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Sixty-sixth session

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Thursday, 19 April 2012, 3 p.m.
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Official Records

President: Mr. Al-Nasser. (Qatar)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Sajdik (Austria),
Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 138 (continued)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/66/668/Add.10)

The Acting President: I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/66/668/Add.10, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/66/668/Add.9, Dominica has made the payment necessary to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter. May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 12 (continued)

Global road safety crisis

Note by the Secretary-General (A/66/389)

Draft resolution (A/66/L.43)

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.43.

Mr. Kiryanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Road safety continues to be one of the most

pressing challenges for large cities. The problem is of no less importance for towns and urban settlements. The international community's recognition of the seriousness of road safety issues provided a strong impetus to active measures undertaken by national Governments, with the support of the United Nations, other international organizations, the World Bank and regional development banks, at the national, regional and international levels. The first Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, held in Moscow three years ago, significantly accelerated international efforts in the field. The Moscow declaration adopted as an outcome of the Conference called upon Member States to declare 2011-2020 the Decade of Action for Road Safety. That was followed by the adoption of resolution 64/255, on 2 March 2010, which built upon that initiative and launched a large-scale campaign to stabilize and reduce global fatality rates due to traffic accidents.

We reiterate our commitment to joint international efforts to fight injuries and deaths caused by traffic accidents. We stand ready to continue to take practical steps to improve road safety.

At present we are working hard to develop a new federal target programme to improve road safety until 2020. It will be strategic in nature and stipulate the modernization of legal and organizational instruments in that field. Measures within the framework of the programme are intended to prevent road users' dangerous behaviour, ensure road safety for children, ensure acceptable standards for the technical condition of vehicles, and develop traffic management systems

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for vehicles and pedestrians, as well as assistance for road victims.

The fourth international congress on the theme “Safety on the Roads for the Safety of Life”, organized by the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, will be held in Saint Petersburg this fall. We invite delegations from all countries to participate.

We attach great importance to international cooperation, which plays a crucial role in the field of road safety best practices and traffic-injury reduction. To that end, I should like to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.43, entitled “Improving global road safety”. The text of the draft resolution was negotiated here in New York and enjoys full consensus. We would like to express our gratitude to our partners for their substantive amendments and proposals and thank the secretariats of the World Health Organization, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and other international organizations for the assistance provided. We note that the draft resolution has 80 sponsors.

Allow me to briefly present the basic provisions of the draft resolution. The document expresses appreciation for the activities under the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, which is being implemented by the World Health Organization, the United Nations regional commissions and the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, in which the Russian Federation is an active member. The draft resolution highly appreciates the efforts of States that have developed national plans to implement the Global Plan. It also requests regional commissions to continue to undertake measures to raise public awareness about road safety. I would like to emphasize that the draft resolution calls upon Member States to undertake measures in all major areas stipulated in the Global Plan, namely, road safety management, safe roads and transport systems, safe vehicles, well-trained road users and responding quickly to traffic accidents.

Death and injury caused by traffic accidents are a serious problem for global health care. Focused measures to reduce traffic injuries undertaken by the United Nations since 2003 have yielded positive results. Over the past few years a downward trend in the number of road accidents has been observed in many countries, including low- and middle-income countries. Our joint efforts to fight traffic injuries at the national and global levels will be able not only to save hundreds

of thousands of lives but will also promote social and economic progress in the world, including in the context of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

I call upon all delegations to support the draft resolution and invite all Member States to become sponsors.

Mrs. Al-Mughairy (Oman): Allow me, at the outset, to express my gratitude on behalf of my country, the Sultanate of Oman, to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report contained in document A/66/389, in which he provides us with an account of activities undertaken and achievements attained by the global road safety community towards the objectives of the Decade of Action for Road Safety, as well as on the ongoing road safety activities worldwide.

The report describes the efforts to prevent the waves of road traffic injuries, including the hosting of the first Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety by the Russian Federation, in November 2009, and the launch of the Decade of Action, in May 2011. The report of the Secretary-General also contains useful recommendations for Member States on how to reduce injuries and death caused by road traffic accidents, such as acceding to and implementing United Nations international legal instruments on road safety and developing national and local capacities for monitoring and evaluating road safety projects in order to advance the cause of road safety.

