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His Majesty condemns reckless, high-speed drivers from all sectors of society

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos addressing sheikhs and notables at the Royal Camp in Saih Al Makarim on October 18, 2009

Squandering of lives on our roads is a 'tax' on the nation

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, ruler of Oman, used the occasion of his annual 'Meet the People Tour' to express his deep concern at the rising tide of road crash death and injury on the country's roads.

Oman faces the irony of leading global efforts to combat road death and injury worldwide through the United Nations while suffering a record toll at home.

In measured and sombre tones, His Majesty described the spiralling toll as deeply worrying. The social and economic cost of lives lost and life-long disability caused by road

crashes is the greatest burden on the nation's progress and prosperity today, he said. Reckless driver behaviour is the No.1 cause and prevalent among all strata of society, without exception, declared His Majesty, adding "While we believe that life and death are pre-ordained by Almighty Allah, at the same time, He ordered us not to destroy ourselves".

HM concluded with an appeal to the nation to address road safety as an absolute priority and as a collective responsibility. He ordered government departments to intensify their public road safety education efforts.

2011-2020 Global Decade of Action on road safety

Citing the tremendous global burden of fatalities resulting from road crashes, as well as the 20 million to 50 million people sustaining non-fatal traffic-related injuries each year, on March 2, 2010, the United Nations General Assembly passed a historic resolution declaring a decade of action on road safety. The resolution requires member states commit to actions in areas such as

developing and enforcing legislation on key risk factors: 1) limiting speed 2) reducing drink-driving 3) increasing the use of seatbelts, child restraints and 4) motorcycle helmets. Efforts will also be undertaken to improve emergency trauma care, upgrade road and vehicle safety standards, promote road safety education and enhance road safety management generally.

8 road deaths in 24 hours cause consternation and debate in the media on measures to combat speeding drivers [Read more](#)



Burnt-out wreckage of 4WD in which a family of 3 died on February 21.

Decade of Action cont..

The UN Resolution describes the toll of death and injury from road crashes as "a major public health problem...which, if unaddressed, may affect the sustainable development of countries and hinder progress towards the Millennium Development Goals".

Road traffic crashes kill 1.3 million people and injure up to 50 million each year, according to the [World Health Organization](#). If nothing is done to make roads safer, road traffic crashes will become the leading cause of death or injury among children 5 to 14 by 2015, the 2nd leading cause of healthy life years lost among adult men and the 4th or 5th leading cause of all death in low- and middle-income countries overall by 2030 according to the World Bank.

This makes road crash fatality a "far bigger problem" than such health concerns as malaria and tuberculosis.

According to the Make Roads Safe campaign spearheaded by the [FIA Foundation](#), a significant coordinated effort in the Decade of Action has the potential to save five million lives and to prevent fifty million serious injuries by 2020 (see table in item below).

A draft Plan for the Decade, prepared by WHO, with support from UN Road Safety Collaboration members, is now open to for comments by all stakeholders.

Links:

[UN General Assembly Resolution A/64/L.44/Rev.1 Improving global road safety](#)

[Draft Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020](#) (pdf)



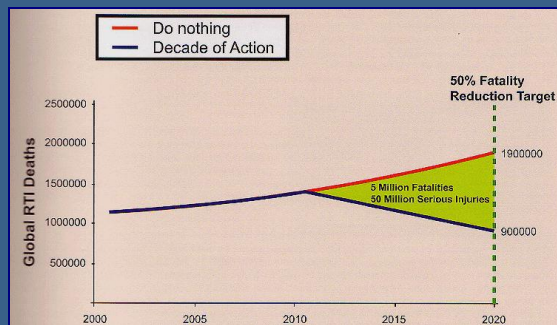
United Nations building, New York



Press conference following the UN General Assembly vote (courtesy [Make Roads Safe](#))



Floor Lieshout, WHO Youth Organisation, addresses Moscow Conference



Potential lives saved, source: Make Roads Safe [Report](#)

Moscow Ministerial Conference

The first Global Ministerial Conference which took place in Moscow on November 19-20 2009 represented a victory for 10 years of unstinting efforts by road safety campaigners, aimed at galvanising the international community into addressing the global epidemic of road crash death and injury.

Around 1500 participants including ministers, UN agencies officials, civil society and private companies attended the meeting which was opened by **President Dmitry Medvedev**. Participants called for action to address the large and growing global impact of road traffic crashes, reviewed progress on implementation of the World report on road traffic injury prevention 2004 and shared good practices on road safety.

The meeting closed with the adoption of the Moscow Declaration urging the UN General Assembly to declare a Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 with the goal of stabilizing and then reducing the forecast level of global deaths by 2020 (see table adjacent). A follow up Ministerial Conference will be held in 5 years time to review progress.

Dr Mohammed bin Awadh Al Rowas, Royal Oman Police Director-General of Traffic and delegate to the Conference, in a [press statement](#) declared that the Sultanate is already working on a long-term, multi-sectoral strategy to combat the scourge of road crash death and injury for submission to the Oman Council of Ministers.

