



**STATEMENT BY MR. JANARDHANA POOJARY, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 60:
GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY CRISIS IN THE 60TH SESSION OF UN GENERAL
ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 26, 2005**

Mr. President,

We thank the Secretary-General for his note transmitting the Report prepared by the World Health Organization on the Global Road Safety Crisis in accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/289 of 14 April 2004. We would also like to express our appreciation to the delegation of Oman for their continuous efforts in support of this agenda item.

Mr. President,

The Report informs us that road traffic injuries are a major public health problem and a leading cause of death and injury around the world. Each year nearly 1.2 million people die and millions more are injured or disabled as a result of road crashes, mostly in urban areas of developing countries. In many instances, road accidents rob poor families of their bread-earning member. In addition to the enormous economic and social costs to individuals, families and communities, road traffic injuries place a heavy burden on national health services, in particular those of developing countries.

As a country that has a vast road network of over 3 million km, and where the traffic on roads is growing at the rate of 7-10 per cent per annum, India attaches

importance to addressing the problem of road traffic safety and to reducing the adverse consequences of traffic accidents. Indian roads carry 85 per cent of the passenger and 60 per cent of the freight traffic of the country. While comprising only 2 per cent of the road network, the highways carry 40 per cent of this traffic. For many years, India lagged behind many countries of the world in the development of highways. In recent years, a concerted effort has been undertaken through new institutional arrangements and improved highway engineering to advance the highway infrastructure in India.

Under the National Highway Development Project (NHDP), 14,279 km of national highways are to be converted to 4/6-lanes, at a total estimated cost of Rs.6500 billion or approximately US \$151 billion (at 2004 prices). This project consists of:

- i. The Golden Quadrilateral connecting the four major cities of Delhi in the north, Mumbai in the west, Chennai in the south, and Kolkata in the east of the country.
- ii. The North-South and East-West Corridors connecting Srinagar in the North to Kanyakumari in the South and Silchar in the East to Porbandar in the West.
- iii. Port connectivity and other projects.

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (Prime Minister's Rural Road Plan) was launched in December 2000 to provide rural connectivity to unconnected habitations in the rural areas by the end of the 10th Plan period in 2007. Rehabilitation and upgradation of about 10,000 km of existing national highways to 4-lane dual carriageway configuration under a BOT basis is proposed under the NHDP Phase III. Accelerated North-East Road Development Project is also under consideration for the development of roads in the north-east region. The fourth phase of the NHDP is a new initiative meant to provide balanced and equitable distribution of improved/widening highway network throughout the country by upgrading 21,000 km of single-lane roads to 2-lane highways and construction of paved shoulders.

We believe that this enhanced focus on improving infrastructure of roads and highways in the country would not only help in the development of the country, but also lead to reducing road congestion, which would help in reducing accidents on the road. Eventually, we hope and believe that the improved road infrastructure would also serve to improve road safety in the country.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has been entrusted with the responsibility for formulating policies for road safety in India. It compiles data on road accidents and prepares annual road safety plans. Various initiatives being implemented include publicity campaigns, grants-in-aid to NGOs for organizing road safety programmes and creating awareness, a national highway accident relief service scheme, refresher training for heavy vehicle drivers and the setting up of model driving training schools. Publicity programmes include the printing of calendars and placement of advertisements on radio, television and other mass media. A road safety week is organized annually to raise awareness. The Sixteenth Road Safety Week was observed throughout India from 3-9 January 2005, with the theme "Road Safety Is No Accident",

which is also the theme chosen by the World Health Organization while declaring 2004 as Road Safety Year. To generate awareness amongst school children, essay competitions on road safety are organized. More than 43,000 drivers are being trained through NGOs and local institutions under the scheme of refresher training to heavy vehicle drivers in the unorganized sector. Awards have been instituted at various levels to recognize important contributions made to road safety.

Mr. President,

The linkage between poverty and underdevelopment on the one hand and road safety on the other has been brought out by the Secretary-General in his earlier reports. The Secretary-General's report this year (A/60/181) identifies a number of strategies and policies that can contribute to decrease in road crashes. One aspect that could be studied in this regard is the aspect of punishment for rash and negligent driving. While this issue falls purely under national jurisdiction, WHO could make an assessment of the need for advocacy in this regard. The report states that the international community must take the lead by assisting countries in identifying road safety interventions that have been shown to be effective and in implementing them in their own countries in a manner that is appropriate to each cultural setting. This cannot be done in a purely mechanical manner.

Given this scenario, the imperative for increasing international cooperation to assist developing countries to effectively address issues of road safety cannot be over-emphasized. We appreciate the efforts being made in this regard through the World Health Organization. We would also like to acknowledge the work done by the regional commissions of the United Nations, particularly the Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific. We note from the report that initiatives have been envisaged to assist developing countries on road safety, including by the World Bank. However, we also note that mobilizing resources remains a concern for many organizations involved in global and national road safety efforts, as the level of funding targeted at reducing road traffic injuries is far from commensurate with the scale of the problem.

Mr. President,

Further international cooperation needs to extend beyond the development of international instruments or the universalization of standards that may have been developed in one region. We are particularly satisfied that the resolution that we will be adopting today recognizes the importance of supporting developing countries to build capacities in the field of road safety and providing them financial and technical support for their efforts.

Thank you, Mr. President

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