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Global dialogue and contribution to road safety capacity building: Focus on low and middle-income countries

Submitted by the Institute of Road Traffic Education (IRTE)

This document contains outcomes and recommendations of the “Global Road Safety Initiative”- an event organized in partnership with the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Government of India, and in association with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) on 4-6 December 2023 in New Delhi. WP.1 will be invited to consider the document and offer comments how to facilitate a shift towards the safe, inclusive, sustainable mobility as per Agenda 2030.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY INITIATIVE

(4-6 DECEMBER 2023)

1. On December 4-6, 2023, the Institute of Road Traffic Education (IRTE) hosted the Launching event and Working Session of the Global Road Safety Initiative, an international conference held in Delhi, India, in partnership with the Indian Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, and association with the UNECE and the UNESCAP. More than 100 road safety experts, government officials, and national dignitaries from more than 20 nations gathered for the Global Road Safety Initiative (GRSI) to review the science and consider practical experience regarding the unique road safety issues facing emerging economies in Southeast Asia and beyond. This conference marked 10 years to the Europe-Asia Road Safety Forum and the 67th Session of the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety as part of IRTE's longstanding international leadership. It was the fourth gathering of international experts of the Global Forum on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) under an MOU between IRTE and the United Nations Economic Commission of Europe.

2. This annex to the full conference proceedings summarizes the outcomes of the technical sessions held during the GRSI. These recommendations are provided by conference participants to complement and expand the work of WP.1 towards accomplishing the objectives of the Agenda 2030. These findings will be tabled at the 88th Session of the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety, for consideration by the delegates of member nations, road safety stakeholders, and academics, as focus areas for assistance, capacity building, and local implementation.

DEFINING MEASURES FOR THE SAFETY OF POWERED TWO WHEELERS (PTWs) AND OTHER VULNERABLE ROAD USERS (VRUs) – [Outcomes of GRSI Session 4]

3. Technical presentations and deliberations on the specific needs of PTWs and other VRUs featured the experience of a range of emerging economies along with scientific work completed by the IRTE, the University of Birmingham, Johns Hopkins University, and others for WP.1.

4. A technical expert from Malaysia reported on the success of segregated lanes for PTWs. This approach was strongly recommended for consideration by nations where PTWs comprise a large proportion of the overall vehicle fleet.

5. Filtration of PTWs was recommended for consideration on roads where ample segregated spaces cannot be provided, such as urban roads, and where enforcement of lane use rules (operation within prescribed lanes) by other traffic (three and four-wheeled vehicles) can be ensured.

6. It was recommended that a road safety code be legislated to define responsibilities for vehicles, roads, pedestrians and other non-motorized traffic so that expectations are well understood and all road users as well as those responsible for infrastructure and vehicles can be accountable in judicial proceedings.

7. The use of pedestrian bridges over high-speed highways was critically analysed: indicating that pedestrians tend to avoid using foot-over-bridges of standard heights (of 5.5 metres) because of inconvenience and discomfort. It was recommended that where high footbridges with long and steep stairways are inconvenient, especially for the old or differently-abled pedestrians, hump subways fitted with proper lighting, security, drainage, ramps, modernised escalators/elevators, slopes (not abrupt), and ample width would be most suitable.

DEFINING COMPETENCE OF DRIVER TRAINERS AND LICENSING EXAMINERS & THE IMPORTANCE OF IN-PERSON EXAMINATION – [Outcomes of GRSI Session 6]

8. GRSI participants recommended that driver trainers (or instructors) and licensing examination officers should be appropriately trained and assessed.

9. Participants acknowledged that driving instructors should be held to an accordingly high standard because novice drivers tend to gain a lasting impression of road safety and driving discipline from their primary instructors. Governments should prescribe minimum legal eligibility requirements and standards for training approved driving instructors (ADI). All paid driving instructors should be included in a Register of Approved Driving Instructors, after complying with all legal requirements. They must satisfy the authorities of their competence after undergoing a criminal records check and passing a three-part examination consisting of a theory test, a test of driving ability, and a test of instructional ability. Details of requirements for classroom learning, teaching techniques, and assessment techniques are provided on pages 6 to 31 of the GRSI Compendium.

