

2021 High-Level Political Forum

2020 Targets

UN SG Special Envoy for Road Safety Remarks - 3 min

Thank you, Moderator,

Dear Excellencies, distinguished colleagues,

Dear Friends,

Thank you for strong statements by the panellists on the issues surrounding important 2020 SDG targets that have not been met. Indeed, achieving them would bring us closer to a more green, resilient, and prosperous planet **and** humanity.

As Special Envoy for Road Safety, my interest is securing safe and sustainable mobility. There is a worrisome reality that after a decade of efforts to achieve SDG target 3.6 -- to halve the number of road deaths and injuries by 2020 -- we are **instead** seeing an increase in lives lost on the roads. I had hoped to see more countries report on this target in their Voluntary National Reviews.

Why should road safety matter to all of you?

- There are 1.4 million road deaths each year and more than 50 million more injured. That puts road injuries in the same league as other global burdens of disease, including the current pandemic.
- Road injuries is the Number 1 killer of children and young people – the new generation.
- Road crashes is a leading cause of injury and death to staff in business operations. For example, at the UN, it is the top killer of UN personnel.
- Road safety has co-benefits to many other SDGs (climate, economic growth, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities, gender and more).
- For example, the transport sector is responsible for approximately 23% of total CO-2 emissions. Investment in safe mobility can shift that trend to lower CO-2 emissions, by investments in public, non-motorized, and clean-energy transport.
- In terms of economic challenges, traffic crashes can cost countries 3-5% of their GDP. Studies have shown that the economic returns on road safety investments are exponential.
- Furthermore, investing in green, safe, and sustainable mobility has **and** will contribute to a resilient post-COVID-19 recovery.

The quality and safety of our roads affect every citizen, every corporation, and every country. It requires a concerted effort.

The opening gambit of the new Decade has been determined by COVID-19. The global health crisis not only changed life in cities, as well as mobility patterns and demands, **but** it has **also** made existing inequalities even more pronounced. This is where we see the greatest similarity between the impact of COVID-19 and road crashes: the most vulnerable carry the heaviest load.

We must do something to change this.

The good news is that although we did not meet our SDG target in 2020, we are well equipped to achieve it for our extended 2030 deadline.

Let me highlight the top four mechanisms.

First: We need actions that can lead to impact. Every country should develop a National Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan reflecting SDG targets 3.6 and 11.2. The WHO, regional commissions and partners are developing a global plan of action that will be launched later this year.

We need to rethink the actions we develop and fund. We need to do business differently. A recent example of local level impact is a UN Road Safety Fund-sponsored initiative to improve the quality and safety of used cars imported by Africa. UNEP, UNECE, UNECA, FIA Foundation, and others have combined their individual expertise to make the difference. We have already seen a harmonized standard adopted by ECOWAS, by 15 West African countries. This means that 400 million citizens in one of the most affected regions will see both environmental and road safety benefits.

Second: Within the governments, road safety is covered by several actors. It is important that country coordination reflects the importance of all sectors. Member States should find ways to secure involvement not only from the public sector and civil society. But also see that the private sector gets its rightful role and responsibility. Furthermore, I challenge **every** government to include road safety in Voluntary National Reviews – after all, there are few other causes of death, injury and economic loss at this magnitude.

Third: United Nations system can, in my view, play an essential catalysing role in the implementation. The UN offers a coordinated response to support countries, especially through its Resident Coordinator system. We also have many tools developed by the WHO and the UN regional commissions, such as the UN road safety conventions.

Last but not least, financing at the national, regional and international level is essential for us to meet our targets. This was a major shortcoming in the first Decade. If we are to halve the number of road deaths and injuries in 2030, we need to **at least double** the amount of money allocated at the national level.

I hope to see more country reporting on this target and to see the highest level of participation during the High-Level Meeting on Road Safety planned for 2022.

Thank you