

MILESTONES IN INTERNATIONAL ROAD SAFETY

WORLD HEALTH DAY 2004 AND BEYOND



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



MILESTONES
IN INTERNATIONAL ROAD SAFETY:
World Health Day 2004 and beyond



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CONTENTS

Foreword	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction	vii
Background	1
<i>A brief history of road safety within WHO</i>	1
<i>A 5-year WHO strategy for road traffic injury prevention</i>	4
<i>Preparations for World Health Day 2004 and the global launch of the World report on road traffic injury prevention</i>	4
<i>Advocacy materials for World Health Day 2004</i>	6
World Health Day 2004	9
<i>The global World Health Day 2004 event</i>	9
<i>World Health Day 2004 events hosted by WHO headquarters</i>	11
<i>World Health Day 2004 events hosted by WHO Regional Offices</i>	12
<i>Other global and regional World Health Day 2004 events</i>	18
<i>National and local World Health Day 2004 events</i>	23
<i>Media coverage of World Health Day 2004</i>	40
World report on road traffic injury prevention	43
<i>Developing and disseminating the World report on road traffic injury prevention</i>	43
<i>Regional and country launches of the World report on road traffic injury prevention</i>	44
<i>Other regional and national road safety reports</i>	45
<i>Awards for WHO and the World report on road traffic injury prevention</i>	51
Follow-up to World Health Day 2004	53
<i>Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and the World Health Assembly</i>	53
<i>Implementing the recommendations of the World report on road traffic injury prevention</i>	56
The road ahead	75
Conclusion	77
References	78

FOREWORD

Milestones in international road safety: World Health Day 2004 and beyond documents an historic year for road safety



Not a day goes by without dramatic news of serious car, bus or truck crashes making headlines somewhere in the world. For every headline news event, many other road crashes – both fatal and nonfatal – go unreported in the press. Yet 3000 people die daily on the world's roads and tens of thousands are disabled for life.

To draw attention to this growing problem, WHO for the first time devoted its annual World Health Day to road safety. One year later I am pleased to report that with the launch of a major global report, resolutions in both the United Nations General Assembly and the World Health Assembly, and many other initiatives, road safety was one of the most featured public health issues of 2004.

While I had the honour of co-hosting the global World Health Day 2004 event together with President Chirac in Paris, France, in April 2004, hundreds of other road safety events were observed across the world. From remembrance gardens in South Africa to a helmet fashion show in Viet Nam and from a road safety film festival in Lebanon to theater performances in public parks in Brazil, the response was beyond expectation. Yet across these events participants voiced my own sentiment: road safety does not happen accidentally, but as a result of concerted and very deliberate efforts on the part of governments and their citizenry, law enforcement officers, civil engineers, public health experts, vehicle manufacturers, the media and others.

The *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, launched on World Health Day 2004, reinforced this view. The report provides the most current data and information on the problem of road traffic injuries, the factors which place people at risk, and proven and promising ways to prevent injuries. Its recommendations will guide the World Health Organization's work in the area for years to come, as the Organiza-

tion assists Member States to implement effective prevention strategies, which include wearing helmets, using seat-belts and child restraints, managing excessive speed and reducing drink-driving.

A week after World Health Day 2004, the United Nations General Assembly discussed road safety for the first time and passed a resolution on *Improving global road safety*. The resolution invited the World Health Organization to coordinate road safety efforts across the United Nations system, in conjunction with the United Nations regional commissions. This invitation was accepted in May 2004 by the World Health Assembly, which passed its own resolution on *Road safety and health*. The new coordination mandate provides an excellent platform from which to strengthen collaboration in developing policies and programmes for road traffic injury prevention, and has already resulted in the initiation of a number of collaborative projects.

During the past year the international community has devoted unprecedented attention to road safety. This document seeks to capture the energy and enthusiasm with which governments, civil society, the private sector, and the injury prevention community around the world have taken up the issue. The report is indicative of the tangible progress that can be made once groups embrace an urgent call to action. I applaud the efforts by all, and call upon you to ensure that this momentum continues and action is sustained to decrease deaths on our roads. The World Health Organization will do its part to support Member States in their efforts in the years to come.



LEE Jong-wook
Director-General
World Health Organization

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The World Health Organization acknowledges with thanks all who contributed to making World Health Day 2004 such an enormous success. From the smallest community-based nongovernmental organization to the largest global multilateral institution, all have done their part to make a difference. Although we would have liked to feature in this particular publication the many hundreds of activities that took place around the world on World Health Day 2004, limitations of time and space do not allow us to do so. Still the Organization appreciates and acknowledges your efforts to improve road safety around the world.

The World Health Organization would like also to thank the teams who prepared World Health Day 2004 and the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, including staff from the Organization's headquarters and its regional and country offices as well as the sponsors of the United Nations General Assembly and the World Health Assembly resolutions on road safety passed during the months following World Health Day 2004.

This publication benefited from the contributions of a number of people: in particular staff from the WHO Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention, including Désirée Kogevinas who researched and compiled the information, Laura Sminkey who drafted the manuscript, Margie Peden and Etienne Krug who reviewed the draft, and Pascale Lanvers-Casasola who provided administrative support for the production of the document. Stylistic editing was done by Angela Haden, and design and layout was done by rsdesigns.com.

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INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization has road safety partners around the world. This report is based on information provided by many of them. Its objectives are two fold: to document the key achievements in the area of road safety made on and since World Health Day 2004; and to inspire action on implementing the recommendations of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. The target audience is primarily policy-makers and others involved in road safety at country, regional and international levels, who would most benefit from examples of practical steps that could be taken.

This publication reflects reports from WHO regional and country offices, ministries of health and nongovernmental organizations about the World Health Day 2004 events they hosted. Requests for information about follow-up to these events were made through WHO's regional offices, the World Health Day 2004 website and key experts in road safety. Although it would have been desirable to produce a comprehensive report, much progress is being made in road safety around the world which is not communicated to WHO. As such the report is illustrative, rather than comprehensive, but we hope it is inspirational just the same. Our apologies in advance to any group or groups whose important work may not be reflected here.

World Health Day 2004 is an opportunity to highlight the impact of road traffic injuries and also to underscore the fact that these are avoidable. They are not just accidents, they are human errors which with proper governmental policy can be dealt with.

Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General, London, United Kingdom,
7 January 2004 interview with the FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society