The General Assembly decided to include an item on road safety for the first time on the agenda of the fifty-seventh session. At that session, my country introduced resolution 57/309, entitled “Global road safety crisis”, during the plenary meeting held on 22 May 2003. I am proud, yet humbled to refer here to my Government’s leading effort, through my predecessor’s chairmanship of the Third Committee at that time, in ensuring the inclusion of an item on road safety in the agenda of the Assembly. We are also proud of our pioneering role in launching at the General Assembly the first international campaign for road safety to make roads safe for generations to come.

The Sultanate of Oman’s introduction of that resolution, which was adopted by consensus, was a first step, in that it requested a report on global road safety from the Secretary-General for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. We have come a long way since then, and the General

Assembly has held many plenary meetings on the issue. The World Health Organization, the World Bank and the regional economic commissions have demonstrated genuine leadership in raising awareness on this very important issue. Ministerial level meetings were held to address the problems of road traffic injuries and to build safer roads and provide technical support for road safety at the international, regional and national levels. In the years since then, the General Assembly adopted various resolutions on the global road-safety crisis and its improvement, in response to the international community's determination to reduce mortality rates resulting from road accidents. Interaction among States in the area of road-traffic safety has recently become a priority for international cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels, and is becoming an important item on the agendas of the United Nations and other international organizations.

United Nations data show that each year nearly 1.2 million people die, and millions are injured or disabled, as a result of road accidents. The economic and social costs for individuals and their families are high, amounting to \$518 billion per annum. With developing countries bearing \$100 billion of that total, there is an urgent need for raising awareness of the social and economic costs of road accident injuries. Such injuries can be reduced by facilitating the exchange of information and experience on best road-traffic safety practices and developing recommendations for prevention, especially in developing countries. In that regard, we call for further strengthening developing countries' efforts to build capacity in road safety and increasing international financial and technical support. In that context, we should commend the relevant United Nations agencies and other organizations for their efforts to promote road safety.

I would like to refer to the steps taken by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman at the national level, which include outreach efforts by the Royal Omani Police to enhance traffic safety by distributing nearly 1 million awareness bulletins annually in every governorate of Oman and by preparing films, some of which have won international awards, on road traffic accidents. I should mention that on 11 May my country celebrated the launch of a national road-safety strategy to coincide with the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. In 2009, in accordance with international requirements and its own aspirations, Oman also established a steering committee for administering

research programmes on traffic accidents. We have also set up a traffic school for children to educate the younger generation on traffic-safety rules and regulations. In coordination with the Ministry of Education, more than 6,000 students visit the school each year. Beginning in 2010 with the organization of a symposium on the subject, 18 October was designated an annual day of traffic safety.

Omani police are continuing their efforts to promote road safety, recently initiating a scheme under which three buses, equipped with modern technology such as computers and display screens, will travel around the country to present awareness programmes and lectures on road safety. The buses will visit every governorate in Oman in order to help raise awareness among all sectors of society. To help ensure road safety, the Director-General for Traffic of the Royal Omani Police has established a road-safety institute and stepped up the police's role in training traffic officers, public transportation drivers and pedestrians. The Director-General has also worked on improving safety standards by modernizing vehicle technical inspection stations, equipping them with up-to-date technology, and by installing high-quality fixed and mobile speed radars. Since their introduction there has been a significant drop in speed violations.

The role of the Royal Omani Police ambulance unit has also been enhanced. The police, along with other Government agencies responsible for planning and constructing roads, have participated in modernizing road design to help meet international and local safety standards and requirements on Oman's highways, which now total 56,361 kilometres. The Director-General for Traffic has set up a web site aimed at providing service in all areas of traffic awareness and answering the public's questions, as well as monitoring traffic accidents daily.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that the Moscow declaration adopted in 2009 at the first Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety and the launch of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 are clear evidence of the international community's commitment to keeping road safety high on the political agenda of the United Nations. We cannot be lax about this, because every year hundreds of thousands of human lives are at risk. We are pleased that the draft resolution before us recognizes the great danger caused by careless driving: driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, at excessive speeds, or while texting or using cellphones. We are grateful to the Russian Federation for introducing the draft resolution, entitled

“Improving global road safety”, in which the Assembly encourages Member States that have not yet done so to become contracting parties to the United Nations road-safety-related legal instruments and to implement them; to consider signing and ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; to nominate national focal points for the Decade of Action for Road Safety; to improve road-safety legislation and regulations; and to address road-safety issues through international cooperation.

In order for us to enhance international efforts and to work together towards our common goal of saving lives and promoting international interaction on road safety, I am pleased to be able to recommend the adoption of the draft resolution by the General Assembly.

