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## UN launches decade-long campaign to cut deaths and injuries on roads



A man blows into a breathalyzer

11 May 2011 –

The United Nations today helped launch the first global Decade of Action for Road Safety in a bid to reduce a scourge that kills an estimated 1.3 million people every year and leaves millions of others injured or permanently disabled.

Governments around the world are holding public events this week and unveiling national safety plans as they kick off the Decade of Action, which the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) hopes will provide the necessary spur for a united response to the problem.

“Road traffic crashes are a growing health and development concern affecting all nations,” [said](#) Margaret Chan, the Director-General of WHO.

Road accidents represent the ninth leading cause of death in the world today and are already the biggest killer of people aged between 15 and 29. Between 20 million and 50 million others receive non-fatal injuries every year.

The problem is also worsening. By the end of this decade, the number of deaths is projected to reach 1.9 million per year.

A global plan drawn up for the Decade of Action calls on policy-makers to turn their attention to vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists, which collectively comprise almost half of all people killed on the world’s roads.

Building bicycle paths, creating separate motorcycle lanes and improving access to public transport are all measures that could help reduce the vulnerability of those groups, according to the plan.

The plan also urges countries to strengthen their laws and enforcement practices on such issues as speeding, drinking and driving, and the wearing of helmets and seatbelts.

WHO, which will play a coordinating role during the Decade of Action, estimates that only 15 per cent of countries currently have comprehensive laws addressing all of these key risk factors for road accidents.

In his [message](#) to kick off the Decade, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon lamented the needless loss of life from road accidents.

“Together we can save millions of lives... I call on Member States, international agencies, civil society organizations, businesses and community leaders and people everywhere to ensure that the Decade leads to real improvements.”

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[Marking annual observance, Ban calls for improving road safety worldwide](#)