



**24 October 2003**

## **VERONA DECLARATION**

The Ministers (including those of the enlargement countries, the other candidate countries and the EEA and EFTA countries), in the presence of Ms de Palacio, vice President of the European Commission, Commissioner in charge of the common transport policy, meeting informally in Verona (on the initiative of Mr Lunardi, Minister of Infrastructures and Transports of the Italian Republic), each of them, holding responsibility in terms of road safety in Europe, AGREED the following declaration,

CONCERNED about providing their citizens with the optimal safety conditions which they are entitled to in order to enjoy their inalienable right to mobility within a sustainable framework,

HAVING REGARD to the conclusions adopted by the Council of the European Union on 5-6 June 2003 aiming at strengthening road safety,

AWARE that the current number of victims of road accidents in Europe represents an unacceptable human, social and economic disaster causing serious physical, psychological and material harm to the victims and their families as well as considerable socio-economic damage to society as a whole,

DECLARE that the huge amount of human victims on the roads is too high a price and that, the situation being such, the eradication of this scourge is a top priority on their political agenda. Any delay in action would mean further irreparable losses in terms of human lives;

victims by at least 50% by 2010, constituting a strong and motivating appeal to the decision makers and all other parties concerned as well as to the European public at large stressing that each casualty is one too many. To this end, FOLLOW the Commission guide-lines set up in the "European Road Safety Action Programme: Halving the number of road accident victims in the European Union by 2010: A shared responsibility" agreed by the Council of the European Union;

CONFIRM the objective of an overall reduction of the number of

UNDERLINE that improving road safety requires a mobilization at any time and at all levels, a constant and sustained effort, implying that much greater priority should be given to this undertaking and that the allocation of appropriate financial and professional resources be ensured;

REMINDE that effective measures do exist and that the greater the number of players participating in the implementation of such measures, the greater the impact will be. In addition, they emphasise that a strengthened cooperation between the many stakeholders that bear responsibility for road safety, may better produce the expected results;

UNDERLINE the importance of ensuring strict enforcement of and respect for road safety regulations by all European citizens, including with regard to offences committed outside their country of residence, in order to prevent impunity;

REAFFIRM that the cost of many road safety actions is extremely low if compared to the human, social and economic cost of risky roads;

and, in these conditions, they AGREE ON THE NEED to promote in their respective countries, and through co-operation and exchange of best practice and appropriate European legislation, a comprehensive road safety policy based on the following measures that strengthen one another;

- a. pool the information available to increase knowledge of the causes, circumstances and consequences of road accidents and draw the necessary conclusions to prevent them from recurring as much as possible. In this regard, the parties agree to contribute, whenever appropriate, to the actions developed within the European Observatory of Road Safety, as an internal body of the Commission, and stress their interest in carrying out relevant analyses based on comparable and exhaustive data as well as in disseminating the results of such analyses to scientific bodies, decision makers and the public at large, whilst respecting the privacy laws and regulations;
- b. promote a gradual convergence of the main road safety regulations in order to eventually provide the European citizens with a single and commonly shared framework of values and rules within the European Union, like speed limits, initial and continuous training of professional drivers, legislation on driving and rest times and its enforcement, driving licenses, etc.;
- c. set up the most suitable regulatory, organisational, technical and economic conditions within each member state in order to help raise the safety standards on European roads, identify the most dangerous sections on the European risky roads, implement a systematic and constant action aimed at raising the safety levels on the current road network, provide the European citizens with comprehensive and accurate information on risk levels or risky situations as additional means to drivers' education and information to raise awareness about the risk of road accidents;
- d. undertake to effectively enforce those rules the analysis of which has shown to have the greatest effect in terms of reducing the number and severity of road accidents, such as for example those pertaining to speed limits, drunk driving, alcohol and drugs, the wearing of safety belts and of helmets, even if the stricter enforcement of those rules may initially prove unpopular. In this regard, rising law-abidingness may be obtained through a combination of information, guidance and enforcement;

- e. set up the effective regulatory, organisational, technical and economic conditions within each member state and as appropriate at European level necessary to improve and strengthen protection measures towards vulnerable users and users at risk, with special reference to pedestrians, cyclists, young and elderly people; take the most suitable measures to secure urban areas for pedestrians, cyclists, children and elderly people so that they can safely use city streets and squares;
- f. take measures aimed at further improving the safety level of vehicles in each Country by strengthening and providing the citizens systematically with detailed information on the results of the ongoing research on vehicle safety at European level, and by promoting new technologies for road safety such as speed limitation devices, accident data recorders or seat belt reminders, e-safety and by disseminating their use for new vehicles more rapidly and systematically;
- g. welcome progress at EU level on the amendment of the regulation on driving and resting time of professional road drivers and on the relevant enforcement of such regulations. Such actions should also concern working conditions related to road safety and all the aspects connected to safety in general. In this regard, the growing internationalisation of road transport, private and professional alike, may require the convergence of a number of regulations in order to improve the standards of road safety,
- h. contribute to provide the victims of road accidents and their families with effective medical, psychological and legal support of high quality;
- i. be determined in fostering the development of a new culture of road safety among citizens (especially but not exclusively within the school-age population), the technical bodies and political decision-makers of both the public and private sector; in this respect, take a pro-active role in discouraging those behaviours and expressions of popular culture or in advertising contrary to this safety-oriented culture;
- j. in order to identify road safety goals foster partnerships and cooperation between public administrations, companies, social representatives and citizen associations, fixing priorities and actions and bringing road safety to the public's attention. Whenever appropriate, actively take part in their implementation, using all necessary and appropriate means and particularly encourage interested parties to sign the European Charter of road safety.