Mr. Jónasson (Iceland): On 2 March 2010, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/255, which proclaimed the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, with the goal of stabilizing and reducing the rates of road-traffic fatalities around the world. The draft resolution before us today (A/66/L.43) follows up that resolution with a number of important actions aimed at improving and strengthening road-safety data collection, the implementation of new car assessment programmes and improving road management systems.

Road safety is a problem shared by every State. Costing around \$500 billion and 1.3 million deaths a year, a figure that is estimated to reach close to 2 million by 2020, the impetus for action it presents is clear.

In the context of the Decade of Action for Road Safety, Iceland is in the process of developing a national plan for the Decade to complement the current national road-safety strategy for 2011-2020. The Icelandic action plan is based on five pillars of national activities in line with the Global Plan: road safety management, safer roads and mobility, safer vehicles, safer road users and post-crash response, taking into account the specific road safety situation in Iceland.

Real results can be achieved. In Iceland we have managed to halve the number of road traffic deaths during the past decade, from an average of 25 deaths a year for 2002 to 2006 to an average of 13 deaths for 2007 to 2011. That makes Iceland the European country with the least number of fatalities per capita and vehicle.

We also need to look at those who survive and are left with serious injuries. Allow me to highlight one serious injury in relation to traffic accidents that my

Government is committed to raising awareness and understanding of, both nationally and internationally. Almost half of those who acquire spinal cord injuries do so in traffic accidents. It is estimated that between 4 and 5 million people around the world now live with spinal cord injuries, and most of them are between the ages of 20 and 40.

The Government of Iceland has supported the Institute of Spinal Cord Injury in Iceland in its work towards alleviating the suffering of those living with such injuries. The Institute aims at gathering scientific knowledge in one faculty to be available for research by prominent doctors and scientists.

This initiative has received support from the Nordic Council, which has agreed to establish a working group of doctors and scientists to review Nordic and international research and methods of treatment of spinal cord injuries, with the aim of making recommendations for enhanced work in the field of treatment.

We encourage Member States, as a part of their national efforts, to take similar steps in increasing knowledge of serious injuries caused by traffic accidents and ways to more effectively treat, or even cure, them. In addition, we stand ready to share our knowledge with all those interested through our national Road Safety Directorate and the Institute of Spinal Cord Injury in Iceland.

Finally, we would like to thank Oman, for placing this issue on the agenda of the United Nations, and the Russian Federation, for continuing to promote collective efforts to ensure the safety and needs of all road users. We know first-hand that real results can be achieved in saving lives and alleviating the suffering of those left behind with serious injuries.

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): At the outset, allow me to commend the President of the General Assembly for convening this very important meeting.

Mortality and serious injuries caused by road accidents have become one of the most pressing public health problems facing the international community today. For that reason, I wish to congratulate the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation for its leadership on the issue and for its successful chairmanship of the negotiations that will lead to the adoption of draft resolution A/66/L.43, entitled “Improving global road safety”.

Brazil is glad to join as a sponsor of the draft resolution and to lend its full support to the initiative.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence of Their Excellencies Mr. Hugo Leal and Mr. Sebastido Bala Rocha, members of the Brazilian Parliament, the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of National Integration, Mr. Alexandre Garcia, and a delegation made up of members of the Brazilian Senate, public administration and academia, all involved in the subject and interested in a positive outcome.

Congressman Hugo Leal is the President of the Parliamentary Front in Defence of Road Safety and the author of a national law that aims at restraining the consumption of alcohol by vehicle drivers through improved enforcement and increased criminal penalties for offenders.

Motorized road transport has changed the face of economic affairs, trade, employment and health care, bringing benefits to all countries and societies around the globe. Food and other products reach more markets in a more efficient way. Patients can be transported with life-saving speed to hospitals and receive urgent health-care services. Emergency relief can now be sent more promptly to disaster-affected sites. Those benefits should be seen as routine aspects of our societies, and working daily towards their improvement is our responsibility.

Contemporary reality still draws our attention to the fact that more needs to be done to prevent accidents and improve road safety. Very sadly, over the course of this year, the tragic news of a death on the road will be delivered to more than 1 million families and friends.

Many more will suffer from injuries caused by traffic-related accidents. The suffering those events will cause is unfortunately very well-known throughout the world, particularly in poorer countries, where 90 per cent of the annual deaths caused by road accidents occur, according to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates.

