

UN Global Road Safety Week – launch
23rd – 27th April 2007

Make Roads Safer Rally calls for UN ministerial to address “epidemic” of 1.2m road deaths and injuries worldwide every year. Young people in developing countries are most at risk.

At the launch of the UN Global Safety Week in the UK on Monday, 23 April, ten of the country’s leading road safety organisations, including the industry’s own RoadSafe, called for the United Nations to hold a ministerial conference to address the growing epidemic of road deaths in developing countries.

The ten road safety organisations, under the banner of the “Make Roads Safe” campaign, expressed their collective concern that so little was being done to address what the Chairman of the Commission for Global Road Safety, Lord Robertson of Port Ellen described as an “epidemic”.

Lord Robertson pointed out that road crashes were now the leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 10 and 25 across the world.

“It is an epidemic that preys on the poor,” he said, “not just in the developing world but here at home too. Half the children killed or seriously injured on our roads in this country come from the most deprived neighbourhoods.”

“Every six seconds,” he went on, “someone is killed or maimed on the world’s roads. Every six seconds we unfortunately have another good reason to demand that the international community works to make roads safe”.

In his new role as German Commissioner for the Global Road Safety Commission, seven-times world motor racing champion, Michael Schumacher said, “A thousand young people under the age of 25 die every day on the roads. Road crashes kill on the scale of malaria or tuberculosis yet the international community has not woken up to this horrific waste of life”.

Prime Minister Tony Blair, in a recorded video message to the Rally, added his support to the petition for the UK ministerial. “Every minute of every day,” he said, “a child is killed or seriously injured on the world’s roads. Road crashes are the second leading cause of death for young men after HIV/AIDS and in some African countries 70% of those killed on the roads are young breadwinners. It is clear that road injury has a serious impact on the wide development goals we are trying to achieve”.

The World Bank’s leading road safety specialist, Tony Bliss pointed out the importance of saving lives in developing countries where health equated with wealth. A 1% improvement in life expectancy was worth 4% on a country’s GDP.

He also contrasted the differences between the road accidents in high-income countries where most of those killed or injured are drivers and passengers of four-



wheel vehicles while in the low- and middle-income countries the “vulnerable road users” – pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and users of public transport - made up a greater part of those killed or injured on the roads.

The US Commissioner, Mark Rosenberg, referred to the “scandal of tolerance” that allowed 1.2m people to die or be injured on the world’s roads in contrast to accidents that occurred in other forms of transport, like air travel, rail or shipping where less than 2,000 fatalities were reported every year. “We all have to take collective responsibility for this,” he urged.

The FIA Foundation, who organised the event, is hoping to collect over 1m signatures in support of the Rally’s call for a UN petition.

For more information:

<http://www.who.int/roadsafety/week/en/>

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