention measures, assessing progress and comparing the scale of road traffic deaths relative to deaths from other causes. In particular, countries need to know about the numbers and types of injuries that occur and about the circumstances in which those injuries occur. Such information will indicate how serious the injury problem is, and where preventive measures are most urgently needed. The mid-term review of the African Road Safety Action Plan undertaken by ECA in July 2016 confirmed that the above road safety data management challenges are encountered by countries across the continent.
5. Globally, there is a big gap in the quality and coverage of data that countries collect and report on road traffic injuries and deaths. The African Road Safety Action Plan which is the continent's framework to implement the UN Road Safety Decade and SDGs 3 and 11 recognises the paucity of road safety data in African countries and requests ECA, AUC and AfDB to develop mechanisms to strengthen data collection for effective policy intervention and analysis. The Roadmap for Accelerating the Implementation of the African Road Safety Action Plan 2011-2020 adopted at the midterm review of the Plan held in Addis Ababa in July 2015, and the Ministerial Declaration of the Second Global High-Level Conference on Road held in Brasilia in November 2015 all emphasise the need to improve road safety data collection, analysis and reporting .
6. Taking road safety into consideration in African countries' development frameworks will, reduce the economic and social burdens imposed by road crashes on African economies and create the required fiscal space to implement African Union's Agenda 2063.

II. Overview of Global Decade of Action on Road Safety and implementation progress as an imperative for safe roads and sustainable development in Africa

7. Efforts to improve road safety in Africa started much earlier than in 2010 when the Decade was proclaimed. For instance, the African Regional Road Safety Seminar that was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in July 2009 on the theme "Setting Road Safety Targets: A Way Forward for Reducing Accident Fatalities by Half by 2015" was a milestone in road safety management in Africa as it developed and adopted targets and indicators to help track the implementation of the First African Road Safety Conference that was held in Accra, Ghana in 2007.

8. For African countries, the Decade provides an opportunity to fast-track the implementation of their road safety activities. The Second African Road Safety Conference, held in Addis Ababa in November 2011, adopted the African Road Safety Action Plan for the Decade. The Action Plan is aligned to the five pillars of the Decade, namely: Road Safety Management; Safer Roads and Mobility; Safer Vehicles; Safer Road Users; and Post-crash Response. The Action Plan has an additional Pillar on cross-cutting issues that addresses rural road safety.
9. The Action Plan, endorsed by the continent's Heads of States in Addis Ababa in January 2012, recognized the importance of having effective and efficient national road accident data systems (Pillar 1). The African Road Safety Charter, also endorsed by African Heads of State, identifies the establishment of road safety data management systems as a priority for contracting States (Article 7), together with the creation and institutional strengthening of national road safety lead agencies to spearhead the harmonization of road safety data collection, treatment and dissemination.
10. The year 2015 was midway in the implementation of the Action Plan and therefore an appropriate time to undertake its mid-term review. The Mid-term Review established that progress had been made in the implementation of the African Road Safety Action Plan, although to a varying degree across countries and pillars. Several good practices to improve the safety of roads on the continent have been identified. However, there is scope for sharing of experiences among African countries.. Several countries have not been able to take significant action, or to take any action at all, in many activities across the pillars of the Action Plan.

III. Key Challenges

11. Challenges to road safety management identified during the mid-term review of the implementation of the African Road Safety Action Plan revolve around sustainable funding, capacity of organizations, empowerment of Lead Agencies, overarching legal framework, data management, and political champions.
12. **Sustainable Funding:** This is a major constraint to the effective functioning of most road safety organizations and initiatives in Africa. Many Road Safety Committees on the continent are not funded through national budget. This corroborates with data in the WHO (2013) global status report on road safety which shows that up to 11 out of 47 Lead Agencies in African countries are not funded through national budget.
13. **Inadequate Capacity of Road Safety Agencies/Organizations:** Most Road Safety organizations in Africa are grossly under-staff and lack the critical mass of personnel to make a meaningful impact. Some African countries also lack the capacity to enforce existing laws. For example, such countries have legislation on

drink-driving which cannot be enforced because they lack breath testing equipment.

