

ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly 42nd Session

Statement by Nneka Henry, Head of the UN Road Safety Fund

Maputo, Mozambique (30 October 2022)

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting the United Nations Road Safety Fund to contribute to the Committee on Social Affairs and the Environment's discussion on the report for "strengthening parliamentary solidarity and political will for road safety in member countries of the OACPS and the EU".

I commend you on producing such a comprehensive yet targeted report. As you seek its adoption, I also encourage you to consider practical ways in which you will individually and collectively help to realize the important recommendations laid out in the report.

I say that because despite increasing political commitments – which at the global level include three road safety ministerial conferences, one UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Improving Road Safety and several related UN resolutions – the numbers of road traffic deaths and injuries are not improving.

As far as political commitments go, the First Decade of Action for Improving Road Safety from 2010 – 2020 helped to secure important progress. The global community recognized that it was necessary to prioritize road safety as a sustainable development issue and an international development assistance priority. As a result, 193 UN member states agreed to give road safety "pride of place" in the 2030 Development Agenda with not one but two explicit SDG targets on improving road safety.

At the start of the First Decade of Action, the global road death toll was estimated at 1.2 million people each year. Today, estimates are closer to 1.35 million lives lost annually across the globe.

It is not so surprising then, that towards the end of the First Decade of Action, UN member states – thanks in large part to the advocacy of the UN Special Envoy – recognised that *saying* that we all really wanted safer roads in developing countries was never going to be enough. Targeted action was required to deploy know-how, standards, best practices, skills, technology and financing to governments in low- and middle-income countries, where the

road death and economic toll were the highest. As a result, with two years remaining in the First Decade of Action, the UN General Assembly established the UN Road Safety Fund in 2018.

As you can all imagine, having been established two years before the end of a Decade of Action and exactly two years before an unprecedented global health pandemic in an already crowded development landscape – to say that the expectations on the Fund have been enormous and highly ambitious would be an understatement.

The Fund has been working hard, smart and fast to deliver on these expectations. Equipped with only a 4-staff secretariat, keeping capacity building support in the range of \$300,000 to \$500,000 per project and applying a multi-country or regional project approach has put the Fund in a position to support over 50 countries improve their road safety performance in the last four years. Multi-stakeholder partnerships to design and implement projects are also a key ingredient to the progress made so far. Our implementing partners include 14 UN agencies, the Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety; industry associations and international finance institutions. Together they ensure the Fund's ability to respond to a wide-range of requests for road safety capacity building and interventions.

By way of example, the UN Road Safety Fund has mapped road crash hotspots & road safety infrastructure needs in Zambia; advanced safe and green street design in Ethiopia; improved road crash and post-crash care data collection in Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal; strengthened legal frameworks in Arab countries; supported Azerbaijan with legislation to help reduce the time interval between crash and provision of first professional emergency care; and built capacity for improved urban planning and sustainable transportation to keep children safer in Paraguay, the Philippines and South Africa. We are also supporting Lao PDR with driver testing and licensing reform and have helped increased enforcement of speed limits, use of safety devices and other road traffic rules in Brazil, Jordan, Tunisia and the Philippines. Recently approved projects in Thailand, Latin America, Nepal and other parts of the world will support an even wider range of needs from motor vehicle insurance regulation to motorcycle helmet standardization and use.

Beneficiaries have reported reduced traffic deaths and increased access and use of safer low carbon transportation. For example, in the Brazilian state of Para, the road traffic rule and speed enforcement system has been strengthened, resulting in a decrease in the rate of traffic deaths per 100,000 habitants from 17.03 in 2019 to 15.64 in 2020. In Ethiopia, the government adopted and has begun implementing a national plan to construct 3000 km of

walking and cycling lanes, safely separated from vehicular traffic. In West Africa, the Fund's support led to the adoption of first-time ever used vehicle importation standards in all 15 ECOWAS member states. These lasting changes in the countries' road infrastructure and road safety culture is a legacy that will substantially improve road safety for millions of citizens and tourists.

The Fund has been busy putting the "action" into the Decade for Action – but we need your support and engagement to continue the journey.

Given that there are 125 low- and middle-income countries demanding our support – there is still too much left to do on the road to 2030. The demands from governments in low- and middle-income countries are wholly under-met because of the Fund's current level of capitalization, which today stands at only \$22 million. Each year we receive between 60 to 100 requests for capacity building support - many originating from OACPS member states – however each year the Fund is only able to respond positively to the 10 or 12 highest ranking proposals (as assessed by a panel of independent road safety experts). In addition to new demands, several partner countries previously supported are returning for additional support beyond what is initially provided.

