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**WELCOMING ADDRESS**

**LEADERS CONFERENCE  
STRENGTHENING ROAD SAFETY AND ACCIDENT PREVENTION  
MEASURES IN PRC**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning

I am pleased to welcome you to the leader's conference for Strengthening Road Safety and Accident Prevention Measures in PRC.

Vehicles, and the roads they use, play an important role in the life of modern societies. In the Asia and Pacific Region motor vehicle fleets are growing at faster rates than the economic and population growth, and motor vehicle usage is increasing even faster. The exceptionally high growth of motorized two- and three- wheelers is another aspect of motorization especially in Asia. In many countries two- and three-wheelers make up over half of the total motor vehicle fleet.

We all know that the rapid growth in the number of vehicles in the Region has contributed to economic development and welfare of the people. It is clear however that the growth of traffic presents people and their surroundings with three main problems.

- Firstly: congestion – although the per capita ownership levels are at present only one third of those in the developed world, city roads in Asia are now increasingly congested. Some people spend many hours each day getting to and from work and home.
- Secondly: vehicle emissions - vehicular traffic contributes significantly to air pollution. Congestion makes the pollution worse. Asian cities are among the worst in terms of air quality in the world. And cities and emissions are both getting larger.
- Thirdly: road safety: the Asia-Pacific Region accounts for almost half of all road accident deaths in the world.

In the conference today, we are mainly concerned with the last of the three problems, namely road safety.

Increase in road safety requirements is an unavoidable consequence of rapid economic growth. Unless road safety is maximized, the resultant economic and social costs could erode a substantial part of the benefits of economic growth. Millions of premature deaths and injuries, billions of dollars in medical costs, increased strain in welfare services, loss of productivity, and poverty problems are some of the consequences of lax road safety. Road deaths and injuries are increasing at faster pace in Asia than other regions of the world. The Asia-Pacific Region accounts for almost half of all estimated worldwide road accident deaths (around 0.5 million), with estimated economic loss of more than \$30 billion annually. This is more than double the amount of annual foreign development aid and loans they receive. It costs DMCs over 2 percent of GNP annually.

The rapid growth in the level of motorization in PRC has resulted in the significant worsening of road accidents. Statistics indicate that, in 2000, there were about 617,000 road accidents, killing 94,000 and injuring 420,000 persons, up 49 percent, 12 percent and 46 percent, respectively from the previous year.

Many of the problems encountered with road safety in the region are predominantly institutional in nature, with fragmentation of responsibility, inadequate coordination, insufficient information, inadequate road audit, lack of detailed plans, as well as shortage of staff and resources. Currently, there is no comprehensive program to fight road safety in the majority of countries in the Region.

To tackle problems of safety of road traffic, a comprehensive approach is required to promote innovative ways to improve road safety through the following four broad-based concerns (i) Institutional Strengthening, such as establishment of national road safety councils, promote integrated management, develop comprehensive action programs, technical studies, modalities for greater leadership and awareness, improve policy and regulatory framework, and effective monitoring; (ii) Capacity Building and Human Resources Development to set up an effective and uniform database, upgrade skills and knowledge, and options for institutionalising road safety research; (iii) Provincial Cooperation to develop potential common projects and activities, conduct workshops, foster knowledge and dissemination of best practice, strengthening linkage with the Global Road Safety Partnership program, and setting road safety targets and timeframe; and (iv) Allocation of appropriate funds, and participation of various stakeholders including government organizations, non government organizations and the community are also essential.

In December 1999, the ADB provided a TA to strengthen the capacity of Ministry of Public Security. The objectives of the TA include (i) review PRC traffic legislation, rules and regulations, and traffic management systems; (ii) develop national action plan for new technologies; and (iii) assess the needs for further capacity building and funding in MPS, and its 180,000 traffic police, and the provincial public security bureaus.

This conference is being organized under the Technical Assistance to (i) present the findings of the TA to the senior government officials and policy makers; (ii) to advance road safety awareness of the key leaders regarding the size of the problem; (iii) to present successful international cases; and (iv) to assess the need for further financial support and resources.

