

'Save Lives: Slow Down,' urges UN health agency ahead of Global Road Safety Week

5 May 2017 – Spotlighting the relationship between speeding and traffic fatalities – speeding contributes to one in three traffic deaths – the UN health agency, ahead of Global Road Safety Week, is urging countries to take measures to curb dangerous driving behaviour.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 1.25 million people die every year on the world's roads. Close to half of those tragic deaths are caused by drivers going faster than posted speed limits.

Speed is at the core of the global road traffic injury problem, WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan said in a [news release](#) issued on the eve of the week, which runs from 8 to 14 May. If countries were to address just this key risk, they would soon reap the rewards of safer roads, both in terms of lives saved and increases in walking and cycling, with profound and lasting effects on health.

To raise awareness and avoid tragedy hundreds of events are being organized throughout [Global Road Safety Week](#). WHO points out that these events will contribute to achievement of the road safety-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UN health agency points to research that shows that a five per cent cut in average speed can result in a 30 per cent reduction in the number of fatal road traffic crashes.

Speed reduction is a key contribution [to the SDGs], said Etienne Krug, Director of the WHO Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention in an interview with *UN News*. We have planned our cities for cars. Cars are everywhere, they are speeding and [as a result] people don't feel comfortable in many cities to cycle or even to walk.

Mr. Krug further pointed out that public transportation is underdeveloped and if we continue [like this], we are going straight into the wall if we develop our cities just for cars.

The campaign [Save Lives: #SlowDown](#) is also part of a larger initiative [Save LIVES: a road safety technical package](#) promoting 22 key measures to address road traffic deaths and injuries, including on managing speed.

Aside from speed management the plan focuses on leadership, infrastructure design and improvement, vehicle safety standards, enforcement of traffic laws and post-crash survival.

Speed is not the only factor, stressed Mr. Krug. Drunk driving is also a key factor and distracted driving such as texting and being

on the phone.”

He saw a clear need to campaign for improving infrastructure and modes of transportation. “We need to make cycling, walking and public transportation more safe and more accessible because that is the future and it is also much healthier. People will have less [non communicable diseases](#) if they walk and cycle more. I'm talking about cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes.”

Krug confirms that the work is paying off. “We are seeing progress there are many cities, I could highlight Freiburg, Sao Paulo and New York,” adding that “we want more of that, and we want it faster because the clock is ticking.”

[UN migration agency transports hundreds of South Sudanese refugees from border into Ethiopia](#)

5 May 2017 – The United Nations migration agency has begun transferring South Sudanese refugees from Ethiopia's Pagak border entry point in Gambella to the Gore-Shembola refugee camp in Benishangul Gumuz Regional States – approximately 835 kilometres away.

“IOM [International Organization for Migration] has set up two way stations, one at Metu [275 km from the Pagak entry point] and the other at Gimbi [310 km from Metu],” said Anezier Ebrahim, IOM Officer in charge of the operation, explaining the route taken to reach Gore-Shembola refugee camp in a press [release](#) announcing the effort, which began on 1 May.

“The way stations have been constructed with the financial assistance of the United Kingdom Department for International Development and provide overnight accommodation, shelter and meals for refugees in transit from the border entry point to the camp,” he continued.

With recent fighting and severe food insecurity further worsening the already dismal humanitarian situation in South Sudan, an additional 30,000 refugees are expected to enter Gambella over the coming months, according to IOM. Refugee camps in Gambella, one of Ethiopia's least developed regions, are currently at maximum capacity with the total number of South Sudanese refugees surpassing that of the local population.

In collaboration with the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs and the Office of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), IOM carried out an assessment of the potential route from Pagak border entry point to Gore-Shembola refugee camp in Benishangul, to ensure the safe and

dignified migration of the refugees.

Prior to relocation, IOM provided pre-departure medical screenings to ensure that refugees are fit for travel, referring those who present medical concerns to local health facilities. IOM is also working in coordination with Plan International to provide psychosocial support and protection services for unaccompanied minors.

Nyakim and her four children are among the 365 refugees who were transferred to Gore-Shembola refugee camp in Benishangul this week. The struggles of the journey to reach Ethiopia are clearly visible – all of her children suffer from skin rashes and a cough.

“The journey from Jonglei to Pagak has been really difficult. We have walked for six days straight and my children and I have eaten only wild fruit from the forest,” Nyakim said.

Renewed fighting led her to make the perilous journey for the safety of her children, leaving her husband behind.

IOM worked in collaboration with Action for the Needy in Ethiopia (ANE) for way station site preparations and the provision of latrines, showers and water.

“Continued transportation assistance is urgently required to ensure newly arrived refugees’ access to basic services in the camps,” added Mr. Ebrahim, with the reminder that IOM remains committed to assist refugees with transportation from Pagak border entry point to Gore-Shembola refugee camp in the coming months.

[On International Day, UN honours midwives as family ‘partners for life’](#)

5 May 2017 – The United Nations population agency today urged governments and development partners to expand midwifery programmes and promote an environment where midwives can effectively serve the needs of women and their families.

“Midwives save lives, support and promote healthy families, and empower women and couples to choose whether, when and how often to have children,” said Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the UN Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)) on the occasion of International Day of the Midwife.

“They also help avert sexually transmitted infections and prevent disabilities like obstetric fistula, mother-to-child transmission of HIV and female genital mutilation,” he added.

