

**KEYNOTE SPEECH BY HRH PRINCE MICHAEL OF KENT**

**INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP FOR ROAD SAFETY LEGISLATORS, QE2 CENTRE 12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER**

*Mr Francois Bausch, Minister for Sustainable Development & Infrastructure, and Your Excellency  
Mr Patrick Engelberg, Ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*

*Mr Barry Sheerman and Parliamentary Colleagues*

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I am very pleased to open this international workshop for road safety legislators here in London. This meeting is an important follow up action to the Global High Level Conference on Road Safety hosted by the Government of Brazil last year. In Brasilia a special meeting for parliamentarians agreed that more must be done to encourage United Nation's Member States to adopt comprehensive legal frameworks for road injury prevention. Chaired by Lord Robertson of Port Ellen and Deputy Hugo Leal of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, the meeting also called for the establishment of a Global Network for Road Safety Legislators.

Today, with support from both the World Health Organisation and the Towards Zero Foundation, the Network is being launched. I am delighted that the Towards Zero Foundation, of which I am patron, is serving in a catalytic role for this important initiative. I also would like to thank the Bloomberg Philanthropies and the FIA Foundation for their support.

The Toward Zero Foundation was previously host to the Commission for Global Road Safety, chaired by Lord Robertson, which has played a very important role in promoting road safety at a global level. Last year it completed its work having successfully encouraged two major developments; firstly, the launch of the Decade of Action for Road Safety in 2011; and secondly, the adoption in 2015 of a new framework of Sustainable Development Goals which include road safety with the ambitious target to halve road deaths and injuries by 2020. It is very gratifying to see that the new Global Network will be able to carry forward the important achievements of the Commission.

The task ahead now is to encourage the implementation of policy and laws that can help realise the UN's goal to halve the toll of death and injury on the world's roads. Every day 3000 people are killed in road crashes. Many of these tragic incidents are predictable and preventable. The plain fact is that we know how to avoid road injury. The combination of safer roads, safer vehicles, and safer road users can deliver lasting reductions in road fatalities and serious injuries. But for countries to make this happen requires the adoption of a solid framework of policies and laws for road injury prevention.

In short we need legislative action. And yet still too many countries lack the basic framework of laws that are the sine qua non for effective road injury prevention. Last year the World Health Organisation's Global Road Safety Status Report showed that only 44 countries worldwide have best practice helmet laws; only 34

countries have best practice drink driving laws; and only 40 countries apply the most important vehicle safety regulations. Therefore, a key task for the second half of the UN Decade of Action is to close this gap in road safety legislation.

This, of course, places a special responsibility on parliamentarians. But it also provides a powerful opportunity to demonstrate leadership. With the strong mandate now provided by Sustainable Development Goals there has never been a better time for Parliaments and parliamentarians to act on road safety. Surely there are few better ways that Members of Parliament can be of service to the communities that elect them?

Effective road safety laws can deliver large and long lasting results. In 2013, for example, this country celebrated thirty years of mandatory use of seat belts; a law which has saved tens of thousands of lives. This came about because of a campaign in Parliament led by Barry Sheerman and George Robertson who were both backbench MPs at the time. In 1996 on the initiative of a British Member of the European Parliament, Alan Donnelly, the European Union adopted crash test standards for passenger cars. This legislation too has saved tens of thousands of lives. Overall vehicle occupant deaths across the EU have been reduced by 50%. This success is the powerful and positive result of effective action by Parliamentarians promoting road safety.

A powerful feature of these success stories is that they were supported by MPs from across the political spectrum. Indeed, the cross party, consensual nature of the parliamentary debates in both the House of Commons and the European Parliament helped to secure legislative success. This goes to show that, in a world too often divided by political argument, road safety can be a source of unity and common purpose. This is certainly the spirit of the work of the Parliamentary Advisory Council of Transport Safety which has done so much to build a broad consensus on road safety policy in the UK Parliament. I am pleased you will be hearing about their work later today.

I very much hope that the Global Network for Road Safety Legislators can emulate this successful example. By providing a platform for sharing experience and best practice between parliamentarians, the Network can hopefully encourage more countries to adopt effective frameworks of road safety legislation. I would also like to encourage the Inter Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to include road safety in their work supporting the Sustainable Development Goals. I strongly believe that the new Network working with these international parliamentary associations can become a transmission belt for effective road safety policy making and knowledge transfer across the world.

I am also pleased that many of you will be attending my international awards luncheon tomorrow. This annual event recognises achievement in road injury prevention around the world. I am looking forward to presenting some very worthy winners tomorrow. Today you are embarking on a challenging mission. I warmly congratulate the WHO and the Towards Zero Foundation on this initiative and encourage parliamentarians around the world to lend their support. I very much hope that you will become future award winners by dedicating yourselves to the task of uniting parliamentarians in the common cause of avoiding death and injury on our roads.

Thank you very much.