

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Sixty-ninth Session
Cairo, Egypt, 10–13 October 2022**

October 2022

**REGIONAL APPROACH TO THE DECADE OF ACTION FOR ROAD SAFETY
2021–2030**

Objectives of the event

On 10 October 2022, a technical session will be held on the regional approach to the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030.

The objectives of the event are to:

- introduce the current global context, including the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030, its Global Plan and the 2022 Political Declaration of the High-Level Meeting on Improving Global Road Safety;
- provide an overview of the regional road safety situation, efforts undertaken and lessons learnt during the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020;
- highlight the key role of the health sector in road traffic injury prevention and control in the context of broader multisectoral action; and
- build consensus on a proposed regional strategic road safety system framework as a key instrument in operationalizing the Global Plan for the new decade in countries of the Region.

Background

Road traffic injuries continue to be a global and regional public health and development concern. Data from Global Health Estimates 2019 revealed that such injuries are one of the leading causes of death, particularly among those aged 5–59 years, and the leading cause of death among those aged 15–29 years in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. This is in line with the findings of the Global status report on road safety 2018, which showed that road traffic injuries are a problem for all countries in the Region regardless of income level. While middle-income countries account for over 80% of regional road traffic deaths, high-income countries in the Region, in contrast to the global trend, have an overall road traffic death rate higher than their less-affluent neighbours. This death rate is three times the average rate for high-income countries globally.

In continuation of global efforts to address this grave public health and development problem, the 2020 United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/74/299 proclaimed a second Decade of Action for Road Safety (2021–2030) following the end of the first such decade (2011–2020). As one of the few times that the General Assembly has highlighted the same issue for two consecutive decades, and given the strong focus placed on the COVID-19 pandemic over the past 2 years, such recognition is exceptional.

As called for in resolution A/RES/74/299, a Global Plan for the new decade was developed by WHO, United Nations Commissions and partners drawing on the safe system approach and integrating road safety in relevant policy agendas. The aim of the Global Plan, launched in 2021, is to inspire and guide the development and implementation of national plans adapted to local contexts that build upon the efforts and lessons learnt over the last 10 years.

At the regional level, WHO launched the Global Plan in November 2021 and has developed a guide for documenting and reviewing national efforts made in the first decade to inform action in the new decade. The draft regional road safety system framework, previously developed in consultation with countries of

the Region has also been revised to align with the new Global Plan and is undergoing peer review prior to its endorsement. In July 2022, a United Nations High-Level Meeting on Road Safety was convened with the theme “The 2030 horizon for road safety: securing a decade of action and delivery”.

The importance of improved road safety for public health and development in all countries of the Region, including through its contribution to protecting the health and safety of younger age groups, cannot be overstated. The renewed global commitment to road safety reflected in the new Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030, the already developed regional and global instruments, and growing high-level momentum are particularly important developments for the Region. An opportunity now exists to build upon the achievements and lessons of the past 10 years, and to mobilize the level of commitment required to take action.

Challenges in the Region

The launch of the second decade and the growing global momentum to improve road safety coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected every aspect of people’s lives, including their mobility. As governments focused on responding to the pandemic, other priorities (including road safety) were inevitably scaled back. Countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and elsewhere have experienced delays in road safety action, for example in relation to planned legislation and infrastructure implementation. In addition, less attention has been given to running behaviour-change and advocacy campaigns both in the short and longer term.

However, people continue to move using motorized and non-motorized modes of transport and crashes are still killing people on the roads. As the Region moves to the post-pandemic era there will be a need to sustain collective efforts for road safety at all levels. In building back better, road safety must be reprioritized, drawing upon the lessons learnt from the first Decade of Action for Road Safety.

Expected outcomes

- The advent of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030 provides an opportunity to advocate for the crucial need to translate global initiatives into country-level action, with the full and active engagement of the health sector in the context of broader multisectoral approaches.
- The opportunity should also be taken to harness high-level buy-in and support for strengthening the role and stewardship of the health sector in addressing the issue of road traffic injuries – not only in terms of response, but also in prevention and informing action by non-health sectors. In this regard, adopting a system-based approach will be instrumental in taking into account the linkages and synergies between the relevant health promotion and well-being agendas and initiatives such as those addressing climate change, environmental health, and the need for healthy cities.
- It is intended that this pre-Regional Committee technical meeting will itself stimulate collective thinking among Regional Committee participants on how best to translate global and regional initiatives into meaningful action on the ground based on well-structured and system-based approaches.