

7th GRSP Africa Road Safety Event (2018) – Wrap up

On October 23 and 24 in Cape Town (South Africa), the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) has hosted the 7th edition of its regional seminar to discuss road safety in Africa.

This seminar brought together different stakeholders active in the road safety space who shared the successes and challenges they face in their daily efforts to halve road crash deaths and injuries by 2020. Representatives from business, civil society, international organizations and government had the opportunity to learn from each other both in the plenary sessions and in the breakaway workshops, which focused on effective road safety management, safer road users, and collaborative approaches to road safety action.

In the opening session, the representative of the City of Cape Town, Councillor Mzwakwe Nqavashe, Chairperson of the Committee on Safety and Social Services, welcomed the participants and reminded all of the importance of the safe system approach to road safety. The elements of the safe system approach were reiterated by Mr Dave Cliff, CEO of the GRSP, who also added a reflection on the fragility of the human body when faced by impacts deriving from speeds exceeding 30km/h. In his remarks, Mr Cliff also highlighted that to decrease the current 1.4million road deaths per year we need a combination of stronger political will from governments, better and more comprehensive crash data and serious investment in key areas.

Ms Ntabeko Mogadime, the Chairperson of GRSP South Africa, noticed in her opening statement that road crashes have overtaken HIV/Aids for number of fatalities in South Africa, but that public reaction to, and institutional investment in this health crisis is nowhere similar.

Mr Robert Kaufman, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Deputy Regional Director for Africa raised a similar point saying that, if we indeed are evidence-based, then we need to consider the decrease in mortality rates of certain illnesses contrasted against the slow but continuous rise of road crash fatalities in the region. Within this context, Mr Kaufmann added that IFRC is interested in prioritizing road safety especially in Africa as “we need not only to preach to the choir, but to grow the choir.”

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Intervening via video, the United Nations Special Envoy for Road Safety and President of the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), Mr Jean Todt, said he believes that "change is possible" through, among other things, the accession of the implementation of the UN Road Safety Convention. Furthermore, he noticed how "road safety is increasingly recognized as a sustainable development priority, particularly with the establishment of the UN Road Safety Trust Fund," but pointed out that this will succeed only if its "catalytic funding is complemented by national investments by governments towards road safety."

Of a similar opinion, Adv. Makhosini Msibi, CEO of Road Traffic Management Corporation (South Africa), recognized that although "it is unlikely to reach the 2020 target of halving road crash deaths and injuries, our efforts have not been vain." He concluded his intervention with a call to action: "we should not stop working towards this objective, we should increase our efforts as more needs to be done."

Participants also enjoyed a field trip and guided tour of the Cape Town 2018 World Rescue Challenge, an annual extraction and trauma care event run by GRSP member, the [World Rescue Organization](#) (WRO). The event attracted 34 fire and rescue teams from 20 countries who compete and share knowledge and technology so as to enhance the teams skills and help raise awareness of the importance of rapid and appropriate response to road crashes.

During the two days, the GRSP Africa Road Safety Event helped strengthen the networks between road safety stakeholders in the region and provided a platform for knowledge transfer between countries and communities who share common challenges. "This important conference," said Mr Cliff, "has given us again the opportunity to share success stories and to reflect on the challenges still lying ahead. Our task now, is to take these learnings back home and apply them in our work to push forward the road safety agenda."