

UN General Assembly adopts traffic resolution amid dire mortality warnings

27 October 2005 – Amid predictions that worldwide traffic deaths will soon outstrip the deadly scourge of AIDS, the United Nations General Assembly resolved to mark a yearly day of remembrance for road victims, and called on nations globally to improve road safety.

The third Sunday of November will be a day of remembrance for the 1.2 million people who die due to traffic accidents every year, the General Assembly agreed in a resolution passed on Wednesday.

Another 20 to 50 million people are injured every year as a result of speeding, the increasing use of cars and rapid urbanization, and death from motorist accidents is likely to surpass mortality from AIDS by the year 2020, predicted the World Health Organization (WHO).

The current estimated cost of traffic accidents worldwide is \$517 billion annually, or 2.2 per cent of GDP, and both deaths and costs will rise where there is a lack of appropriate road engineering and injury prevention programmes in public health sectors, the agency said. With over 90 per cent of motorist-related deaths occurring in low and middle income countries, the impending health crisis will affect them disproportionately as well, [WHO](#) said.

Currently, Road Traffic Injuries (RTIs) are ranked after Malaria as the 9th most frequent cause of death, while lower respiratory infections are ranked the number one reason for mortality worldwide. But by 2020, death from traffic injuries is predicted to become the number three reason for death, following ischaemic heart disease and unipolar major depression, said WHO.

"There appears to be little awareness of [RTI] contribution to the burden of disease, so they are seriously neglected in research and policy," WHO concluded in their report. That problem is accentuated in low and middle income countries that are more likely to experience a steady increase in deaths from traffic accidents, partly because efforts to reduce the impact of increased motorization have been minimal, the agency said.

In adopting the resolution, the General Assembly invited States to implement recommendations in the "World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention" compiled by WHO, to collect meaningful road data and enhance information networks, establish national lead agencies on road safety and create action plans to reduce traffic injuries.

Oman's representative Fuad Al-Hinai, who introduced the resolution called on Member States to build capacity for managing road safety systems, and to pass legislation that would make vehicles, roadways, and drivers safer.