Each year, more than 300,000 women die during pregnancy and childbirth. The UN also estimates that some three million babies do not survive the first month of life, and another 2.5 million are stillborn.

“Most of them could have been saved by the care of well-trained midwives within the framework of strong health systems,” Dr. Osotimehin said.

This year’s theme for the Day ‘Midwives, Mothers and Families: Partners for Life!’ underscores the important roles that these women and girls have in preventing maternal and newborn deaths and empowering women to make informed, healthy choices.

These are critical aspects of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to alleviate poverty and assist the planet, by the 2030 deadline.

Also today, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) reiterated the importance of midwives washing their hands and maintaining hygienic standards.

“Handwashing and lack of water and sanitation is a fundamental constraint to quality of care,” says Fran McConville, midwifery adviser, WHO. “As midwives we must work in partnership to improve access to water, sanitation and electricity for all women and babies everywhere.”

Worldwide, 30,000 women and 400,000 babies die every year from infections, such as puerperal sepsis, often caused by lack of water, sanitation and poor hand-washing practices.

[As rainy season starts, UN health agency warns of cholera outbreak in drought-hit Somalia](#)

5 May 2017 – Somalia is suffering from the largest cholera outbreak in the past five years and the number of people killed is expected to double by the end of June, the United Nations health agency.

The UN World Health Organization (WHO) reported close to 32,000 cases of cholera, including 618 deaths, since the beginning of the year.

“The drought had led to a lack of clean water and the largest cholera outbreak in Somalia in the past five years,” Tarik Jasarevic, spokesman for the WHO, told journalists in Geneva.

He noted that the case fatality rate of cholera is 1.9 per cent, with an emergency threshold of 1 per cent. Those numbers are expected to double at

the end of next month, as the overall numbers jump due to the start this week of the rainy season.

Lack of access to clean water and hygiene, food insecurity and malnutrition caused by drought are worsening the figures.

There may be more than 50,000 cases of cholera in 2017 in Somalia, Mr. Jasarevic said.

The UN is working with partners to provide medicines and medical supplies, and train health staff. In addition, a vaccination campaign reached more than 450,000 people in March, and a [second round](#) was launched yesterday.

In addition to cholera, Somalis are faced with the threat of measles as a result of a low vaccination rate, and massive displacement and crowding as a result of the drought.

A campaign had been planned to vaccinate half-a-million children between the ages of six months and five years of age, but the required \$2.7 million have not yet been met.

[World needs 'soft power' of education, culture, sciences, to combat 'ancient hatreds' – UNECSO chief](#)

5 May 2017 – 'Hard power' can no longer stop conflicts nor the rise of violent extremism and 'ancient hatreds' such as antisemitism and racial discrimination, the head of the United Nations cultural agency said today, insisting that 'we need 'soft power' of education, knowledge, culture, communication, the sciences, to strengthen the values we share and recognize the destiny we hold in common.'

Irina Bokova, the Director-General of the UN Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) made this [call](#) at the opening ceremony of the [Fourth World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue](#) hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan in the country's capital, Baku, and co-organized along with UNESCO, the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

More than 500 participants from around the world are attending the Forum under the theme 'Advancing Intercultural Dialogue – New avenues for human security, peace and sustainable development.'

Ms. Bokova praised President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan for his 'longstanding leadership in promoting intercultural dialogue' as well as the tireless engagement of the First Lady, Mehriban Aliyeva, as

UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Oral and Musical Traditions.

Azerbaijan has a long history on the 'Silk Road' ancient trade route, as a centre for exchange, scholarship and art. Baku's [Walled City](#) is also inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Conflicts across the world are tearing countries apart with civilians hardest hit, Ms. Bokova warned, pointing to the rise of violent extremism and 'cultural cleansing,' as well as what she called 'ancient hatreds' like antisemitism, racial discrimination and intolerance.

'We see mosques, churches and other temples destroyed and cultural diversity threatened,' the UNESCO chief told a room full of dignitaries and representatives of the public, private and non-profit sector. 'We see education under attack and children forced out of learning. We see freedom of expression threatened, journalists attacked. We see societies closing against perceived 'others,' and minorities persecuted.'

In this context, Ms. Bokova argued, the world has no choice but to respond while remaining true to the compass setting of human rights and dignity.

Of late, she added, hard power is not enough. The world needs the soft power of education, knowledge, culture, communication, the sciences, to strengthen the values we share and recognize the destiny we hold in common.

Picking up that thread, Nassir Abdulaziz, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), in his address [said](#) military actions and security measures cannot be the only response to the world's challenges. 'The interconnected nature of today's crises requires us to connect our own efforts for peace and security, sustainable development and human rights, not just in words, but in practice,' he said.

'The challenge now is to make corresponding changes to our culture, strategy, structures and operations. We must commit to achieve human security and sustainable development, in partnership with regional organizations, mobilizing the entire range of those with influence, from religious authorities to civil society and the business community, he said, adding that women and youth must also be brought to the table.

The Baku Process has become a successful platform to promote 'peaceful and inclusive societies' around the world. Since its inception, Mr. Al-Nasser said, the Forum has encouraged and enabled people and communities worldwide to take concrete measures to support diversity, dialogue and mutual understanding amongst nations.

The focus of this year's Forum is particularly significant, he continued, adding that human security places people at the centre of multidisciplinary approaches and response, including development and human rights.

UNESCO is a main partner of the Forum in addition to organizations such as the UN World Tourism Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Council of Europe, the Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.