Remarks prepared for

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National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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Road Safety Collaboration

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Good morning. It is my great pleasure to speak this morning about our continuing effort to improve safety for the motoring public on an international scale. So much has happened since we launched the Decade of Action for Road Safety last year. I am delighted to reconnect with this community.

As you know, at the U.S Department of Transportation we focus on reducing highway fatalities both

domestically and internationally. Our contributions to improving highway safety address a broad array of factors, including driver behavior, roads and infrastructure, vehicle testing, and emerging automotive technology.

Our safety goal is to save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce economic costs due to road traffic and non-traffic crashes—research, education, safety standards, and enforcement activity. In 2012, in addition to our core activities, we are emphasizing advanced safety technologies, pedestrian safety, children being left behind in hot cars and the resulting fatalities and injuries, and the central role of the agency's data analysis infrastructure.

Our international efforts include a safety agenda comprised of Global Technical Regulations, compliance

and enforcement, and behavioral programs. In addition, we provide data, scholarship, and best practices to assist countries with behavioral risks in a knowledgeable and culturally sensitive frame.

The foundation of NHTSA's work is a data-driven and research-oriented focus that touches on every aspect of driving safety. We envision, and are working to create, a new safety era that revolves around emerging technologies, safe vehicle designs, and responsible driver behavior.

Since 2004, when World Heath Day highlighted the critical impact of road safety on the daily well-being of people around the globe, our international community has captured the world's attention and focused a remarkable outpouring of resources on the issue. In 2009, these efforts were coordinated by the creation of

the Decade of Action. The strength of this international commitment is unprecedented—coming as a result of the first global ministerial conference dedicated to the topic of road safety.

At that conference, Secretary LaHood expressed our Department's commitment and spoke about how our international community can identify and apply evidence-based best practices as we work together to improve traffic safety globally. Support from many directions—the United Nations, government organizations around the world as well as non-government organizations and foundations—has since raised public awareness of this issue to new levels. I am extremely encouraged by our progress in the last few years.

Our potential as partners in The Decade of Action is incredible—more than 5 million lives, 50 million serious injuries, and $5 trillion can be saved over the decade—and the returns will continue accumulating into the future. This is a vision that we cannot afford to lose sight of.

The Decade of Action is built upon the need for nations to take appropriate and effective steps within their borders—and to lend help across borders where needed. Let me first tell you about some of the steps that the U.S. is taking here at home.

NHTSA continues to evolve our crash test activities to improve vehicle design and enhance safety. Beginning with the 2011 model year, we introduced a smaller-sized female test dummy for some of our New Car

Assessment Program (NCAP) testing, in addition to the average-sized male dummy.

At NHTSA and the Department, we think electric vehicles have an important role to play in our continued goal of increasing fuel efficiency, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, and decreasing dependency on foreign oil. We also believe that safety, in all modes of operation, is one of the key measures of success of electrified passenger vehicle technologies.

NHTSA is currently conducting crash tests of new electric vehicles and working with U.S. and international partners to promote EV safety, with a special focus on lithium-ion battery safety research.

In addition to our crash test and monitoring activity, we are moving forward with our international partners on

electric vehicle safety. In November 2011, NHTSA announced, together with our partners in Japan and the European commission, a plan to work toward a Global Technical Regulation (GTR) on electric vehicle safety. The goal is to promote harmonized regulations for electric vehicles and electric vehicle safety.

The GTR would address the unique safety issues associated with EVs and their components. It would also set provisions and test protocols to ensure that electrical components perform safely and are appropriately protected while in use and after a crash event.

While we must continue to improve the crashworthiness of vehicles and continue to develop advanced safety systems that support the driver and can even help avoid a crash from happening, we know

that driver error is a factor in approximately 90 percent of crashes in the United States. Our dedication to programs that help drivers make the right decisions about driving is stronger than ever. Driving while impaired by drugs or alcohol, while distracted, driving too fast or without wearing a seatbelt, are decisions that are within a driver's control. And we know that we can affect those decisions through education along with strong laws and enforcement.

While distracted driving is not a new risk to the fleet, the emergence of attractive technologies and the consumer demand for these services onboard has necessitated the Department's focus. In 2010, more than 3,000 people in the United States lost their lives in crashes where distraction was a factor.

NHTSA recently developed new guidelines for assessing the distraction potential of in-vehicle technologies. The guidelines will help automakers develop electronic devices that provide the features consumers want—without interfering with the driver's focus or sacrificing safety by distracting the driver's attention.