It is not all gloomy. A handful for governments have taken on board the three key lessons learnt from the First Decade to: (1) make road safety an international development assistance priority – (2) give importance to capacity building in developing countries and – (3) make financing available to ensure support. Donations and pledges have so far been very generously made by Bahrain, Croatia, Cyprus, the European Commission, France, Hungary, Luxembourg, Mauritius, Monaco, Nigeria, Russia (dated 2021) and Slovakia. That's a whopping 12 out the 193 UN member states that committed to supporting the work and mandate of the Fund just four years ago.

Admittedly, the development aid landscape has changed significantly since then. However, like every country, these 12 donors are also affected by road deaths and injuries, some a lot more than others. And there are all also affected by old and new global challenges facing us all. The difference is that one or more well-positioned advocates in those 12 countries has realized that, if everyone shares the responsibility for action – to the extent that is within their means – partnering to halve road deaths and injuries by 2030 is actually a sustainable development target that can be achieved and that is affordable. The alternative would be to accept a Third Decade of Action and to accept a road death toll of unimaginable proportions. Both of which, quite frankly, we should all consider as unacceptable; because we already

know that to close the gap on road deaths is a matter of more governments pitching in to help deploy the things that we already know works to the places where we already know need it to work the most.

As Parliamentarians and advocates for a better world, you have a unique and critical role to play to help move beyond political rhetoric to action and making a real difference. Allow me to highlight three practical ways – already mentioned in the Committee’s draft report – where your support would be invaluable.

First, **advocate for road safety as an international development assistance priority.**

Paragraph 4 of the draft report mentions advocacy initiatives, road safety campaigns and regular reporting on implementation as ways to increase the visibility and prioritization of road safety. Despite being in the 2030 Development Agenda under SDGs 3 and 11, there are still far too many foreign affairs and development cooperation ministers who have yet to acknowledge road safety as an international development assistance priority or who view it as a standalone issue set apart from more popular development priorities such as climate action (SDG 13), children’s education (SDG 4) and economic development (SDG 8). Nothing could be further from the truth. Improving road safety challenges can in fact be a cost-effective way to gaining low-hanging fruits for other development priorities.

For instance, led by the UN Environment Programme and UN Economic Commission for Europe, the Fund’s regional project to introduce vehicle safety standards for used vehicles imported to West Africa, also has strong climate dividends specifically related to clean air quality, decarbonisation and lower emissions. Safer vehicle standards supported by the project call for newer used vehicles to be imported which evidence shows are more energy efficient and emits lower emissions.

In South Africa and Zambia, led by UNICEF and UNDP, the Fund’s child-friendly projects have built the capacity of urban planners and government officials to improve safe road design and infrastructure in school zones which means that children have safer access to gaining an education.

And while safer streets mean saving lives, the mantra “better roads better business” also rings true. The Measuring Streets report revealed compelling findings on the link that exists between, *on the one hand*, higher retail sales; higher property values; increased consumer engagement; rise in employment and *on the other hand*, improving road design for pedestrian and cyclists safety; introducing bike lanes, crosswalks, sidewalks, tree-lined

medians; simplifying intersections; and lowering speed limits. Moreover, in today's globalized world, it is an economic necessity for productivity and growth, expanded trade relations and competitiveness for a country to have a well-established transport system – which may be defined by the system's ability to minimize time costs of moving people and property. Good road safety performance is a critical ingredient to minimize time costs that are associated with road crashes.

As influential leaders from some of the most-affected countries as well as some of the most-affluent donor countries, I call on you to share these important sustainable development interconnections to decision-makers in your home countries. Road safety is the low-hanging fruit, hiding in plain sight, which if more development actors understood and supported, would prevent millions of road deaths and injuries while also helping to realize sustainable development benefits across several of the 17 SDGs.

The second area for your support is mentioned in paragraph 3 of the report and it is to **advocate for the need for capacity building on road safety in your member states** and partner countries, especially where the road safety performance falls below your regional or the global average. In the EU the average rate of road deaths is about 8 per 100,000 inhabitants whereas in OACP countries it ranges somewhere between 15 to 26. And even among the ACP countries, there are significant gaps to close. In Africa for example, the average rate is 26.6 road deaths per 100,000 inhabitants but OACP member states which are supported by the Fund – such as Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Togo – that experience far higher road death rates than the Africa average at 31 and above. This is why I am so pleased Elena from UN Habitat has joined today to speak about the road safety capacity building support being provided here in Mozambique, including with the Fund's support.

The third area for action is mentioned in paragraphs 2 and 3 and it is to **advocate for road safety financing – both at domestic level as well as to the UN Road Safety Fund**. As leaders in your respective countries, you do have the influence to lobby ministers of finance and ministers of health, ministers of transport as well as ministers of foreign affairs and development cooperation to set aside financing for road safety at home and in partner countries. I have already made the case to you as to why your governments should consider a contribution to the Fund; and should you wish to learn more about the Fund and how your government can support it, please do give me a signal of your interest either during or after today's session.



Thank you again for the opportunity to add to your debate on how best parliamentarians can show solidarity for road safety. Thank you