**Speech by Jean TODT, FIA President**

**and the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for Road Safety,**

**to the European Parliament’s Transport Commission**

**Brussels, 11 October 2017**

Madam President, dear Karima DELLI,

Members of the European Parliament,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you most sincerely for having invited me to speak about road safety before your Transport and Tourism Commission. I consider it a subject of paramount importance, which constitutes a cornerstone of my commitment, not only as President of the Fédération Internationale de l’Automobile but also as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organisation on this theme.

The film that you have just seen was conceived for the launch, in March this year, of the FIA’s international campaign for road safety entitled *#3500Lives*. By the end of this year, it will have been translated into 30 different languages and deployed in 900 towns in 80 countries around the world, which makes it the biggest campaign on this theme ever distributed on a global scale.

The reason we decided to call it *#3500Lives* is that each day, 3500 people including 500 children die on the world’s roads. This represents 1.25 million lives cut short each year, 90% of them in developing countries.

Road mortality thus represents an unacceptable scandal, a scourge on the same scale as the other major challenges facing us, such as pandemics, serious diseases and climate issues.

It therefore justifies the deployment of exceptional mobilisation at the international level, allowing the essential means for saving lives to be put in place. It also calls for efficient synergy between all the stakeholders: national governments, supra-governmental institutions such as the European Union, non-governmental organisations and associations, industries and professionals of the road, and of course all citizens.

In principle, the means of eradicating this scourge are already available to us: information, education and prevention to begin with; then the harmonisation of the rules and their proper application; and lastly the safety of the vehicles, of the road infrastructures, and the quality of the rescue services. Together, these form the three fundamental principles of a global road safety policy that will allow results to be achieved in both the short and the long term.

If we can manage to implement these fundamental principles, in all regions of the world and in all countries, we shall succeed in drastically reducing the number of victims. But to do so we have to reason on a continental scale. Consequently, the work that you, as MEPs, can do at the level of the European Parliament, in interaction with the other European Institutions that are the Council and the Commission, is very relevant.

It is, in fact, decisive.

Ladies and gentlemen of the European Parliament, I would like to briefly mention three points before answering your questions:

First, to present to you the initiatives and the main lines of the work carried out by the FIA and the UN to promote road safety.

Secondly, to make a few suggestions for measures to be taken at the European level to improve results in this field.

And thirdly, to encourage you regarding the role that Europe could assume to help other regions of the world, in particular the Southern countries, to reduce inequalities and use road safety as a lever for development.

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As regards the FIA, of which I am honoured to have been the President since December 2009, I would like first to stress that the 250 national automobile clubs, whether sporting or mobility, that comprise it have made road safety one of their prime objectives over these last few years.

For my part, I wanted to further reinforce these actions and give them a strong boost in order to initiate new reflection and to increase their visibility, in the interests of prevention and improved efficiency through new solutions. I therefore took two new initiatives.

The first was to launch the *FIA High-Level Panel for Road Safety*, a high-level consultative group on road safety issues, which gathers together decision-makers from the economic world, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and the FIA network in order to encourage innovation and put in place concrete measures.

Since last year, this panel has developed a work programme including: support for world funding to promote road safety and the search for new sources of funding; strengthening cooperation and coordination thanks to the creation of regional observatories on road safety; and the organisation of missions at the national level as well as a global initiative aimed at encouraging the voluntary adoption of minimum safety standards for vehicles by the major automobile manufacturers.

The second initiative was to launch this year, further to the *High-Level Panel*, the campaign *#3500Lives* mentioned at the beginning of my speech. This campaign, developed in partnership with the advertising and billposting leader JC Decaux so as to ensure maximum visibility, is supported by many athletes and celebrities such as Antoine Griezmann, Fernando Alonso or Pharrel Williams.

On our posters, each of them defends the 11 FIA “golden rules” for road safety, which are the fundamental principles of safety on the roads: respect the speed limits, fasten your seatbelt, don’t use your telephone while at the wheel, take a break if you feel tired, etc.; the latest, launched in the spring, urges drivers to have their eyes tested regularly.