The conference format will include policy guidance, successful international practice, and assessment of critical factors for formulation of road safety programs. It will provide the basis for creation of a comprehensive action plan to tackle road safety problems across PRC.

Incomes in PRC have gone up considerably in recent years. Along with this, the use of road transport has increased tremendously. Transport infrastructure development brings huge economic benefits, but it also brings with it the challenge of addressing adverse factors such as increases in the number of road accidents. It is encouraging to see that PRC has started to take measures to enhance road safety and to adopt effective counter measures. It is our experience from other countries that successful strategies need to combine legislative action, government commitment, and appropriate enforcement measures. To carry out such strategies, PRC, like all other countries in Asia, will have to substantially strengthen the capacity of organizations charged with management of road safety and traffic enforcement, at the national, provincial and local levels. In most cases such capacity building programs will only be started in earnest after decision makers have been sensitized to the economic costs of road accidents and the associated social impacts. The Ministry of Public Security is at the vanguard of these efforts in PRC.

ADB's long-term strategic framework has given high priority to road safety. As a part of this strategy, ADB is deeply involved in activities to improve road safety and transport efficiency at the regional and local levels. Road safety is frequently included as a component of ADB financed road projects. This Technical Assistance to PRC will help with dissemination of information, advance awareness, and will also help to galvanize cities in PRC into implementing further actions for improving road safety management.

Three training sessions of this Technical Assistance were organized in the city of Wuxi in April, October and November of this year, attended by mid level officers of all provinces across PRC. The feedback and commitment to tackle the problems of road safety were encouraging. Three overseas study tours have also been organized as part of this Technical Assistance to expose the decision-making officials to the best international practice. Promotion material will also be provided to all provinces at the end of the Technical Assistance.

This conference is expected to facilitate formulation of the national action plan that will identify the future directions and requirements.

Given the magnitude of the problem and the general shortage of resources, some observers doubt whether significant improvements in road safety management can be made at all in the Asian region. They say that the problems are too large and that the government commitment required to address the situation is too big. In ADB we are optimistic. There are success stories in road safety management in different parts of the world, and in Asia similar programs can be formulated to meet the local conditions.

ADB is very keen to support the PRC in the implementation of actions that will actually reduce road safety impacts. We believe that exchange of information through events like this conference is important, but at the same time we all must realize that conferences alone do not reduce traffic accidents. Actions such as the control of speed limits, or drink driving campaign, do. The response to this conference and level of attendance give me confidence that decision makers in the PRC are committed to enhance road safety and improve the life of the people.

ADB has accumulated considerable experience in the formulation and implementation of road safety projects including in PRC. We have learned that the government cannot tackle roads safety problems single-handedly. Active involvement is required from civil society organizations to promote policy reform, and implementation of awareness raising campaigns. Private sector involvement can bring management resources and finance. The establishment of a national road safety council, provincial road safety councils, together with multi-sectoral safety management groups, are necessary to implement and monitor the effectiveness of various action plans across PRC.

The struggle against poverty is the number one priority of ADB. It is important to realize that it is the poor who are most affected by ineffective road safety conditions. They are the most exposed to traffic. They represent the lowest vehicle ownership group in society. If we want to succeed in improving the quality of life of the community's poor in PRC we will have to successfully address the problem of road safety and create a safer and sustainable transport system.

I am sure that many useful ideas will be discussed in the next three days, but what can we expect in terms of actions at the end of these deliberations? At the end of this conference we should know clearly what we need to do to strengthen road safety and prevention measures through better safety initiatives. We should also have a good idea of the costs and benefits from the effort and how the costs can be financed.

I would like to conclude by thanking all the conference participants and speakers for their forthcoming contributions and inputs. Many thanks also to the conference supporters – Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Construction, as well as the Canadian Government CIDA, National Road safety Council of Singapore, Transport Research Laboratory of UK, Mustang International of USA, and Honda of Japan.

I look forward to a productive and successful conference.

Thank you.