10. It was recommended that the licensing officers be under no obligation to issue as many licenses as possible in a given day, rather they should have a fixed time that must be invested in testing each candidate. Further, participants recommended that driving license examiners hold a certificate of professional competence (CPC) based on an assessment that must be renewed periodically and configured according to the types of driver licenses the examiner issues.

11. Participants considered a situation observed in some jurisdictions where the demand for the issuance of novice driver's licenses was much higher than the availability of licensing officers, and technology (automated testing) had been adopted as a compromise. Experts stressed that such compromises should be avoided since direct interaction of a licensee with a trained human examiner is essential to ensure that the licensee's driving behaviour and vehicle control skills can be evaluated in different conditions, including low-speed manoeuvres, varying traffic conditions, and yielding the right of way. Trained examiners can also repeat certain theoretical questions about traffic control devices that were to be posed in a computer-administered test. Automated testing on fixed tracks is inadequate in these aspects for the complete assessment of new licensees. Technology cannot be the solution but only an enabler for licensing examination.

HARMONIZATION OF MEDICAL STANDARDS FOR DRIVER FITNESS AND CERTIFICATION – [Outcomes of GRSI Session 7]

12. The importance of a driver's fitness certification while applying for a driver's license was a question widely debated. In setting standards for such certification, it was mentioned that there is a need to balance the desire for public safety (by restricting individuals who may pose a risk) with the need for individual mobility (by allowing those who can drive safely to do so).

13. Participants recommended that countries that have not considered medical certifications should do so (India included). Such certifications can be incorporated in the process of obtaining a novice driver's permit, as well as in license renewals as required by national legislation. Medical standards for driver licensing should be published to create awareness of drivers' responsibilities, firstly, not to drive under inappropriate conditions, and secondly, to inform the licensing authority when a medical situation arises that does not comply with the standards. Insurance companies may also step in to ensure that these standards are met in letter and spirit, thereby underlining their importance. In consultation with the drafted standards and the health departments, the government should prescribe relevant training for medical professionals and traffic psychologists (wherever applicable) who would then issue such certificates after a defined examination.

14. In most neuro-psychiatric conditions, conditional licenses with periodic reviews should be mandated instead of unconditional licenses. Wherever denial (dementia), poor insight (schizophrenia/mania), or understatement (substance misuse) regarding the disorder is expected, collateral information from other sources must be sought, along with a

specialist's opinion for any uncertainty. Draft guidelines are provided in the GRSI Compendium (Pages 52 to 71) for reference.

COMMERCIAL POWERED TWO-WHEELERS (PTWs) AND PRIVATE PTWs USED FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES (e.g., private PTWs used as 'delivery agents' in the gig economy) – [Outcomes of GRSI Session 8]

15. While in the past, most PTWs have been used for personal transportation, or by enforcement agencies, in recent years an increasing number of PTWs across the globe – and especially in Southeast Asia - are being used for commercial purposes, such as taxis and as delivery agents for transporting goods. These private PTWs are locally adapted to the needs of such commercial use without research regarding vehicle safety or appropriate rider training. It was recommended that PTW manufacturers should offer PTW models that have been developed specifically for carrying commercial loads of various types. Such models should be certified as safe for defined commercial use. The weight limit and design of delivery bags for use on such vehicles should also be legislated and enforced. GRSI participants agreed that commercial PTW riders must undergo specific training programs. Where traffic violations or crashes create an unsafe road environment due to businesses that promote and promise 'fast delivery', penal action should be taken against those businesses. There is an urgent need for legislative and policy action to control the risks of commercial PTWs both to the public and to the riders.