While this unique campaign is based on the fame and charisma of major stars who are greatly appreciated by young people, the primary victims of violence on the roads, it also aims to provide all the FIA-affiliated Clubs around the world with material that is ready to use, as an addition to the efforts they already make to raise awareness of road safety at the national, regional and local levels.

Concerning my role with the UN, I am honoured to have assumed, since April 2015, the duties of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Road Safety. As such, I have defended the drafting and adoption of an ambitious resolution which notably opens the way to the creation of a new United Nations global fund for Road Safety. It is essential that this idea is made a reality, and I am counting on your support to achieve this.

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly declared a Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, the aim of which is to stabilise and then reduce the projected level of deaths caused by road accidents throughout the world. With the support of the UNECE, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, my role also consists in pursuing and supporting these objectives around the world, which gives me the opportunity for direct dialogue with the public authorities and the UN bureaus in each region of the world and enables me to note the progress that has been accomplished and the distance that remains to be covered, in particular in Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia.

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So in what way can these actions and this experience be of use to you, the MEPs who are working on these questions; what diagnosis can be made of road safety in the European Union; and how can the results at Union level be improved?

There are a few facts and figures that can help us, and that you no doubt already have in mind.

A first essential observation: according to the latest European statistics on road safety, published by the European Commission in March, European roads are the safest in the world: in 2016, in the EU there were 50 road victims per million inhabitants, as opposed to 174 on average in the world. There were three and a half times fewer deaths on the roads in Europe than elsewhere on the planet. Of course, road violence is no less scandalous here than elsewhere.

Secondly – and this is a very positive point – we must note that the road safety policies developed in most European countries over the last forty or fifty years have produced very important results. However, there is another consequence of this: as a plateau with relatively low levels has been reached, it is now more difficult to continue to reduce the number of road victims at the same pace. There is thus a tendency towards stagnation in several European countries, which is reflected at Union level, in particular for the years 2014 and 2015, and even for 2016 when a very slight reduction, of 2%, was recorded.

While we can stress that this stagnation has come about even though the volume of road traffic continues to increase, we must nevertheless acknowledge that it will no doubt be extremely difficult to achieve the strategic objective of halving the road mortality rate between 2010 and 2020, even if the EU has renewed its commitment to a significant reduction in road accidents with the signing of the Valetta Declaration in March. In my capacity as Special Envoy, I had the honour of joining the 28 transport ministers and European Commissioner Violetta Bulc to witness the adoption of this declaration.

Thirdly, strong disparities persist within Europe, in particular between the countries of Northern Europe such as Sweden, the United Kingdom or the Netherlands, where the road mortality rate is the lowest with around 30 deaths a year per million inhabitants, and the countries of Eastern Europe, which joined the EU more recently and have not yet all adopted the same standards of safety requirements: Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Poland thus record three times as many annual deaths, between 80 and 100 per million inhabitants.

The combination of this plateau phenomenon and these strong disparities must incite us, and incite you, ladies and gentlemen of the European Parliament, to work twice as hard. I am therefore delighted that the European Commission has announced a review of the regulations on general vehicle safety for the beginning of 2018. This review has been long-awaited by all road safety stakeholders. I know that the schedule for this review has been postponed several times. While I can understand the reasons from the point of view of the European work agenda and of the technical and legal work that is essential to the drafting of the texts, I can only insist before you today on the need to keep to the planned schedule. The battle for road safety is also a battle against the clock: it is appalling that between the start and finish of our meeting, in the space of one hour, around 150 people will have lost their lives on the roads around the world. Time is running out.

