



**STATEMENT BY HON. AMB. CHIRAU ALI MWAKWERE, FCILT, EGH, MP,
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND CHAIR OF
PANEL 4, "SAFE ROAD USERS" DURING THE 1ST MINISTERIAL ROAD
SAFETY CONFERENCE IN MOSCOW, 19TH TO 20TH NOVEMBER, 2009.**

Fellow Panelists,

I take this opportunity to thank the World Health Organization, the co-host of Moscow Conference for this honour to chair Panel 4 of the Conference's Sessions. This Panel's task is to deliberate on the topic of "Safe Road Users" and generate outcomes and recommendations for preparation of the final report that I will present at the Plenary Session later in the afternoon.

Our guided deliberations will focus on issues surrounding the human element in road safety, success stories and interventions, best practices or innovative ideas for improvements in ensuring safety for road users. This, we will do in the contexts of developed and developing countries with emphasis not only on drivers' safety but also pedestrians, pedal cyclists and motorcyclists' safety as well. I am confident that with your expertise, the Panel will achieve its objective.

Fellow Panelists, More than one (1) million people around the world are killed every year in road traffic accidents with an additional 20-50 million injured or permanently disabled. This is approximately 3,000 deaths daily. According to a World Report by the World Health Organization and World Bank, road safety injuries are a major and growing public health epidemic on the same scale of Malaria and Tuberculosis.

More than 80% of road traffic accidents fatalities occur in low income countries despite these countries accounting for only 40% of the world's vehicle fleet. The total cost of road crashes and resultant deaths and injuries in developing countries is estimated to exceed US\$ 65 billion.

Africa is the region with the worst death rate with 28 fatalities per 100,000 people. Considering 50% of the population in the continent is below the age of 16 years, road accidents place a heavy burden on Africa's economies as it affects the productive section of the population, thereby increasing poverty levels in the continent.

Although projections indicate that road accidents deaths will decline by about 30% in developed countries by the 2020, the same may not be the case in developing countries. In fact, by 2020, it is estimated that road traffic deaths and injuries are expected to escalate as the third leading contributor to health problem in developing countries.

Fellow Panelists, this clearly indicates that road safety is a social and development issue and a real concern to the international community. When road traffic accidents occur, it is mostly road users like pedestrians, passengers, motorists, motorcyclists and pedal cyclists who bear the biggest brunt. In Africa, animals and people die from road accidents because animal and human-drawn carts are popular means of transport and a source of livelihood.

It has been argued that the problem of road safety is largely addressed in the wrong manner because most road safety measures are designed to increase the safety of drivers. Such critics point out that measures which increase driver safety may perversely increase the risk to other road users through risk compensation. In the UK for example only 40% of victims are drivers.

Road users' behavior is at times blamed as a big contributor to the increase in fatalities and injuries among the vulnerable groups. For example, pedestrians are often blamed for being reluctant to use designated facilities such as overbridges (extra distance) and underpasses (extra risk), which are meant to enhance their safety.

Advocates for vulnerable groups' rights are also critical of current interventions, which they view as too 'restrictive' for vulnerable road users. Such advocates claim that many interventions are designed to improve road safety infrastructure and regulations at the expense of vulnerable road users' needs, which is tantamount to blaming the victims and failing to address the source of the problem.

Fellow Panelists, The interests of road users must be a priority at the international and national levels. Interventions that may apply in developed countries may not necessary work in developing countries. Similarly, countries may adopt measures unique to their environment, but overall, there is universal consensus that road safety management systems should integrate the following-:

- Training of drivers and licensing
- Management of vehicle quality
- Enforcement
- Judicial actions
- Management of roads and public space
- Accident control and insurance
- Management of transport systems
- Research and information and
- Education and communication

Such road safety management systems in my view, could facilitate convergence, as it addresses road safety in entirety. It also takes into account the needs of people with special needs, the aged, the poor and children. What more, they can inform the development of national road safety policies leading to greater economic benefits.

It is my hope that we will extensively deliberate on these issues and at the conclusion of our discussion, come up with appropriate recommendations that would add value to the Conference's resolutions and the Decade of Action for Road Safety.

Thank You