Every year in Brazil, road accidents cause more than 70,000 injuries. Traffic-related accidents claim the lives of more than 6,000 Brazilians a year. We are therefore especially determined to advancing national legislation, improving surveillance and enforcement and increasing public awareness of the harm caused by road accidents.

We believe that improving road safety requires adopting multidisciplinary actions and addressing the

major road safety risk factors, such as the non-use of safety belts and child restraints, the non-use of helmets, driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, inappropriate and excessive speed, and texting and inappropriate use of cellphones while driving, as highlighted in the draft resolution before us today.

Brazil is deeply engaged in a number of international initiatives targeted at enhancing cooperation to improve road safety, in line with the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration set up by the WHO. We are also convinced that the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 provides the ideal framework for international cooperation and support to the development of national plans as a complement to any current national road safety strategies already in place.

With that goal in mind, Brazil has been an active member of the Friends of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, an informal group of Governments and international agencies committed to making the Decade a success.

Finally, we are pleased to support draft resolution A/66/L.43, and we believe that it will provide yet another excellent contribution to the overall goal of underlining the importance of road safety and improving international cooperation in this matter.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the World Health Organization, the United Nations regional commissions and other partners of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration for presenting a thorough and comprehensive report on improving global road safety (A/66/389), as well as the recommendations contained therein to achieve the goals of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

On behalf of the Government of Malaysia, I would also like to thank the Russian Federation for spearheading draft resolution A/66/L.43, entitled "Improving global road safety", to assess the progress achieved during the first year of the implementation of the Decade, provide new impetus and outline priorities for further global road safety cooperation. Malaysia is pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution.

Malaysia has actively advocated road safety issues for many years. Realizing the urgency of addressing the issue in a systematic and planned manner, the Government of Malaysia, in September 2004, set up the Road Safety Department in the Ministry of Transport as a one-stop agency to coordinate, monitor and implement

road-safety programmes. Furthermore, through the Ministry of Transport, a road safety plan for the period 2011-2020 was drafted to include guidelines and initiatives for road safety in Malaysia and provide six road safety strategies. The 10-year road safety plan also gives an overview of Malaysia's vision as well as the challenges and risks that need to be overcome in order for the plan to achieve its goals.

To further save lives in Malaysia, the Government formulated a long-term policy called the Zero-Fatality Vision, which is a safety policy and philosophy that covers all aspects of safety, including driver, vehicle, roadway infrastructure and environmental safety. The ultimate aim of the Vision is that no one should be killed or seriously injured in the road environment as a result of preventable road traffic accidents.

Malaysia has also established various platforms, such as the Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research as a one-stop centre for the dissemination of road safety information through print media and a concessionary training programme. The Institute carries out studies and evaluates current procedures on road safety to generate information that will form the core of its evidence-based intervention programmes to enhance road safety. Additionally, Malaysians Unite for Road Safety (MUFORS), a community-driven project that was established in September 2009, empowers Malaysians to voice their thoughts and concerns on road safety in the country. More importantly, it also serves as a platform for every Malaysian to think about how they can play his or her part to improve road safety and save lives.

MUFORS has been instrumental in giving road safety advocacy a fresh approach by involving Malaysians from all walks of life to take ownership of road safety. Over a period of two years, MUFORS has initiated various programmes to get an increasing number of Malaysians to be involved in improving attitudes and making roads safer for everyone. In short, MUFORS is a movement of the people, by the people, for the people.

To make a difference for safer roads, Malaysia has implemented the International Road Assessment Programme (IRAP), a charity active in more than 70 countries worldwide whose vision favours a world free of high-risk roads. The IRAP programme in Malaysia has the potential to prevent almost 32,000 deaths and serious injuries over 20 years.

Malaysia is proud to have a fellow Malaysian, Hollywood star Michelle Yeoh, as the Global Ambassador

for the Make Roads Safe campaign. Michelle Yeoh has led the campaign's call for a Decade of Action prior to the first United Nations conference on road safety in November 2009 and addressed the General Assembly in 2010 (see A/64/PV.74) as it proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety.

Every day, more than 3,500 people are killed in road traffic accidents worldwide, and nearly 1.3 million people in the world die each year of such accidents. Road trauma is a serious and rapidly worsening public health crisis. The crisis affects developing countries in particular, where 9 out of 10 road deaths and injuries occur. Road traffic accidents are the leading cause of death in young people aged 10 to 24 worldwide; a global killer, the number of deaths it causes is similar in scale to those caused by malaria or tuberculosis.

