



**STATEMENT BY MR. A. GOPINATHAN, DEPUTY PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE ON AGENDA ITEM 160: GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY
CRISIS AT THE 58TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON
APRIL 14, 2004**

Mr. President,

We thank you and the Deputy-Secretary-General for the introductory remarks. We also commend the World Health Organization for their contribution to this debate, including through the World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention. We express our appreciation to the delegation of Oman for their steadfastness of purpose in inscribing this item and in highlighting it on the agenda of the General Assembly.

We, in India, attach importance to addressing the problem of road traffic safety and to reducing the adverse consequences of traffic accidents. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has been entrusted with responsibility for formulating policies for road safety. The Ministry compiles data on road accidents and prepares annual road safety plans. Various initiatives being implemented include publicity campaigns, grants-in-aid to NGOs for organizing road safety programmes and creating awareness, a national highway accident relief service scheme, refresher training for heavy vehicle drivers and the setting up of model driving training schools. Publicity programmes include the printing of calendars and the broadcasting of advertisements on the radio, television and other mass media. A road safety week is organized every year to raise awareness. Last year, 22,000 drivers of heavy vehicles in the unorganized sector were provided refresher training through NGOs and local institutions. Awards have been instituted at various levels to recognize important contributions made to road safety.

Mr. President,

The linkage between poverty and underdevelopment on the one hand and road safety on the other has been brought out very clearly in the report of the Secretary General as well as in the WHO report which was released on April 7. Factors such as driver fatigue, old and unsafe vehicle design, unclear marking of intersections, and unsatisfactory driver training are some of the more important contributory factors for road accidents. The Secretary-General's report points out that a number of strategies and policies have contributed to dramatic decreases in road crashes in developed

countries. It goes on to say, very correctly, that the strategies cannot simply be transferred to, or replicated by, developing countries in a purely mechanical way.

Given this scenario the imperative, in our view, for increasing international cooperation to assist the developing countries to effectively address issues of road safety cannot be over-emphasised. We appreciate the efforts being made in this regard through the World Health Organization. We would also like to acknowledge the work done by the regional commissions of the United Nations, particularly that of the Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP has, along with a number of other initiatives, developed an aggregated and computerized "Asia-Pacific Road Accident Data-base". This data-base, together with its user-friendly software, is aimed at improving road safety by providing a tool to administrators and policy makers to analyze the safety situation in comparison with that of other countries. The software also assists in the development of appropriate strategies and realistic targets and in the monitoring of the effectiveness of national road safety action plans. We are happy that India had proposed this initiative for the work programme of the very first session of ESCAP's Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development. We are collaborating with ESCAP in a pilot project in India for the development of a national road accident data-base. This project is being funded by the Government of India.

Mr. President,

There is, despite the initiatives which are already underway, scope for further international cooperation. Such cooperation needs, in our view, to extend beyond the development of international instruments or the universalization of standards which may have been developed in one region. We are happy that the resolution which we will be adopting today and which we feel privileged to have co-sponsored recognizes the importance of supporting the efforts of developing countries to build capacities in the field of road safety and of providing financial and technical support for their efforts. We look forward to the effective fulfillment of this commitment.

Thank you, Mr. President

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