

MEDIA RELEASE

Paris, 3 October 2016

Zero Road Deaths and Serious Injuries: Leading a Paradigm Shift in Road Safety

Report by international experts highlights need for new approach, calls for “Safe System” thinking in road traffic safety

Road crashes are the leading cause of death worldwide for young people aged 15 to 29 and the ninth leading cause of death overall, killing more people than malaria or tuberculosis. Rapid motorisation in many lower-income countries points to rising numbers of road deaths in the future, while in many higher-income countries, progress in reducing fatalities has stalled.

To combat the carnage on the world’s roads, the United Nations have set a target to halve the number of road fatalities over the coming years. Achieving the 50% reduction enshrined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals will require governments to fundamentally review their road safety policies (see Figure 1 in Appendix).

A group of pioneering countries and cities are leading the way. Sweden, the Netherlands and New York City, among others, base their road safety policies on “Vision Zero”, the aspiration that no-one should be killed in a crash. They operationalise this vision by transforming their road networks into a “Safe System” – i.e. a traffic ecosystem where all elements are designed and managed together to avoid crashes and, where they do occur, serious injuries or death.

A new report by the International Transport Forum released today reviews the experience of Safe System countries and offers guidance for leaders who seek to drastically reduce road deaths in their communities.

Among the core recommendations are:

- ▶ **Be ambitious: Think safe roads, not just safer roads.** The conventional approach to road safety seeks incremental improvements to current practice. A Safe System works backwards from the vision of eliminating road fatalities and serious injuries, thus creating new perspectives as to effective instruments
- ▶ **Be resolute: Foster a sense of urgency and lead the way.** In the countries and cities that have adopted a Safe System, innovation occurred where political leaders strongly felt that the current approach no longer delivered. Strong and visionary leaders, who galvanise policy making as well as public opinion, open the way for others to follow and also ensure that a sense of urgency permeates the responsible government agencies.
- ▶ **Be inclusive: Establish shared responsibility for road safety.** Today, avoiding harmful crashes is the responsibility of the road user. A Safe System requires everyone with a role in the

traffic environment to recognise this role and assume responsibility for making traffic safe. Shared responsibility is the basis for integrated policies and complementary actions that leverage all parts of a Safe System for greater overall safety.

- ▶ **Be concrete: Underpin aspirational goals with concrete operational targets.** Establish milestones that show the vision is long-term but realistic. The Swedish government was able to report in 2008 that no child had been killed in a bicycle crash that year. A number of cities in Europe, Japan and the US recorded no road fatality in the course of a year, and 16 towns in Europe of more than 50 000 inhabitants had no traffic fatalities in five years.

Iain Cameron, chairman of the Working Group of more than 30 road safety experts from 24 countries and organisations which prepared the report, said:

"We need a paradigm shift in road safety policy to stop the road death epidemic, and we need it now. It is unrealistic to expect that education and enforcement alone will bring the needed step change. Even road users who know and follow the rules make mistakes. A Safe System creates an environment in which simple mistakes will no longer kill people."

José Viegas, Secretary-General of the International Transport Forum, which convened the Working Group, said:

"There is huge potential for lower-income countries to leapfrog the spikes in road fatalities usually seen with growing car numbers, by drawing on lessons from the Safe System pioneers. Investments into capacity-building measures for those countries will pay off in human lives saved."

The ITF report also highlights how cities can use a Safe System to improve road safety for the high share of vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists or seniors in urban traffic. ITF will be launching a new network for cities seeking to improve their road safety performance at the UN Habitat III conference on 18 October.

The report *Zero Road Deaths and Serious Injuries: Leading a Paradigm Shift in Road Safety* is available online at <http://itf-oecd.org/zero-road-deaths>.

A seminar on the issues raised by the report will be **webcast** on Monday 3 October from 11:00 hours via www.itf-oecd.org.

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ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT FORUM

Who we are

The International Transport Forum is an intergovernmental organisation with 57 member countries. It acts as a think tank for transport policy and organises the Annual Summit of transport ministers. ITF is the only global body that covers all transport modes. The ITF is administratively integrated with the OECD, yet politically autonomous.

What we do

ITF works for transport policies that improve peoples' lives. Our mission is to foster a deeper understanding of the role of transport in economic growth, environmental sustainability and social inclusion and to raise the public profile of transport policy.

How we do it

ITF organises global dialogue for better transport. We act as a platform for discussion and pre-negotiation of policy issues across all transport modes. We analyse trends, share knowledge and promote exchange among transport decision-makers and civil society. ITF's Annual Summit is the world's largest gathering of transport ministers and the leading global platform for dialogue on transport policy.