Road safety is indeed one of the most important issues that will continue to affect each and every of us in one way or another. In most cases, road traffic accidents are predictable, and therefore preventable. Malaysia will therefore continue to promote and introduce road safety initiatives and programmes for members of the public to create an awareness and safety culture among them. Malaysia also wishes to reiterate that the United Nations should continue to play a major role in addressing this highly preventable but deadly public safety issue.

Mr. Goddard (Barbados): Barbados is pleased to join with a significant and diverse group of Member States in sponsoring draft resolution A/66/L.43, entitled "Improving global road safety".

As a small State with limited resources, Barbados can ill afford the economic and social costs caused by traffic accidents. The available statistics for collisions in Barbados between 1980 and 2009 reveal that accidents increased from 4,200 in 1980 to 8,317 in 2009. While the statistics in Barbados may not be as startling as in some other countries, it remains true that the number of road accidents is nevertheless much too high.

Internationally, the statistics on vehicular accidents are staggering. It is difficult to imagine that across the globe as many children die on the roads annually as the entire population of Barbados. The World Health Organization has predicted that, by the year 2015, road crashes will be the leading cause of premature deaths and disability for children aged 5 and above. Ninety per cent of such casualties take place in low- and middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is against that backdrop and in the light of

the increasing number of accidents on our roadways that the Government of Barbados took the decision last July to establish the Barbados Road Safety Council.

Given the importance of the Council's work, the Cabinet of Barbados decided that the Prime Minister would chair the Council, the Minister of Transport and Works would serve as Vice-Chair and that the Minister of Health would also sit on the Council, in view of the direct relevance of road safety to individual and societal health. Given the many stakeholders involved in the area of road safety, care was taken to ensure that the composition of the Council would be as diversified as possible. Hence the Council includes representatives from the private sector, labour unions, the insurance industry, petrol dealers, car importers, the health and education sectors, the police, private transportation operators and non-governmental organizations doing work in the area of road safety.

The mandate of the Council is twofold: first, to advise the Government on road safety issues, and, secondly, to develop and implement road safety promotional activities and conduct public education programmes.

The overall aim is to reduce the number and severity of collisions on our roadways, as well as to lower the financial, emotional and social costs to society. In addition, the Government of Barbados is seeking to build on legislation such as that enacted in 2002 that introduced the requirement for seat belts, which has significantly reduced fatalities and injuries resulting from vehicular accidents. After a comprehensive review of the Road Traffic Act, the Cabinet approved several amendments to the Act and its regulations. Those amendments will deal with issues such as emissions, the frequency of inspection of both private and public service vehicles as well as breathalyser testing, and will introduce additional speed-limit restrictions.

Another major issue with which Barbados is very concerned is the matter of the use of cellphones while driving, including texting. The issue of "distracted driving", as it is referred to by the World Health Organization, is one of great concern to local authorities and is being addressed within the framework of the amendments to the Road Traffic Act.

Barbados reiterates its strong support for the adoption of this draft resolution as an expression of the will of the international community to make a meaningful impact on improving global traffic safety.

It is for that reason that we urge full support for its adoption and implementation.

Mr. Cervantes Trejo (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*):

I welcome this opportunity to address the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session in order to express Mexico's support for the draft resolution (A/66/L.43) on the global road safety crisis, introduced by the Russian Federation. This is an issue to which Mexico has attached the highest priority for more than five years now. I should like also, on behalf of our President, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, to convey the greetings of our Secretary of Health, Salomón Chertorivski Woldenberg.

Mexico is no stranger to the problem of road safety and traffic accidents, which affect nations throughout the world. The report on the world situation of road safety issued by the World Health Organization indicates that 10 countries account for 62 per cent of the deaths caused by traffic accidents. Unfortunately, Mexico ranks seventh among those countries. That is why since 2007 Mexico has been an active member of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, and in March 2008, at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, Mexico acknowledged that each year traffic accidents account for more than 17,000 deaths in our country. That type of accident is the number-one cause of death among children, adolescents and young adults aged 5 to 35.

In addition, every year traffic accidents cause more than 350,000 major injuries requiring hospitalization and more than 1 million injuries requiring medical attention. Traffic accidents are the second cause of permanent motor disabilities in our country, with more than 860,000 Mexicans living with such a disability for that reason. Traffic accidents are the number-two factor causing children to be orphaned in the country. The epidemic is exacerbated by socio-economic and cultural factors, including the fact that 80 per cent of our population is urban and that the number of vehicles has doubled in the past 10 years, reaching 33 million cars, according to official figures.

