

## Open Letter on the Appointment of UN Special Envoy for Road Safety

8 May 2015

This week, the worldwide road safety community has pulled together for the Third United Nations Global Road Safety Week and the #SaveKidsLives campaign, which highlights the shocking dangers faced by children on the world's roads – every day over 500 children are killed while many thousands more are injured. The time for action is now.

Unfortunately, this year's Global Road Safety Week is also marked by controversy as a result of a little-known UN process: the antiquated, secretive appointment of UN Special Envoys.

Surprisingly, there are no requirements for public consultation, comment, or, indeed, any disclosure whatsoever, on why and how UN Special Envoy appointments are made. It's simply the Secretary General's private choice. Even UN agencies are not consulted. Usually we assume the Secretary General makes the best decision possible based on the information available; most of the time these appointments are uncontroversial.

But this Global Road Safety Week, here is the result of that opaque, non-consultative process: the surprise appointment last week of Jean Todt, President of Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) – the organization that governs Formula 1 and automobile clubs worldwide – as UN Special Envoy for Road Safety.

According to the FIA's website, its mission is “representing the rights of motoring organizations and motor car users throughout the world via campaigns and activities that defend their interests.” Yet more than 50% of all traffic deaths are among pedestrians, cyclists, and users of public transport – populations with no powerful group like FIA lobbying for them, and whose interests are clearly at odds with those of FIA's constituents.

And, while Formula 1 is surely exciting and enjoyed by millions, it

thrives commercially by promoting the allure of speed and danger to a predominately young, male audience that also happens to be the demographic most frequently involved in road crashes.

We have no doubts about Mr. Todt's sincere personal commitment to road safety, but it is clear that there are multiple conflicts of interest in the head of FIA being the UN Special Envoy for Road Safety. That is why so many NGOs, academics, governments, and international institutions involved in road safety are disheartened by last week's sudden announcement. It is akin to appointing the head of a tobacco company as UN Special Envoy for Cancer.

But there is a simple solution to the problem: mandate a transparent process and public consultation period for all UN Special Envoy appointments. The controversy surrounding Mr. Todt's appointment is a direct result of the lack of such a process.

It is surprising that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, behind-closed-doors processes like this still exist at the UN. Indeed, some member states have already begun to call for the reform of how Special Envoys are appointed. This Global Road Safety Week, we encourage and support these calls for reform.

Building consensus among disparate and often contentious groups of stakeholders is never easy. But that is exactly the kind of hard work that the UN needs to be doing – and doing in the light of day – if it strives to represent all global citizens, including child pedestrians in the developing world who are suffering from an epidemic of road traffic injury (more than 4% of children in some of urban areas in Africa are injured *every year*, for instance) and don't have well-funded advocates at their disposal.

Signed by:

Accident Prevention and Rescue  
Initiative (APRI)

ACS Academia Condução Segura, Lda

Kottayam Road Safety Forum

La Prévention Routière Internationale  
(PRI)

ADEVA EDUCACIÓN VIAL ASTURIAS	La Sécurité Routière asbl
AESLEME	Ligue contre la violence routière
Al Montada Association	Luchemos por la Vida Asociación Civil
Aljariyat	MENSenSTRAAT
Amend	MUBi - Association for Urban Bicycle Mobility
ANSR	NAH Zorg
APPER Hainaut	NGO ALINAGNON
ARBI-RIBA	ONG Bien Argentino
ArriveAlive.co.za	Over-Hoop vzw
ArriveSAFE	Oxynation Pakistan
Asociación de Conductores Dominicanos, Inc. (ACODOM)	P(A)T
Asociacion Madres del Dolor	Pamoja Road Safety Initiative
Asociația Siguranța Auto	Parents d'Enfants Victimes de la Route asbl.
Association des Familles de Victimes des Accidents de la Circulation (AFVAC - CAMEROUN )	Pedestrians Foundation
Association des victimes de la route (AVR)	Por la Vía Por la Vida - LIGA CONTRA LA VIOLENCIA VIAL
Association for the rights of Pedestrians - Greece	Portuguese Cycling Federation
Association in defence of insured and injured in road crashes	Road Safety Association
Association of Self-Mobilized Citizens	RoadCross Schweiz
ASSOCIATION ZEINA HAUCH POUR LA PREVENTION ROUTIERE	RoadPeace
AVOID ACCIDENT	Safe Communities
AVR Association nationale des Victimes de la route. (luxembourg)	Save the Nation Association
Brake, the road safety charity	Scotland's Campaign against Irresponsible Drivers
Buzz Road Safety Education	secretaria de salud del estado de yucatan
Campaign for Better Transport	SECURROUTE AFRICA

Carfree.com	Serveis d'Enginyeria del Transport
Catalunya Camina	SJKT SUBRAMANIYA BARATHEE
CCVR Romania	Society for Prevention of Road Accidents (SePORA)
CONFARCA - SAF	SOS Road Crimes
Cycling Advocates - Building a better bicycle culture	SOS Road Crimes Panhellenic Association
Cycling All The Way	South Africans Against Drunk Driving-SADD
Danish Pedestrian Association	Suat Ayoz Traffics Victims NGO
Drivers Domain UK	SUTA-CCOO
e-consumer protection association	tarek assi foundation
Ecologistas en Acción (Spain)	The Association for Improving Safety of Road Traffic "Road and Safety"
EUGENT - European Association for Deceleration	Trage Wegen
ΕΥΘΥΤΑ ΡΟΔΟΥ-ΕΛΛΑΔΑ (EFTHITA Rhodes)	TRSF (Transport & Road Safety Foundation )
FEVR	Udruga obitelji osoba stradalih u prometu
Fietsersbond	Verkehrsunfall-Opferhilfe Deutschland e.V. (VOD)
Fondazione Luigi Guccione	Victimes&Citoyens
Forum for Prevention of Road Accidents	Victoria Walks
Fussgängerverein Zürich	Vzw Rondpunt
Fussverkehr Schweiz / Mobilité piétonne Suisse / Pedestrian Mobility Switzerland	Walk-space.at - Austrian Federation of Pedestrians
Gambian Youth Forum for Road Safety	World Road Safety Partnership
Green Communities Canada	YASA
Heathers Highway	You Are What U Do - Kostas Kouvidis
HOOF&CYCLE	Zambian Road Safety Trust
Inter-Environnement Wallonie	MBOY COIII № 30
International Federation of Pedestrians	#Salvaiciclisti Piombino
Irish Road Victims' Association	