CHALLENGES IN HARMONIZATION OF TRAFFIC RULES AND THE INTERNATIONAL DRIVING PERMIT – [Outcomes of GRSI Session 9]

16. GRSI participants expressed serious concern about the legality, issuance, and use of International Driving Permits (IDP). Furthermore, the term 'contracting party', which forms the basis for the issuance of IDP, was a dubiety in this aspect. In a study undertaken in consultation with the WP.1 Secretariat, IRTE found that a contracting party has either completed the formalities of accession, succession or ratification to either one or more of the four conventions. The study found that a total of 138 countries are contracting parties to at least one of the four conventions (Road Signs & Signals 1949, Road Signs & Signals 1968, Road Traffic 1949 & Road Traffic 1968) and only 86 countries are contracting parties to the two conventions (i.e., 1949 and 1968) on road signs and signals. However, the Indian IDP issued by the Automobile Association has 156 member nations printed on the permit in contradiction to the provision of issuance.

17. The Chairperson of the WP.1 proposed this matter to be discussed at the next session of the Global Forum and noted the suggestions made by the participants for consideration which included:

IDPs should, therefore, be issued only by the contracting parties of both the Conventions of Road Signs and Signals & Road Traffic of 1968 only (or perhaps, 1949 as well). IDPs should be restricted only to those contracting parties who have legalised the clause of issuance of IDPs and recognition of IDPs issued by other nations. Finally, the issuance of IDPs should not be a matter of commerce by the automobile associations but rather a permit that has use and acceptance.

18. It was suggested that the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety should underline the need for and importance of the IDP. One of the most important concerns highlighted was the understanding of Codes of Practice of Signs, Signals and Road markings, as now designed by the Expert Group of Signs & Signals, which a driver of an IDP must recognize while touring different countries. Towards this end, member countries, ensuring that they are contracting parties to the Convention of Road Signs and Signals of 1968 (currently only 73 countries are contracting parties), should be given preference for such issuance.

HARMONISING THE DEFINITION OF A SCALE OF INJURY RESULTING FROM ROAD TRAFFIC CRASHES – [Outcomes of GRSI Session 10]

19. Consistent and accurate data on the causes and consequences of serious injuries in road crashes are critical for the development of effective remedial measures. Many countries (India included) define crash injuries as prescribed in their Penal Code, which is very basic and inadequate for research for remedial measures. GRSI participants recommended that an Injury Scale should be defined within the scope of the Resolutions to the Convention on Road

Traffic so that member nations would find support in amending their road traffic laws accordingly. Based upon the Indian Health Ministry and the WHO guidelines it was recommended that injuries should be redefined by including physiological aspects of trauma and utilizing a more elaborate scoring system that divides hurt/injury into multiple categories based on severity. This system should also incorporate additional required details like initial triage, vitals on presentation, the requirement of ED resuscitation, disposition to ICU/OT, LOS in ICU, etc. It was recommended that motor vehicle laws should be amended to include the triage protocols of the World Health Organization, which give a much more detailed analysis of the scale of injury. Detailed information on the Scale of Injury has been provided in the GRSI Compendium (Pages 83 to 87).

PRINCIPLES FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY COLLISION INVESTIGATION – [Outcomes of GRSI Session 11]

20. GRSI participants endorsed the content of the document on Multi-Disciplinary Crash Investigation (MDCI) that was submitted by the Swedish government to WP.1. This document has been annexed in the GRSI Compendium on Pages 72 to 82 for reference. Furthermore, it was recommended that the authority and responsibility for investigation and consultation should be defined.

21. Presentations revealed that in contrast to the situation in the Western nations, a very large proportion of crashes in emerging economies such as India are the result of non-standard roads and poor traffic engineering practices, where the traditional practice has been to blame the driver of the larger vehicle. Training of officers for crash investigation has often been rudimentary. It was recommended that specialised police units should be dedicated to the investigation of motor vehicle accidents. This should be accompanied by the establishment of academic centres in universities for interdisciplinary research on the cause of motor vehicle accidents.

22. GRSI participants stressed the goal of every road accident to be a competent investigation performed by trained officers, followed by data entry into a centrally-managed government repository that can be accessed by all qualified stakeholders, and submitted to the court by the Police. Trained judicial officers can make inferences based on objective data, explore the root causes of the incident, and identify corrective actions. Training of all personnel involved in the process is essential to the realisation of this vision, including investigating officers, judicial officers, and prosecutors dealing with road crashes. With such a system of accurate and reliable crash investigation and adjudication, the consequences of crashes can include remedial measures in addition to compensation.