We believe these programs—technology and driver behavior—can maintain our current trend of decreasing traffic fatalities. Over the past several years, I have been very pleased to report annual declines in U.S. highway traffic fatalities. Our latest data show that in 2010 U.S. highway fatalities fell to 32,885, the lowest level since 1949, despite an estimated increase of nearly 21 billion miles traveled. Since 2005, fatalities in the U.S. have dropped 25 percent. This is an exciting time to be involved in traffic safety in the U.S.

The U.S. and many of its international partners have made substantial progress in reducing the burden of crash deaths and injury over the past decades and we are now in the position where we can analyze the lessons we have learned and help other nations who are at different points on the same path.

In the developing world, we know that:
Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death for people aged 15-29 years:

- **Only 15 percent of countries have comprehensive laws relating to the five key risks: speeding, drinking and driving, and the non-use of helmets, seat belts, and child restraints**
- **Over 90 percent of global road traffic deaths and injuries occur in low-income and middle-income**

countries, which have only 48 percent of the world's registered vehicles

But in our efforts to raise the bar on traffic safety in all countries, we must operate with an acute awareness of environmental, social, and cultural differences and sensitivities. Technology transfer in this context is not a simple matter. There are no out-of-the-box solutions.

We are still learning how to work across a wide range of situations—including government structures, roadway infrastructures, and often-competing health care priorities. It is important to remember that introducing changes out of context can produce unintended consequences that undermine the safety benefits we all want to see.

For example, there are fundamental differences in the character of a transportation system in which 70 to 80 percent of the population is riding on two wheels versus a system that has 95 percent riding on four wheels. The reasons behind the differences are embedded deeply in the environment, economics, and culture. The responses to safety initiatives—such as reducing congestion and road speeds, for example—are likely to vary widely from country. I have seen firsthand on the streets of Mumbai a family of six on a motorcycle, babies included, and that occurrence is as normal as a family of 4 in a pickup truck in Wrightsville, Ga. going to the Piggy Wiggly.

We are engaged in a number of productive partnerships that have steered this course to provide meaningful international assistance. Of course, we work through the United Nations System—through our long-term

partners at the UNECE and through the WHO and the World Bank—and with many others. We have focused on best practices that can be offered to nations looking for evidence-based strategies and we have fostered the development of international standards to ensure a common level of vehicle and equipment safety performance.

One area that we have given particular attention is traffic safety data system development. The experience of the U.S. and many other nations has shown that the best way to approach traffic safety is through a systematic, science-based approach based on the public health model of injury prevention. It includes:

- **Collecting/analyzing data to determine the nature and scope of the problem**

- **Developing and testing approaches to address the problems**
- **Delivering interventions**
- **Evaluating the implemented programs**

Data collection and analysis are unquestionably fundamental to understanding and addressing the traffic safety problems in countries around the world.

In 2009, NHTSA conducted a pilot training program to help nations implement the types of data systems described in the new Data System manual developed in partnership with the WHO. Representatives of Argentina, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, and Vietnam participated in the pilot. Last year, Secretary LaHood made a commitment to the Asian Pacific Economic Commission in San Francisco to move forward with this

initiative. NHTSA is now planning a regional data conference in Vietnam this fall.

The purpose of the workshop will be to increase understanding of road traffic data systems and evaluation, and to impart the value of reliable and up-to-date data for policymakers. Participants will learn to improve and strengthen the collection and evaluation of traffic and road safety data systems in their own countries. They will also learn how to leverage data to create, develop, and implement effective traffic safety policies.

We have made substantial progress in focusing the world's attention on the crisis of global road traffic injuries. We have come to understand that the way forward is to leverage the efforts of those with knowledge and experience in reducing highway

fatalities for the benefit of those who will soon see an expansion of personal motorized travel. And we have a partnership through the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration that brings together the experience and resources needed to achieve the ambitious vision laid out in the Decade of Action.

We are now one year into our ten-year commitment and I believe our prospects look very good. But of course the hardest work is ahead of us. I want to thank the United Nations and especially the UNECE, WHO, and World Bank for their vision, leadership, and partnership in this global effort. This is a cause that connects at every level. We just need to continue working these connections until we have made a difference around the world.

Thank you for your time. It was an honor to speak to such an esteemed audience of international lifesavers.