I commend the progress that has been made in recent years: I am thinking in particular of the new European driving licence introduced in January 2013, together with stricter rules concerning young people’s access to motorcycles with powerful engines; of the directive relating to the cross-border application of legislation, which came into effect in May 2015, helping to reduce the impunity of breaches of the highway code committed abroad; of the new legislative measures on technical checks, adopted in April 2014, which helps to reduce the number of accidents caused by technical defects; or again of the obligation for all vehicles to be equipped with the *eCall* system, which automatically calls 112, the single European emergency number, in the event of an accident. This obligation, which comes into effect in March 2018, will, I am sure, help save many lives. The other work in progress, concerning the requirements for the training of professional drivers, the review of the directive on the safety of the infrastructures, the European strategy relating to cooperative intelligent transport systems, the *SafetyCube* research project, or the creation of the European charter on road safety, effectively complete the policies in force. Lastly, the 27 recommendations contained in the working document entitled “*Saving Lives: Boosting Car Safety in the EU*” – drafted by your excellent rapporteur Mr Dieter-Lebrecht KOCH, himself a former professional driver – and which you have planned to examine within the Commission, are also a step in the right direction, especially with regard to raising standards of vehicle safety.

I would like to dwell for a moment on the question of new technologies. Of course, they often serve to improve the passive safety of vehicles; this is a determining factor and we must exploit all the possibilities offered by technical progress. But we must also note that in the broad sense the use of new technologies in public spaces sometimes increases the risks in terms of safety. This is the case not only regarding the use of telephones at the wheel, which is lethal and against which we must continue to focus our efforts of prevention and repression, but also regarding the use of telephones in the street by pedestrians or even cyclists, which is a source of distraction, and therefore danger, for these groups who remain the most exposed and the most vulnerable in urban areas. Lastly, I am convinced that we must seize the opportunity offered by technological progress to further reinforce driver training, for both novices and experienced drivers, in order to adapt their behaviour to the new safety tools proposed in the most recent vehicles, but also to constantly remind them that high technology will never be able to completely replace the human factor – attention, respect for the rules and for other road users – which remains the most determining factor for road safety. That is why our mobility clubs prioritise such training. Their expertise and experience are put to use in the service of driver safety. Our European members, who form part of Region I of the FIA, represented here today by its Director General Mrs Lauriane KRID, are at your disposal to pursue this discussion, including on an advanced technical level.

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Ladies and gentlemen of the European Parliament, I would like to end this preliminary speech with an invitation to a commitment on your part and on the part of the European authorities. The European Union, which is ahead of the rest of the world in matters relating to road safety, can intervene even more strongly than it does today to help those regions of the world that are most affected by this scourge. Indeed, while the road mortality rate reaches 50 annual deaths per million inhabitants within the European Union, it can reach around 250 annual deaths, or five times as many, in countries such as Algeria or Vietnam. Countries with younger populations are also more affected, as young people are the most exposed. I would remind you that at the global level, road accidents are the main cause of death among 15 to 29-year-olds, and the traumatic injuries resulting from such accidents are the eighth cause of death. Low and middle income countries are the most severely affected. And when you facilitate adherence to the UN conventions and to the application of the basic rules; when you support the construction of safer roads; when you encourage the motor industry to make more robust vehicles; when you develop educational road safety programmes in schools, you are promoting not only road safety but also, more globally, the development of a country.

I am convinced that there is a very strong correlation – and this is corroborated by the figures – between a country’s level of development and its level of safety on the roads. Road safety is not merely an indicator of a country’s development; it also constitutes a factor, a lever for development which must be seized in the more global perspective of human progress.

That is why I would like to make another, very concrete, proposal to illustrate and materialise this conviction: that the level of road safety be taken into account as one of the factors for calculating the HDI, the Human Development Index, which was created by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990 to assess the level of human development of countries around the world. At first the HDI was based on three criteria – the GDP per inhabitant, life expectancy at birth and the level of education – but it has since been expanded, notably by taking mobility into account. It would thus be logical to add the criterion of road safety, and this would be an additional incentive for the different countries to invest more massively in this priority.

As pointed out by my friend [Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeid_Ra%27ad_Zeid_Al-Hussein), the United Nations High Commissioner for human rights, access to safe roads is a fundamental human right. It is our duty to do everything we can to defend it.

Ladies and gentlemen of the European Parliament, I thank you for your attention and remain at your disposal to answer your questions.