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**MESSAGE TO THE FIRST GLOBAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
ON ROAD SAFETY
Moscow, 19-20 November 2009**

*Delivered by Mr Sergei A. Ordzhonikidze,
Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva*

It gives me great pleasure to extend my greetings to all the participants in this First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety. I thank President Medvedev for bringing together so many high-level representatives in support of this cause.

This conference is long overdue. Each year, more than one million people are killed in traffic accidents – more than die than from malaria or diabetes. The vast majority are in low and middle-income countries. In addition, some 50 million people are severely injured, costing governments 1 to 3 per cent of their gross national products.

Behind these staggering statistics lie the enormous suffering and grief that road accidents inflict on families and communities. Our lives have come to depend on mobility. But mobility should not come at such a high price.

The United Nations plays a critical role in raising awareness, mobilizing support and fostering cooperation to address what should be regarded as a crisis. With the active involvement of many parts of the UN system, under the umbrella of the UN Road Safety Collaboration, and led by the World Health Organization and the Regional Commissions, there has been a significant rise in regional and international initiatives.

But we must do more to limit the economic and emotional devastation caused by poor road safety, while creating sustainable transport systems that protect the environment from climate change. I call on governments, vehicle manufacturers, public and private donors, NGOs and experts to work together towards tangible goals such as safer roads and vehicles, and greater investment in preventing road traffic injuries.

Road traffic deaths and injuries are preventable. Let us rise to the challenge and better protect the millions upon millions of people who travel the world's roads every day. Please accept my best wishes for a successful conference.