



## *The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010* **PRESS RELEASE**



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### **United Nations declares Decade of Action on Road Traffic Safety**

5 March 2010 | LUND (SWEDEN) -- The Bone and Joint Decade, working together for the last 10 years with several international organisations, have collectively succeeded in putting Road Traffic Safety at the top of the global health priority list for the coming decade.

As a direct result of work by the BJD-initiated UN Global Road Safety Steering Committee, the United Nations Wednesday voted to declare 2011-2020 as the global Decade of Action for Road Safety

[http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2010/traffic\\_injuries\\_media\\_20100303/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2010/traffic_injuries_media_20100303/en/index.html).

A Decade of Action for Road Safety is urgent, says WHO Assistant Director-General Dr Ala Alwan. "It will help us increase action to address what will otherwise become the fifth leading cause of death by 2030."

The hard facts speak for themselves: 1.3 million people around the world are killed every year by traffic accidents, that's 3000 people every day – or one every three seconds. and 17 million more will die on the world's roads by the year 2020, with over 200 million being seriously injured and permanently disabled unless a change is made.

"Clearly these figures are unacceptable – they are unacceptable because they are preventable," said Prof Lars Lidgren, Chairman of the Bone and Joint Decade. "Most of these deaths, each of which is a personal tragedy, occur singly and draw no attention from the world's media. About 90% happen in developing countries, most of them among pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists and passengers of public transport." Trauma and road traffic injury prevention are part of the BJD's 5 target areas for policy change in last decade.

"Greater effort is needed from the international community to counter this growing epidemic," said Prof Bruce Browner, BJD member and one of the key players in the initiation of the UN Global Road Safety Collaboration. "The WHO's Global Burden of Disease and Injury report states that in 20 years road traffic injuries will have moved up from 9th place to 3rd place on the list of the 15 leading causes of disability worldwide," he said. The Collaboration called on UN Ambassadors to seek a more coordinated approach between the UN and their governments, arguing that road safety must become a political priority if casualty reductions are to be achieved.

#### **Mobilising Global Support**

The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010, made up of musculoskeletal and trauma specialists, and comprising networks in more than 70 countries around the world, has been a champion of improving road safety from the beginning. At the start of the Decade the BJD Road Safety Project recognised that immediate action could dramatically alter the course of this epidemic. Raising

awareness on an international level which results in intervention on a national level can significantly reduce traffic fatalities.

BJD task force members saw the need to support their colleagues in developing countries in their efforts to advocate the priority of road safety to their governments. As witnesses to the carnage, musculoskeletal and trauma specialists can attest to the unnecessary pain and suffering endured. Their moral authority and prominence as influential members of society will allow them to be powerful advocates for change.

However, BJD task force members recognised that the ultimate success of any action hangs on the creation of a multi-disciplinary effort which unites public and private sector and which is bound by sustainable global political commitment. In response to this clear need to raise political awareness and address the issues, in 2001 members of the BJD International Steering Committee and counterparts in the campaign proposed a United Nations conference on global traffic safety.

In 2002 the BJD through its Global Road Safety Project helped to coordinate a unique committee of international stakeholders known as the Global Road Safety (GRS) Collaboration which includes the Task Force for Child Survival and Development, the WHO, the World Bank through its Business Partners for Development project, UNICEF, UNDP, UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, and the FIA Foundation among its members.

Working closely with UN Ambassador Fuad Al-Hinai from Oman, in a historic move the Committee organised the first-ever “Technical Briefing on Global Road Traffic Safety,” in 2002 at the UN in New York. The goals of the session were to introduce the problem; build political will, raise awareness, address potential solutions, and discuss a permanent role for the UN in the global road safety campaign.

“At the start of this project, we had been told that it would be a long road to put traffic safety on the UN agenda; but by convening the right players and fostering a successful collaborative effort, we have been able to accomplish this and more, within a few years,” said Dr Wahid Al-Kharusi, MD, BJD Steering Committee Member. “This is the result of the efforts of UN Ambassador Fuad Al-Hinai from Oman, and the UN Global Road Safety Collaboration.

Today The report recommends that the Assembly, among other things, call upon United Nations agencies and key partners to strengthen their cooperation in the context of the Road Safety Collaboration; to call on States to develop action plans and strategies on road safety, noting that the programmes should be seen to be cost-effective measures, as well as profitable investments; and also to call on States to continue raising road safety awareness at the international and national levels by organizing advocacy events and scaling up existing efforts.

Based on work by the Road Safety Collaboration, the goal of the coming Decade of Action is to initiate a long-term global strategy which makes clear the magnitude the public health burden and helps countries to develop multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary strategies which unite public and private sectors. Public health will need to work closely with national transportation and law enforcement ministries in every country to address the tremendous health and economic burdens from the high rate of traffic injuries and fatalities. Public health also has an important contribution to make in focusing efforts on prevention as well as treatment of injuries. “We have an opportunity in working together to get ahead of the curve and prevent the predicted devastation on the roads of the world,” Dr Marcos Musafir, BJD Steering Committee Member and representative of the WHO’s Dept of Violence and Injury Prevention.

### **The Burden on Society and Where to Start the Change**

Beyond the human suffering they cause, road traffic injuries result in considerable additional costs to societies. Globally, more than half of all victims are between the ages of 15 and 44, the

age at which they would be most able to contribute to the livelihood of their families and communities. This loss of breadwinners has enormous implications for the security of families. And estimates show that road traffic injuries cost nations as much as 2 per cent of their gross national product.

Yet most of this loss can be prevented -- by tackling dangerous driving, such as speeding and driving under the influence of alcohol; by promoting the use of helmets and seat belts; by ensuring that people walking and cycling are more visible; by improving the design of roads and vehicles; by enforcing road safety regulations; and by improving emergency response services. The key to successful prevention lies in the commitment of all relevant sectors, public and private -- health, transport, education, finance, police, legislators, manufacturers, foundations and the media -- to make road safety happen.

**Major events which have been initiated in part by the Bone and Joint Decade Road Safety Project include:**

- 2002 the BJD through its Global Road Safety Project coordinates stakeholders in the Global Road Safety (GRS) Collaboration
- 2004 WHO/ World Bank 'World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention' published
- 2004 UN General Assembly meets to promote Global Road Safety. The General Assembly endorses the World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention, and call for a UN Road Safety Charter.
- 2004 World Health Day on the theme 'Road Safety is No Accident'
- 2006 United Nations Endorses Global Road Safety Week
- 2007 2nd Global Road Safety Stakeholders' Forum held by the UN
- 2007 UN Global Road Safety Week on the theme of young road users
- 2008 UN Road Safety Collaboration and its good practice guides published
- 2008 World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility inaugurated
- 2008 Global Helmet Initiative
- 2009 Commission for Global Road Safety reports published
- 2009 UN Ministerial Conference on Global Road Safety held in Moscow in November

**About the Bone and Joint Decade**

Launched in January 2000, the Bone and Joint Decade is an NGO comprised of National Action Networks in 65 countries and with the support of more than 750 related organisations globally. Its mission is to advance understanding of musculoskeletal disorders worldwide through research and to improve the quality of life for those affected. The Bone and Joint Decade initiative works closely with the United Nations and the World Health Organization. For more information, please see <http://www.bjdonline.org/>

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