Road Safety in Latin America: the region's challenge to achieve the global targets

Rationale
Each year, the world suffers 1.3 million preventable deaths and an estimated 50 million injuries from road crashes[1]. Without serious action, road crashes will cause an estimated 13–17 million more deaths and 500 million more injuries in the current decade[2].

UN Member States have adopted a resolution 74/299 *Improving Global Road Safety*[3] and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (target 3.6)[4] and are therefore mandated to reduce road deaths and injuries by 50% by 2030. We know what works to achieve this target: the actions needed are set out in the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030[5].

Regional context
The road traffic fatality rate in the Americas is close to 16 people per 100,000 inhabitants, which is lower than in Africa and Asia but higher than in Europe[6]. Road crashes are the leading cause of death for children aged 5–14 years old in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay, and the second leading cause of death for 5–14 year olds in Colombia. For 15–49 year olds, they are the leading cause of death in Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Paraguay, second leading cause of death in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay, and the third leading cause of death in Cuba[7].

Road traffic injuries rates in the Latin American region vary from one country to another. The Andean Subregion (23.4) and the Southern Cone (21.0) show death rates considerably higher than the regional average[8]. Between 2010 and 2018, Mexico, Chile, and Uruguay have achieved more significant road safety improvements than Colombia, Costa Rica and Argentina[9]. The rate of motorization in Latin American countries will continue to increase in this decade, in particular, the exponential increase in the number of motorized two-wheelers, due to increase in demand for individual transport as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, among other factors. Users of motorized two-wheelers account for an average of 45% of road fatalities in the region[10].

Countries in the region not only failed to achieve the objectives of the first Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2021, but many of them are far from stabilizing and containing this crisis. The international

[1] WHO. (2018). *Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018.* Geneva: World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565684.

[2] WHO & UN Regional Commissions. (2021). *Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030.* https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/global-plan-for-the-decade-of-action-for-road-safety-2021-2030; Job, RFS. (2019). *Development of a Safe System Approach,* Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting, 13 January 2019, Washington DC.

[3] United Nations General Assembly. (2020). *Resolution A/74/L86 Improving Global Road Safety.* https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/226/30/PDF/N2022630.pdf?OpenElement

[4] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2015). *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.* https://sdgs.un.org/goals

[5] WHO & UN Regional Commissions. (2021). *Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030.* https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/global-plan-for-the-decade-of-action-for-road-safety-2021-2030

[6] International Transport Forum. (2017). *Benchmarking Road Safety in Latin America* https://www.itf-oecd.org/benchmarking-road-safety-latin-america

[7] Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. (2016). *Global Burden of Disease Study.* https://ghdx.healthdata.org/record/ihme-data/gbd-2016-cause-specific-mortality-1980-2016

[8] Pan-American Health Organization. (2016). *Road Safety in the Americas.* https://iris.paho.org/bitstream/handle/10665.2/28564/9789275119129-eng.pdf?sequence=6

[9] International Transport Forum. (2020). *Road Safety Annual Report 2020.* https://www.itf-oecd.org/road-safety-annual-report-2020

[10] International Transport Forum. (2017). *Benchmarking Road Safety in Latin America.* https://www.itf-oecd.org/benchmarking-road-safety-latin-america

road safety community has made multiple recommendations[11], based on evidence, and has identified the measures that have been shown to be effective[12].

Call to Action

After a decade of collective failure, we urge the governments and public authorities of Latin American countries to make road safety policy a national priority, adopting the Safe System approach. We urge them to mandate and guarantee the protected legal right to safe, sustainable and inclusive mobility, that transcends government terms and incorporates targets and results indicators, and to implement evidence-based actions, with particular emphasis on speed management, safety of motorized two-wheeler users, and comprehensive support for road victims and their families.

We call on all Latin American governments to:

1. **Guarantee the right to safe mobility:**
    a. Draft and enforce laws or constitutional changes to enshrine the right to safe, sustainable, and inclusive mobility so that they transcend government terms and short-term priorities
    b. Formulate short, medium, and long-term objectives with results indicators to monitor how effectively people's rights to safe mobility are being protected

2. **Implement evidence-based actions:**

    a. Address speed, which is the primary factor aggravating all other risk factors (including driving under the influence of alcohol or psychotropic substances, distraction, drowsiness, fatigue, use of a mobile phone, inexperience, reckless behavior, etc.) by incrementally reducing maximum speed limits, including 30 km/h limits, in urban areas where there is a typical and predictable mix of road users by 2030.
    b. Improve safety of motorized two-wheeler users by:
        i. Incorporating security systems and technologies that reduce and mitigate human error into the vehicle standards required in each country.
        ii. Raising the standard required for the granting and issuance of driving licenses for novice drivers of motorized two-wheelers.
        iii. Establishing records of the topography of injuries to increase understanding of road crashes and implement effective measures based on evidence.
        iv. Establishing a protocol, including response times, for specific pre- and post-hospital assistance for road victims.
    c. Provide comprehensive support systems for road crash victims and their families and guarantee their protection by:
        i. Ensuring crash victims' and families' rights to information and support through the post-crash period, as well as medical, rehabilitative, psychological, social, and judicial support, and, where appropriate, financial support and fair compensation;
        ii. Mandating thorough investigations for crashes that result in serious and fatal injuries, including determining cause and detecting culpability. The data should be used to inform prevention strategies and ensure an effective judicial response for victims and their families;
        iii. Ensuring effective deterrents, rigorous enforcement, and prosecution and sentencing of offenders as appropriate.

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[11] *3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety.* (2020). https://www.roadsafetysweden.com/
[12] WHO & UN Regional Commissions. (2021). *Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030.* https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/global-plan-for-the-decade-of-action-for-road-safety-2021-2030

d. Enact and enforce road safety legislation to:

    iv.   Establish blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limits to prevent impaired driving (drink- and drug-driving) with specific provisions for novice and professional drivers.

    v.   Restrict the use of handheld electronic devices while driving and other distractors

Our role and commitment

We, as civil society, have a role defined in the Global Plan. We commit to play our part in advocating for and enabling people's rights to safe mobility and achieve a 50% reduction in road deaths and injuries by 2030.

We commit to:

1. **Establishing a single regional citizen accountability office for social leverage**

   We will encourage our governments, people, and all stakeholders to adhere to their countries' public policies

   We will generate warning mechanisms for non-compliant with the objectives that they have established.