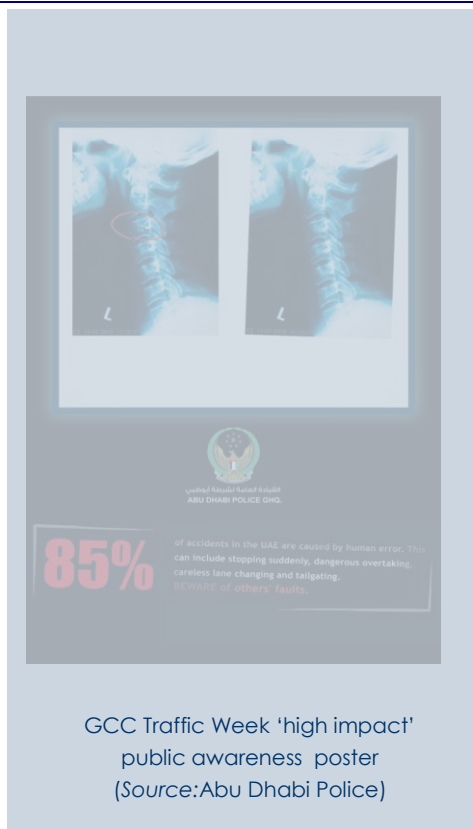
Oman News

26th GCC Traffic Week

Qatar's Traffic Director Brig. **Muhammed Saad Al Kharji**, officially launched the 26th annual GCC Traffic Week in Doha on March 13 in the presence of delegations from Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE under the theme, "Beware the mistakes of others". The aim of the week-long event was to raise public awareness of the importance of defensive driving and compliance with traffic regulations. This Traffic Week was a low-key affair and Gulf media commentators doubted its power to impact driver behaviour in a significant, lasting way. [Read more](#)

Grand Mufti speaks out

His Eminence, Sheikh Ahmed bin Hamad Al Khalili, speaking on Oman TV during Traffic Week, urged drivers to respect the rules of the road and castigated drivers who kill themselves and others through speeding and reckless driving. The death of a driver in a crash caused by his own negligence is deemed to be a deliberate act equivalent to suicide for which the punishment is hell. [Grand Mufti's Fatwa against speeding, video clip](#)



GCC Traffic Week 'high impact'
public awareness poster
(Source: Abu Dhabi Police)

Al Batinah region leads the fatality tables for 2009

Road traffic crash statistics for 2009 recently issued by the Royal Oman Police reveal that, for the 5th year in a row (2005-2009), Al Batinah region tops the table of road crash fatalities. 243 deaths on Al Batinah's roads were recorded in 2009, far in excess of deaths in Muscat and Al Dakhiliyya tied with 157 deaths each.

A comparison of the death-to-crash ratio proves that Al Batinah's roads are also the deadliest. Whereas the As Sharqiyya and Muscat regions have double and treble the number of crashes respectively as Al Batinah, but record approximately 40% less deaths. A study on the road infrastructure in Al Batinah reported in the Oman Tribune on January 18, 2010 attributes the high death toll to the number of crossroads along the dual carriage way and the speed differential between high-speed traffic on the highway and that of slow moving/stationary traffic joining or crossing the highway from population centres either side of it.

The study recommends closing many of the crossroads between Al Naseem and Al Musanah constructing roundabouts or bridges instead, and adding a third lane on the approach to all roundabouts.

UNICEF – road accidents are a leading cause of morbidity among Omani youth

On her first visit to the Sultanate after assuming office as UNICEF's regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, Sigrid Kaag commended Oman for its impressive progress in the areas of protection, health and education. After two days of high-level meetings from March 7-8, in remarks to the press, Kaag described road traffic accidents as a leading cause of death among young people and expressed the view that UNICEF can assist the sultanate in this 'emerging' area of preventable injury.

Road Safety in the Omani curriculum

The Ministry of Education and Shell Development Oman unveiled an improved edition of the Omani road safety curriculum in mid-February 2010. The curriculum, developed as a partnership initiative between the Ministry of Education, Royal Oman Police and Shell, aims to raise road safety awareness among schoolchildren and their families.

UAE officials speak out

Road death toll among children

"...a clear indication of the negligence of parents and guardians and lack of

understanding" Capt Bashir Balbisi,
ADC for Research and Security

"I see injuries here that are unheard of in other parts of the world. Many of the more horrific ones involve people who were not wearing seatbelts"

Dr Moore, trauma specialist Rashid
Hospital

"It will be remarkable if everyone starts to buckle their children in. It will make such a difference to what we see here."

Dr Moin Fikree, clinical director of the
Rashid Hospital A & E

Regional news

UAE to mandate child safety seats and seat belts

From the beginning of 2011, car safety seats for children under 6 years and seatbelts for those over 6 years will be mandatory in all Emirates a senior police official declared on February 25. Brig Gen Ghaith al Zaabi, the director general of the federal traffic department of the Ministry of Interior, said his staff is drafting a sweeping new law to save children from being killed in car crashes.

