



Panel session: Road safety and security in the age of new mobility

In February 2020, Minister Eneroth hosted the third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, resulting in the Stockholm Declaration. On this basis, a UN Resolution adopted in September sets a target to reduce road deaths by 50% in the decade to 2030. It highlights the need to connect road safety with the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and the other Sustainable Development Goals.

Shortly after the Stockholm Conference, the world was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic that deeply changed mobility patterns, accelerated a trends towards more cycling and walking, and exacerbated the need to provide more space to non-motorised transport. “We cannot go back to the old normal: we have to use this period to change” said Matthew Baldwin, highlighting that the pandemic can be a catalyst to fix a car-centric mobility system. The Covid-19 crisis also revealed the ability of policy makers to take quick and strong decisions and their acceptance by the public in the interest of public health. We need the same political will to fight against road deaths epidemic. For Etienne Krug, road safety policy makers need to “stop being shy and be more vocal. We also need a strong civil society that will demand action for road safety.”

Addressing unsafe speeds is a vaccine against the current road deaths epidemic, said Jean Todt. Generalising a 30 km/h speed limit in urban areas where people and traffic mix is a major innovation, that several cities in the world already adopted, and which is the focus of the UN Global Road Safety Week this May. Respecting the safe limits set for roads is essential to preventing deaths and serious injuries and the arrival of Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA) will save many lives. Matthew Baldwin noted that from 2022, all new models of cars in Europe will be fitted with ISA. The system will not only notify the driver of speed limits but also apply a significant resistance to the accelerator pedal when the limit is reached. Speed reduction is an illustration of the convergence between road safety and sustainability goals as it leads to better air quality, less noise, less CO2 emissions and better traffic flows. Addressing jointly sustainable transport and road safety is a win win. “We need to connect road safety with sustainability and aim at a transformation of the transport sector”, said Minister Eneroth.

The UN target for saving lives on roads in the last decade was not met. Things need to be done differently for the new decade, delivering a Safe System. Jean Todt noted from his professional background that motor sport is an excellent showcase for Safe System principles and a laboratory for safety innovation. The Safe system is at the core of motor sport racing so when a when a crash occurs, all the other elements (high standard road and roadside, effectiveness of emergency services, shared responsibility) are here to minimise the level of injury. The Safe system is not a recipe for rich countries it is within the reach of all, providing there is political will. Colombia has embarked on the Safe System journey and Minister Orozco

reported on implementation of several very successful pilot projects achieving a 75% reduction in the number of road deaths.

Efficient road safety policies need solid funding and innovative funding mechanisms must be found. The creation of the UN Road Safety Fund has been a major step forward, but for Jean Todt “we need to generate more funding from both the public and the private sector”. Minister Orozco agreed, and outlined Colombia’s USD 30 billion infrastructure investment plan to build high safety standard roads.

Minister Orozco took the discussion back to integrating policies to address safety together with the other UN Sustainable Development Goals. She highlighted growth in motorcycle traffic as one reason Colombia was not able to meet the goal of the last Decade of Action on Road Safety. “In some areas of the country we don’t have public transportation” Minister Orozco noted to explain motorcycle use. The new decade of action for road safety thus requires shaping a transport system that is no longer dependent on private motor vehicles but structured around public transport, walking and cycling.