

**Message from Dr Samlee Plianbangchang  
Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region,  
on the occasion of the Launch of the  
UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020  
11 May 2011**



This year, we have the privilege to draw special attention to the problem and prevention of road traffic injuries. On 11 May the United Nations including World Health Organization, United Nations Regional Commission and other international partners, and Member States are, simultaneously launching the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011 - 2020.

In 2004, the UN Secretary-General released his report on the global road safety crisis. WHO also launched the report on road traffic injury prevention in 2004 with recommendations to Member States. Following the World Report, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on improving global road safety (Res A/58/289), which calls for countries to take note of the recommendations of the joint WHO/*World Bank World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*, also invites the World Health Organization to act as coordinator on road safety issues within the United Nations system. The World Health Assembly accepted the invitation and moved to mobilize the public health sector and implement good practices.

On 2 March 2010 governments around the world took the historic decision to increase the degree of action to address the road safety crisis over the next ten years. The UN General Assembly resolution proclaimed a Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011 - 2020 (A/RES/64/255).

In response to resolution A/RES/64/255, WHO prepared a Plan of Action for the Decade through wide consultation with stakeholders. The Plan focuses on five activity categories: improving the management of road safety through multisectoral mechanisms; assessing road infrastructure and improving road design; making vehicles safer; changing the behaviour of road users; and improving emergency care and rehabilitation services. The plan serves as a guide for governments to develop their own plans and targets according to their priorities and objectives for the Decade. Nongovernmental organizations and the private sector will also contribute in implementation.

WHO will play a key role throughout the Decade. WHO will provide overall coordination and host a small secretariat to monitor progress through global status reports, and will provide technical support to countries for prevention, data collection and emergency trauma care.

The symbol for the Decade, which is the yellow road safety tag, has been finalized in the six UN languages, other widely spoken languages and many more regional languages recently. The Tag will illuminate several important buildings in the world on the evenings of 10 and 11 May 2011.

Road traffic injury prevention requires the involvement of many sectors. In some countries the ministry of health may take the lead; in others, it may be the ministries of transport, interior or others who are in charge. While this variation across countries is recognized, we do hope that the ministries of health will play a key role in contributing to national road safety efforts in all countries. WHO country offices will engage with them as well as other appropriate governmental counterparts.

If all countries prepare and implement their plans for the Decade of Action for Road Safety during the next ten-year period, millions of lives could be saved.

On this occasion, I urge all governments in the Region, stakeholders, and partners to strengthen and implement appropriate road safety programmes that target the major risks of RTI. WHO stands ready to provide the necessary technical support to national governments and will continue to work in collaboration with them and with other partners.



Dr Samlee Plianbangchang  
Regional Director