More recent estimates indicate that the economic costs of deaths and injuries caused by traffic accidents in Mexico total more than \$10 billion a year, or about 1.7 per cent of gross domestic product. Given that situation, in 2007 Mexico established a road safety action plan that includes multisectoral activities and follow-up action. Better observation and monitoring mechanisms were set up, and national and State road

safety centres were established. So as to strengthen police capacity, a national programme was launched to monitor the consumption of alcohol in the context of driving.

Infrastructure has been improved through a national network of road safety inspectors, and educational programmes have been promoted, with media-based public-awareness campaigns geared particularly to children. As a result of the plan, compared with 2006 figures, by 2010 we had managed to significantly reduce the number of reported road accidents by 9 per cent; the number of people hospitalized owing to such incidents by 5.6 per cent; the number of deaths among minors under age 15 by 16.3 per cent; and the number of people seriously injured in highway accidents by 14.9 per cent, among other positive results. While those figures are encouraging, we acknowledge that there is still much to be done. That is why we commend the fact that, on 11 May 2011, the United Nations declared the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, and that more than 100 countries participated in that event.

At that time, Mexico held a regional meeting in order to mark the Decade of Action with the participation of representatives at the ministerial and vice-ministerial levels from 29 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. More than 1,000 other participants from various sectors, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Andean Development Corporation, the national automobile association and more than 60 non-governmental organizations also participated. On the basis of that meeting, President Calderón launched the national strategy for road safety 2011-2020 in the presence of representatives of five ministries — public safety, health, communications and transportation, education and foreign affairs.

The national strategy, which is now law, is in line with the five pillars for action set out in the United Nations Global Plan for the Decade of Action. Our strategy is a milestone when it comes to the ambitious goals set for our country during the Decade. Those goals include reducing by 50 per cent by the year 2020 the number of deaths, injuries and disabilities caused by road accidents. Achieving that would save more than 60,000 lives and prevent more than 120,000 people from being disabled and more than 1.5 million serious injuries. Those benefits would result in a savings of more than \$50 billion, the amount associated with the

direct and indirect costs of this pandemic in the next decade.

These actions have helped launch an unprecedented social movement in Mexico, involving the Government sector at the federal, state and local levels, as well as key actors in the private sector and civil society organizations. National efforts have included initiatives such as the eleventh Ibero-American Forum of People Responsible for Traffic and Road Safety, which was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in March. That event marked the beginning of the functioning of the Ibero-American Road Safety Observatory, which will enable us to follow up the efforts of Ibero-American countries working to integrate data collection and standardization mechanisms in this field.

Furthermore, at the thirteenth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Tuxtla Mechanism for Dialogue and Coordination, held in Mérida, Mexico, on 5 December 2011, the leaders of Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic and Mexico agreed that road safety would be a priority for the region and instructed their ministers of health and transportation to set up a road safety programme for Central America. We have begun the technical work needed to organize the programme and expect that a regional road safety initiative will be presented and adopted at the next Summit of the Tuxtla Mechanism, in October, in the presence of the 10 Heads of State, in order to benefit the more than 200 million inhabitants of the 10 countries that make up the Central American region, potentially preventing more than 50,000 deaths in the next decade.

While significant progress has been made, there is still much to be done. Mexico recognizes that the road-safety crisis is a serious development and public-health issue, and is committed to implementing actions that will help promote road safety, as set out in the Global Plan for the Decade of Action. Mexico would like to thank the Sultanate of Oman for promoting this topic. We firmly support draft resolution A/66/L.43, on improving road safety, which was introduced today by the delegation of the Russian Federation. Mexico hopes that its adoption today will demonstrate the firm commitment and continuing political support needed to speed up the implementation of the commitments we have made for the Decade of Action.

Mexico reaffirms that promoting road safety is a fundamental step in our countries' ability to achieve

the objectives of sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals. Through it we may be able to prevent more than 5 million deaths and 50 million serious injuries over the next decade, and our peoples are counting on us to do so.

Mr. Jawhara (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to begin by welcoming the Russian Federation's commendable initiative in introducing the draft resolution (A/66/L.43) on improving global road safety, an enormously important issue that affects people all over the world. I would also like to thank the Secretariat and the various international organizations for their reports.