Hundreds of youngsters die in crashes each year in the UAE (44 died in Abu Dhabi alone in 2009) but there currently is no federal law mandating child restraints. The only existing rule, observed more in the breach, states that children under 10 must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle. "No doubt ... the law will help reduce the number of road casualties among children," said Brig Gen Ghaith al Zaabi. "International traffic and road studies have proved that restraining children in their seats has a massive impact on reducing injuries among children." [Read more](#)

Free baby seats for all babies born in the capital

A drive by Health Authority Abu Dhabi (HAAD) to educate parents of the risks of carrying their children unrestrained in vehicles aims to distribute 4500 safety seats to parents of new-borns for a 2-month trial period later this year. Based on the results of the pilot project, HAAD will consider making it mandatory that new-borns are carried in a safety seat before leaving hospital as is already required in many developed countries. [Read more](#)

UAE reduces crash fatalities by 10%

Around 10 percent fewer people died on the UAE's roads in 2009 compared with 2008 and the government is aiming for a further 20 percent reduction over the next 3 years. In a statement to the campaigning local National newspaper, Brig Gen al Zaabi, said the reduction in deaths was attributable to tougher enforcement of traffic rules and the introduction of a point system for offenders.

Sustainability (Al Mustadaama) News

Sustainability in Moscow

As a member of WHO's global NGO network, Sustainability (Al Mustadaama) was invited to attend the first Global Ministerial Conference in Moscow in November. "It was a privilege to be present at this landmark meeting in the battle to combat global road crash death and disability", said Sustainability's coordinator, Kemi Animashaun. "The extraordinary sense of consensus and 'can-do' among delegates from all four corners of the globe, gives us all renewed purpose and optimism for the future."

Sustainability commends UAE on proposed safety seat law

British lawyer and co-founder of Sustainability, Bernadette Bhacker, in a statement to the National newspaper congratulated the UAE on "leading the way" in the region by embarking on legislative reform aimed at death and injury prevention of children in motor vehicles. [Read more](#)



Kemi Animashaun (left) with Casey Marengé, founder of Kenyan NGO, Chariots of Hope



Dr Wahid Al Kharusi, ORSA Chair, addresses the Conference on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman

Sustainability (Al Mustadaama) News cont....

Sustainability speaks out on speed

In a statement to the press in February following the high level of fatalities over a 2-3 day period, a Sustainability spokesperson emphasizing the need for tougher laws, declared *"It is imperative to re-position sanctity for human life, especially those of innocent children and vulnerable road users, as the central guiding value and to challenge the culture of immunity, impunity and sense of invincibility prevailing among drivers on Oman's roads."*

In the same article, Mukhtar Al Rawahi, representative of the National Committee for the Welfare of the Disabled agreed, saying, *"Most drivers are not scared about being punished. We need to have stringent laws that will book them so that they won't repeat their mistakes."* [Read more](#)

Sustainability joins PDO in HSE road safety event for staff at Mina Al Fahal

PDO's Diversity and Inclusiveness team staged a road safety event in October under the heading **'Drive Safely, Save a Life'**. Sustainability's Bernadette Bhacker participated in a 3-way road safety presentation to staff with Fuping Zhu, senior production seismologist and Chris Evans Corporate HSE in the presence of PDO's road safety champion, exploration director, Martin Stauble.

Mr Stauble in a filmed presentation outlined PDO's determination to intensify efforts to tackle high-risk driving practices among employees and contractors alike through enhanced in-car monitoring and enforcement patrols. Individuals found violating rules relating to speed, seatbelts and use of mobile phones behind the wheel face disciplinary action and dismissal for repeat offences. These compliance and enforcement measures are to be reinforced by a more stringent driver training programme.

One Life, Your Choice, Oman's first road safety newsletter, is dedicated to sharing knowledge to create a crash-free culture. Get the latest road safety news as well as the best and next road safety practices, campaigns and resources from around the world condensed and delivered direct to your desktop. Sharing ideas, tips and resources with your family, colleagues and community is one way to play **your** part in creating a crash-free culture.

Subscribe [here](#). Unsubscribe at any time by sending us an email headed 'Unsubscribe'.

Sustainability (Al Mustadaama) llc is a 100% Omani-owned non-profit company engaged in road safety research and advocacy dedicated to raising public awareness of the risk factors for death and disability resulting from road crashes.

It has achieved recognition as developer of **Salim and Salimah, Safe and Sound™** السلامة مع سالم و سالمة, a pioneering child passenger safety campaign for the Arab world, and as producer of a bi-lingual award-winning film *"Doesn't your child deserve a safe ride?"*. Sustainability is a member of WHO's network of global NGOs advocating for road safety, Make Roads Safe campaign, the Road Traffic Injuries Research Network, the European Road Safety Charter and the Middle East Partnership Initiative.



Contact details:-

Sustainability llc
P.O. Box 500
Mina Al Fahal 116
Sultanate of Oman



email: almustadaama@ecologyfund.net
web: www.salimandsalimah.org
webmail: info@salimandsalimah.org
tel/fax: + (968) 24492057