Learn more: www.itf-oecd.org

Appendix

Figure 1. **Global road deaths: trend and target**

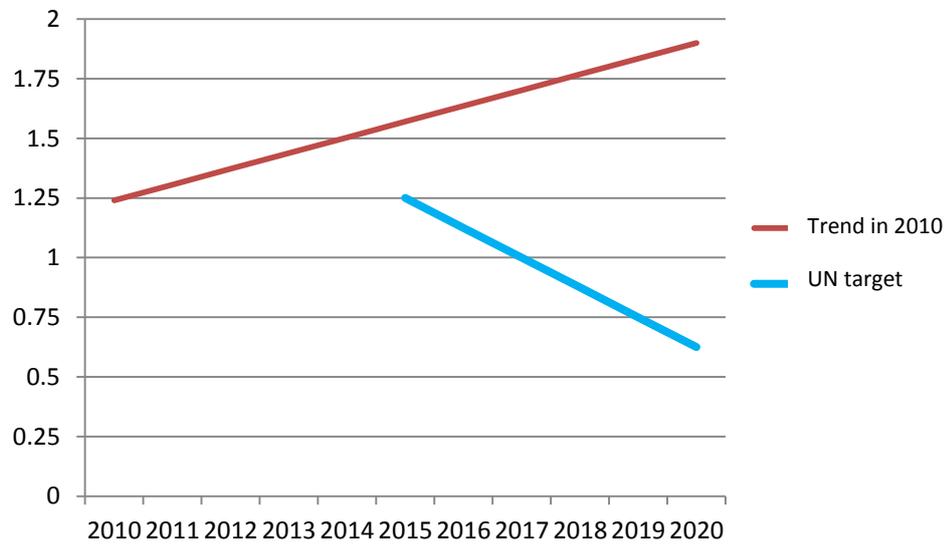


Figure 2. **How a Safe System works**

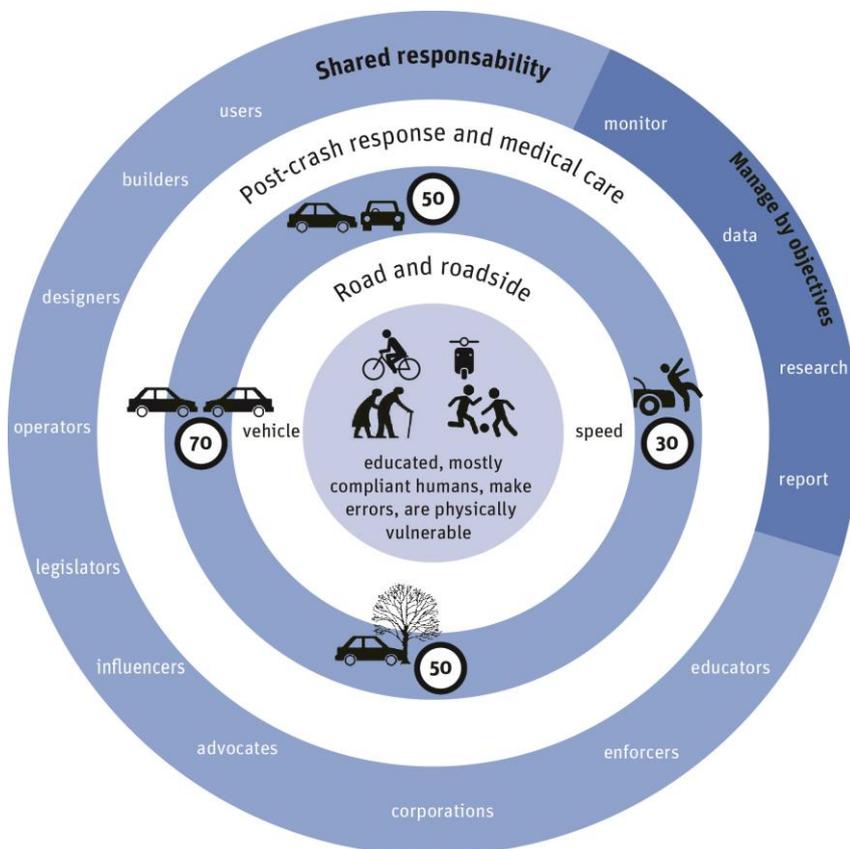


Figure 3. Maximising safety by reducing potential points of conflict in traffic

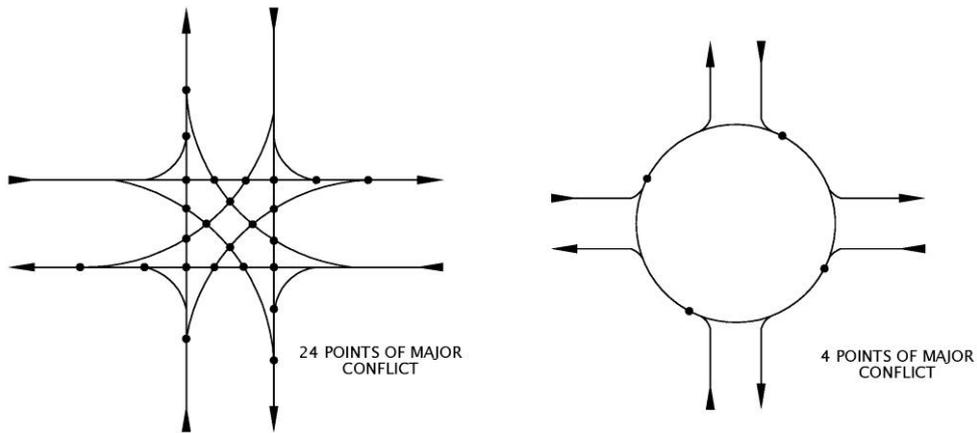


Figure 4. Comparing approaches: Traditional road safety policy vs Safe System

	Traditional road safety policy	Safe System
What is the problem?	Try to prevent all crashes	Prevent crashes from resulting in fatal and serious casualties
What is the appropriate goal?	Reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries	Zero fatalities and serious injuries
What are the major planning approaches?	Reactive to incidents. Incremental approach to reduce the problem.	Proactively target and treat risk Systematic approach to build a safe road system
What causes the problem?	Non-compliant road users	People make mistakes and people are physically fragile/vulnerable in crashes. Varying quality and design of infrastructure and operating speeds provides inconsistent guidance to users about what is safe use behaviour.
Who is ultimately responsible?	Individual road users	Shared responsibility by individuals with system designers
How does the system work?	Is composed of isolated interventions	Different elements of a Safe System combine to produce a summary effect greater than the sum of the individual treatments - so that if one part of the system fails others parts provide protection.