The Syrian Arab Republic is pleased to join others in sponsoring the draft resolution, particularly as it concerns the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, which fosters cooperation between Member States and the bodies of the United Nations, along with the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, in ensuring road safety at the highest levels. We would particularly like to thank the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for the Decade's launch event, held on 17 May 2011.

Syria supports international efforts to make road safety a reality across the world. We are party to the relevant United Nations and international conventions on road and traffic safety. We attach great importance to road safety, which has such a major impact on human health. We have created a high-level committee at the prime-ministerial level with the participation of a number of NGOs and representatives of civil society. Together they have outlined a strategy for road safety. In Syria, the public institutions in charge of roads work to ensure that international road-safety standards are implemented, drawing up an annual action plan for road safety, as well as one for the short term and others that are more forward-looking in nature. Our highway department is in the process of improving standards for traffic circulation and road networks. In addition, those bodies ensure that road construction and safety conforms to international standards; they work to improve systems for collecting road-safety data and management; and they ensure that standards are in line with road-safety codes and agreed on with the relevant ministries.

My delegation would like to call attention to a significant issue, that is, the support that developed countries, organizations and United Nations funds and

programmes should provide for financing and ensuring the transfer of technology in order to strengthen and build developing countries' capacity to improve road safety, thus having a positive impact on the development of those countries and their populations. We feel that one of the greatest impediments to Governments' ability to carry out improvements in road safety, now and in the future, are the economic limitations imposed on certain Governments or institutions, which contribute to difficulties in implementing road-safety plans due to lack of funding.

I should like to reiterate that my country continues to be a victim of terrorist attacks perpetrated by armed groups against public and private institutions. We would note in that respect roads, which are often commandeered, and travellers, who are targeted and who must travel under dangerous conditions. That in turn leads to accidents, causing casualties among dozens of innocent people who are killed or injured, and leading to serious impacts on development and trade, given that the commercial sector also uses roads.

Mrs. Cizare (Ethiopia): Let me begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this important debate on improving global road safety. We also thank the Secretary-General for his note (A/66/389) transmitting the comprehensive report and useful recommendations on improving and strengthening road safety.

There is no doubt that road transportation is a very important tool for growth and the development of nations regardless of their size, population, industrial capacity or level of technological development. It enhances the movement of people, goods and services from one place to another and is critical for the sustenance of strong economic and political ties.

It has been acknowledged that the major challenges facing the road sector across the globe are the menace of road traffic crashes and the attendant deaths and injuries sustained by victims. That has been a challenge facing the entire world, but it is more pronounced in developing and low-income countries, and, of those, Ethiopia is one of the worst hit. The death rate is currently high. Economic losses due to road accidents are also significant. The reality, however, is that road traffic crashes and injuries are preventable.

Ethiopia attaches great importance to addressing the problem of road traffic safety. We are also conscious of the impact of road accidents on the health and well-being

of our people. In that connection, the Ministry of Health of Ethiopia is developing a three-year strategic plan for injury prevention and emergency medical services. In accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO) global road safety report recommendations (see A/66/389), Ethiopia has established a national road safety coordinating office. The office has recently developed a 10-year strategic national road safety plan based on the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

Furthermore, the office organizes various awareness programmes in collaboration with civil society in order to develop a culture of road safety in the country. Children's traffic safety education has been incorporated into the basic and extracurricular education syllabus of schools for grades 1 to 8. Mass media participation in road safety publicity campaigns and community awareness creation programmes are at encouraging stages. Road safety committees have been established at both the federal and regional levels. A drivers' licence law and traffic control law have been revised and enacted. We have also established a national road safety council.

As a result of such interventions, there has been a sustained reduction in road accidents. Despite Ethiopia's efforts to improve and make our country's roads safe, the lack of strong road safety institutions and inadequate resources still remain a challenge. In that regard, we would like to emphasize the importance of cooperation in the area of capacity-building and exchange of best practices.

In conclusion, we strongly support the call for a Decade of Action for Road Safety and the adoption of the draft resolution before us (A/66/L.43).

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with resolution 49/2, of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Jilani (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): Often when we speak about the global road crash crisis, we talk in big numbers: 1.3 million, the number of people killed in road crashes each year; 50 million, the number of people injured in road crashes each year. But these numbers do not tell the full story of loss. In addition to the sheer scale of the numbers, these losses affect whole communities, and they disproportionately claim the lives of young people, breadwinners and parents.

