

## **First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety**

### **Report panel 6: Safe Vehicles**

#### **By David Ward, Director General of the FIA Foundation**

The Panel was chaired by Claes Tingval of the Swedish Road Authority and as moderator of the Panel I have been asked to present a summary of our discussion and main recommendations. Firstly I would like to thank all our panellists for their interesting contributions.

The panel discussed the significant progress that has been made in vehicle safety over the last few decades. The latest passenger cars on the market in USA, Europe, and Japan are safer than ever before through the development of technologies promoting crash protection (air bags, crumple zones, intelligent seat belts systems etc) and new crash avoidance systems (electronic stability control etc).

The panel noted that this improvement in vehicle safety has been driven by a 30 year effort of sustained research, industry innovation, applied legislation, and consumer awareness initiatives. Regulation has often provided a minimum standard above which a 'market for safety' has developed helped by new car assessment programmes.

Improvements in vehicle safety have contributed significantly to reductions in road fatalities and serious injuries. For example NHTSA estimate that safety technologies have saved 328,551 lives from 1960 through 2002.\*.

The panel recognises, however, that affordability matters. If the safest vehicles are beyond reach of the consumer they will remain in less safe vehicles for longer. So it is very important to develop policies that make safer vehicles less expensive, through incentive schemes, global harmonisation and fleet purchasing.

The panel also noted that the motor vehicle fleet is forecast to almost triple by 2050 and all that increase will occur mostly in newly motorising nations. There is huge scope, therefore, for a large increase in the number of safer vehicles on the world's roads, but such progress is not inevitable. There is a risk of a widening divide between the vehicle markets of the already motorised and newly motorising countries. A two tier global vehicle market may develop of safe vehicles in the OECD area and less safe vehicles in the non-OECD area (supplied by both second hand and new but less well specified vehicles).

The major challenges the panel then considered were how can we grow the market for safer vehicles? -What policy options work best? And what can a Decade of Action contribute?

In response the panel offered the following recommendations:

- A minimum set of global vehicle construction standards should be developed for application by both vehicle exporting and importing nations.
- Motor vehicle manufacturers should be encouraged to further develop safety technologies especially those that positively influence user behaviour and governments should adopt policies that provide incentives for such investment.
- Consumer information activity such as New Car Assessment Programmes should be developed in all world regions.

- The market for safer vehicles can be stimulated through fleet purchasing policies of both public authorities and the private sector following best practice in health and safety (such as the new ISO road safety management standard).
- Targets for the decade could include encouraging the fitment of effective safety systems such as Electronic Stability Control (ESC) in all new motor vehicles by 2020.

This concludes the report of Panel 6 on Safer Vehicles. Thank you very much.

\*Source: NHTSA 'Lives Saved by the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards and Other Vehicle Safety Technologies, 1960-2002 – Passenger Cars and Light Trucks'.