

**ADDRESS OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS, MR DEMETRIS CHRISTOFIAS AT THE
"ACTIVE INVOLVMENT OF YOUTH IN ROAD SAFETY"
CONFERENCE FOR THE 4TH EU ROAD SAFETY DAY.
FILOXENIA CONFERENCE CENTRE, LEFKOSIA (NICOSIA)
WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2012**

It is with a sense of great joy and satisfaction that I address the **"Active Involvement of Youth in Road Safety"** conference, which is organised in Cyprus for the 4th EU Road safety Day.

I wish to congratulate the Ministry of Communications and Works, the European Commission and the Cyprus Youth Organisation for Road Safety REACTION for organising the event. As President of the Council of the EU and the Republic of Cyprus, as well as a European citizen, I share the responsibility that lies upon all of us to address the tragic consequences of road accidents.

Over 1 million three thousand (1,300,000) people worldwide lose their lives on the road, while another 50 million are injured and suffer permanent handicap for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately, this problem on a worldwide level is rapidly getting worse. It is calculated that road accidents, which today constitute the ninth main cause of death, will become the fifth main cause of death by 2030. Already today, road accidents constitute the first cause of death worldwide with regard to children and young people aged between 5 and 29.

The human suffering and social tragedies which are caused by road accidents, either by the loss of loved ones or the cause of permanent handicap, are immeasurable. Yet the financial cost is also high, since in developing countries alone, the financial cost is calculated at 100 billion dollars a year.

The International Community has sounded the alarm for addressing this enormous social plague. Upon the decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations in March 2010, the decade between 2011 and 2020 has been named the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety. The Decision calls on all countries members of the UN to implement actions for road safety throughout the decade; especially in the areas of road safety management, infrastructure development, vehicles and driving conduct of everyone driving on the streets. According to the UN Decision, these actions should also include the efficient treatment of injuries and the rehabilitation of those who have suffered handicaps. The beginning of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety, along with its message and commitment of "Time for Action", were launched worldwide on May 11, 2011. Of course, Cyprus could not be absent and therefore in May 2011, the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety was launched in a special ceremony under my Presidency.

Cyprus actively participates in the global efforts for upgrading road safety, building on and drastically intensifying the multifaceted and multidimensional actions which have been used the past twenty years. The application of the Road Safety Strategic Plan 2005-2010, which targeted the decrease of deaths and injuries from road collisions by 50% compared to the average numbers of 1999-2003, was completed in December 2010. We have achieved a considerable drop by 41,7% in road deaths and we succeeded in our goals for road injuries with a decrease of 50,4%.

However, every loss of life and limb on the road is unjust and unacceptable! The application of the new Road Safety Strategic Plan for the period 2012-2020 started this year. The targets have already been set, including the 50% decrease of victims; deaths and injuries compared to the numbers recorded in 2010. The strategic directions for the upcoming decade have also been set and are as follows:

The first strategic direction is the more efficient check of traffic violations

This concerns the drastic upgrade of the legal framework and the means available to the Police for the efficient check of violations; especially with regard to speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol and the failure to use seatbelts and helmets.

The second strategic direction is to upgrade the education, information and to raise awareness for road safety of all road users

Road safety education in schools will become more systematic and comprehensive. Furthermore, the information and awareness campaigns of the public will be upgraded and modernised through the wider use of modern ways of information and social networking such as the internet. Campaigns which target young people and foreign drivers will also be intensified. The education of candidate drivers and the driving licence examinations will also be upgraded significantly.

The enhanced protection of children and vulnerable road users constitutes the third strategic direction

New increased measures in all areas of road safety will be introduced, including the protection of pedestrians, drivers and passengers of motorcycles and bicycles.

The upgrade of the safety of road infrastructure constitutes the fourth strategic direction

Special emphasis will be placed on the upgrade of road infrastructure in cities and communities, where the most severe problems are noted, while also the majority of road deaths and injuries are recorded.

The encouragement of installing modern systems of safety on vehicles and the extension of technical checks on all types of vehicles also constitutes an important component of the strategy

The instalment of modern systems of direct and passive safety on vehicles has contributed greatly to the decrease of victims in road collision in the EU and of course in Cyprus. The incorporation of new safety systems of modern technology will be promoted. Furthermore, the technical checks on all vehicle types will be extended to include motorcycles.

A substantial parameter of the strategy also includes the increase of data collected on road safety and the upgrade of the procedures for analysing and processing them.

In order to maximise the possible efficiency of road safety interventions, the designs will be based on studies, surveys and the scientific analysis of data. There will also be a systematic evaluation of the efficiency of the interventions.

The seventh and final strategic direction of the Road Safety Strategic Plan in Cyprus regards the upgrade of the efficiency of treating injuries

The restructuring programme of the Ambulance service which is currently in progress will be concluded soon and will bring about a drastic improvement in the treatment which is offered to the injured.

The responsibility for addressing the plague of road collision falls primarily on the Governments and States in general. In the European Union of course, the European Commission and the European Parliament also play an important role. The Cyprus Government has fully assumed its responsibility and several steps have already been taken during the past few years, with ample results as I have mentioned earlier. We vow to do much more within the framework of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety. We also vow, as the Presidency of the Council of the EU, to do our

outmost for the speedy and efficient materialisation of the Policy Orientations on Road Safety for 2011-2020.

Gathered today in this hall are young people from almost all the member states of the EU and neighbouring countries. Also present are several state officials responsible for road safety in these countries, as well as relevant competent officials from the European Commission. In addition, several experts on road safety are present, who have great expertise in this complex and multifaceted issue. The opportunity that is offered to everyone present to extract knowledge and exchange views and suggestions is unique.

I am confident that this conference will constitute the beginning of multiple successful actions for the drastic decrease of young victims in road accidents in the entire EU and its neighbouring countries in North and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Young people are always the frontrunners in struggles. They will also show us the way for Road Safety. As it is fittingly put by the Universal Youth Declaration for Road Safety, **“Together we can make road crashes history”**.

I wish the very best and every success to the proceedings of the conference and a very pleasant stay in Cyprus for all our dear guests from abroad.

Demetris Christofias
President of the Republic of Cyprus and
President of the Council of the EU