14. **Lead Agency not fully empowered/Weak national level collaboration:** Some Lead Agencies in Africa are still not fully empowered while different actors in some countries are unwilling to collaborate or cooperate with each other or to coordinate their activities. This problem is more severe when different institutions have clashing mandates. Memorandums of Understanding between national institutions are meant to address this challenge.
15. **Lack of overarching legal framework to guide road safety:** Some African countries lack comprehensive legal frameworks on road safety – their existing road safety laws are not comprehensive. For instance, a country may have legislation on seatbelts and on the use of mobile phone while driving, but lack legislation on child restraint. These countries generally need to overhaul their Traffic Acts and some of them are in the process of doing so.
16. **Ineffective Data Management:** Managing road safety data is a major challenge in most African countries. Many road safety experts on the continent express the view that the Police do not consider road safety as its core function. This affects the effectiveness and accuracy of data collection and entering, which are often the responsibility of the Police. It also leads to delays or irregular reporting of road crashes.
17. **Lack of Political Champions:** Lack of high-level commitment to improve road safety seems to be a common characteristic of many African countries. Political leaders in some countries also appear to avoid unpopular decisions at the expense of the safety of road users. For instance, the growing number of motorcycles in many African cities is a problem, which is highly political. Most of the riders are not licensed, do not wear helmet and many of them are involved in fatal crashes. Yet the sector is not properly regulated in many countries on the continent.

IV. Key Issues for Discussions with STC Experts

18. Africa's impressive economic growth figures experienced for the past decade and half, confirms the continent's ability to sustain a positive development trajectory, the ability to transform its economies, and become a global growth pole. But this impressive growth could be threatened by social and economic burdens imposed by road traffic accidents and deaths. Road accidents represent a huge social problem to many African countries given that the continent has the highest rates of road traffic accidents and deaths. Many of these accidents are preventable and their occurrences impose heavy costs on national economies and households in the era of competing global, national and individual interests. Therefore effort must be applied to prevent such avoidable losses and use the resources to address other developmental challenges on the continent.

19. The following are the key issues that are being brought to the attention of the STC experts to address this road carnage in our continent as we aspire towards the Africa we want;
20. Assess the cost of road traffic crashes and deaths; failure to assess the cost of RTIs prevents governments and civil society from realizing the importance of the economic and social drain that crashes cause as well as lives lost. To this end, data should be the cornerstone of all road safety activities as it is essential for the diagnosis of the road crash problems and for monitoring road safety efforts. However, data management and harmonization is serious issue in many African countries as identified by the Mid-Term-Review and efforts must be garnered towards RTIs data collection and methodologies;
21. Determine the extent to which member States have implemented the African Road Safety Action; and identify the challenges to the implementation of the Action Plan as well as the remedial measures, focusing on key strategic issues related to road safety management (with emphasis on data management); infrastructure; roadworthiness of vehicles, road user behavior, and post-crash management;
22. Adopt recommendations in the Roadmap to accelerate the implementation of the Action Plan;
23. Assess how the proposed road safety targets under the Sustainable Development Goals fit in the existing road safety framework in Africa, and how road safety efforts on the continent may benefit from the inclusion of road safety targets in the Sustainable Development Goals;
24. Discuss short to medium term plans by partners to support the implementation of road safety activities in African countries; and put in place the M & E frameworks to monitor the progress

V. Policy Recommendations

African countries to fully implement the activities in the roadmap for implementing the African Road Safety Action Plan. Specifically, they are recommended to:

- (i) Create and/or strengthen their Lead Road Safety Agencies by providing them with management autonomy and adequate financial resources to coordinate and implement road safety measures.
- (ii) Create the conditions for civil society organizations, and the private sector, particularly insurance companies and companies connected to road transport to be actively involved in Road Safety Activities;

- (iii) Build a critical mass of skilled road safety experts who are dedicated to the implementation of national road safety strategies, aligned to the African Road Safety Action Plan;
- (iv) Modernize the management of their road safety data to enable effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation of road crashes;
- (v) Strengthen the human and financial resources of emergency services of hospitals as well as first aid services for victims of road accidents;
- (vi) Develop national frameworks for monitoring the implementation of the African Road Safety Action Plan;
- (vii) Enhance sensitization on Road Safety and, to the extent possible, establish mechanisms for exchange of good practices;
- (viii) Explore all options to generate the resources necessary to finance national road safety programmes;
- (ix) Continue to celebrate the African Road Safety Day as we have done since November 2012;
- (x) Have high-level political Road Safety Champions; and
- (xi) Ensure that road safety is adequately taken into consideration in the post 2015 discussions, particularly in the Sustainable Development Goals.