In the time since Member States adopted the resolution creating the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, in March 2010 (resolution 64/255), more Governments, civil society organizations and the private sector are working together to try to prevent road crash-related deaths and injuries. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's long-term commitment to road safety, along with the depth and breadth of its volunteer network, was a key reason that Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies were recognized as important partners in resolution 64/255.

Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are often first responders in many emergencies, including road accidents. As a global network, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement continues its commitment to road safety by aligning its efforts with the Decade of Action goals and taking an active part in work to prevent road crashes.

In November 2011, at the thirty-first International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held in Geneva, national societies reaffirmed their commitment to road safety as a vital humanitarian concern. In addition, a number of national societies and the Governments of Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Monaco, the Philippines, Romania and Zambia pledged to work together to improve road safety and to mobilize new resources to implement evidence-based multisectoral programmes.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) was one of the first organizations to recognize the road crash crisis as a global humanitarian emergency with its 1998 *World Disasters Report*. The following year, the IFRC agreed to host the world's first global multisectoral partnership dedicated to reducing road crash deaths and injuries in low- and middle-income countries. It is estimated that approximately 85 per cent of annual road crash deaths occur each year in low- and middle-income countries, costing those countries between 2 and 3 per cent of their gross national product per year.

Twelve years later, the Global Road Safety Partnership continues to work with Governments, the private sector and civil society to implement road safety programmes. For example, in Hungary, the Partnership has helped national and local Governments to develop comprehensive seat belt and pedestrian safety campaigns. In South Africa, the Partnership has

helped in efforts to get children safely to school in areas of increased risk.

The Partnership also engages in capacity-building. In the past year alone, the Partnership has been active on five continents, working to enhance road safety management systems and facilitate training on speed management, the enforcement of drunk driving laws and social marketing, and promoting and enforcing seat belt and helmet use. In countries as diverse as Poland, Brazil, China, Viet Nam and Cambodia, the Partnership is involved in programmes that are yielding quantifiable reductions in road crash-related deaths and injuries. In north-eastern Poland, for example, one regional government working with the Partnership was able to reduce annual road crash deaths by 49 per cent in the past six years. In the city of Teresina, in northern Brazil, local officials believe a new Partnership approach is a major reason that road crash deaths were reduced by 22 per cent during the first quarter of 2011, when compared to the same time period in 2010.

In the humanitarian world, we often refer to crises that do not receive an adequate response as “forgotten” or “neglected”. For too long, the road crash crisis has been a forgotten disaster. Even today, given the scale of the problem, funding levels remain far too low. One year into the Decade of Action for Road Safety, we see there are signs that this is starting to change. That is great news, but it is just the beginning. Much more can and must be done. We must remember that unless our response is rapid, comprehensive and grounded in multisectoral partnership, the crisis will in fact worsen as millions of additional people start using motorized transport each year.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): We have heard the last speaker on this item. The General Assembly will now proceed to consider draft resolution A/66/L.43 entitled “Improving global road safety”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/66/L.43: Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Dominican

Republic, Ecuador, Finland, Honduras, Hungary, India, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Panama, Poland, Qatar, San Marino, Spain, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.43?

Draft resolution A/66/L.43 was adopted (resolution 66/260).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 12?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 115 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(f) Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences

Note by the Secretary-General (A/66/107/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that at its 63rd and 83rd plenary meetings, on 22 November and 12 December 2011, respectively, the Assembly took note of the appointment of the Congo, France, Namibia, the Philippines and the Russian Federation as members of the Committee on Conferences for a period of three years beginning on 1 January 2012.

Members will further recall that there remained one vacant seat from among the Asia-Pacific States to serve for a period of three years beginning on 1 January 2012, and two vacant seats from among the Latin American and Caribbean States for a period of three years, one beginning on 1 January 2011 and the other beginning on 1 January 2012. On the recommendation of the Chair of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, the President of the General Assembly has appointed Uruguay as a member of the Committee on Conferences for a period beginning on 19 April 2012 and ending on 31 December 2013.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of that appointment?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: With regard to the remaining vacant seats from among the Asia-Pacific States and the Latin American and Caribbean States, I urge those regional groups to submit their candidatures as soon as possible.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 115.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I wish to inform members that the consideration of agenda item 19, entitled “Sustainable development”, to take action on the draft decision issued as document A/66/L.44, previously scheduled for this meeting, is postponed to a later date to be announced.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.