19 OCTOBER 2015 I GENEVA – Some 1.25 million people die each year as a result of road traffic crashes, according to the World Health Organization's *Global status report on road safety 2015,* despite improvements in road safety.

"Road traffic fatalities take an unacceptable toll – particularly on poor people in poor countries," says Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO.

However, the number of road traffic deaths is stabilizing even though the number of motor vehicles worldwide has increased rapidly, as has the global population. In the last three years, 79 countries have seen a decrease in the absolute number of fatalities while 68 countries have seen an increase.
Countries that have had the most success in reducing the number of road traffic deaths have achieved this by improving legislation, enforcement, and making roads and vehicles safer.

"We're moving in the right direction," adds Dr Chan. "The report shows that road safety strategies are saving lives. But it also tells us that the pace of change is too slow."

The WHO report highlights that road users around the world are unequally protected. The risk of dying in a road traffic crash still depends, in great part, on where people live and how they move around. A big gap still separates high-income countries from low- and middle- income ones where 90% of road traffic deaths occur in spite of having just 54% of the world's vehicles. Europe, in particular the region's wealthier countries, has the lowest death rates per capita; Africa the highest.

More countries acting on road safety, but further action required

But more countries are taking action to make roads safer. In the last three years, 17 countries have aligned at least one of their laws with best practice on seat-belts, drink–driving, speed, motorcycle helmet or child restraints.

Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and three-term Mayor of New York said, "Thanks to stronger laws and smarter infrastructure, nearly half a billion people in the world are better protected from road crashes than were just a few years ago - and we have the opportunity to do much more, especially when it comes to enforcing laws. Every life lost in a road crash is an avoidable tragedy, and this report can prevent more of them by helping policy-makers focus their efforts where they'll make the biggest difference." The report was funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

The report reveals that globally:

- 105 countries have good seat-belt laws that apply to all occupants;
- 47 countries have good speed laws defining a national urban maximum speed limit of 50 Km/h and empowering local authorities to further reduce speed limits;
- 34 countries have a good drink–driving law with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit of less than or equal to 0.05 g/dl as well as lower limits of less than or equal to 0.02 g/dl for young and novice drivers;
- 44 countries have helmet laws that apply to all drivers, passengers, roads and engine types; require the helmet to be fastened and refer to a particular helmet standard;
- 53 countries have a child restraint law for occupants of vehicles based on age, height or weight, and apply an age or height restriction on children sitting in the front seat.

More attention required to protect vulnerable road users and improve vehicle safety

Motorcyclists are particularly vulnerable, making up 23% of all road traffic deaths. In many regions this problem is increasing; in the region of the Americas, for example, the proportion of motorcycle deaths out of all road traffic fatalities rose from 15% to 20% between 2010 and 2013. In the South-East Asia and Western Pacific regions a third of all road traffic deaths are among motorcyclists.

Pedestrians and cyclists are also among the groups with the least protection, making up 22% and 4% of global deaths respectively. “Decision-makers need to rethink transport policies,” – said Dr Etienne Krug, Director of WHO’s Department for Management of Noncommunicable Diseases, Disability, Violence and Injury Prevention. “Improving public transport as well as making walking and cycling safer requires us to refocus our attention on how vehicles and people share the road. The lack of policies aimed at vulnerable road users is killing people and harming our cities. If we make walking and cycling safer there will be fewer deaths, more physical activity, better air quality, and more pleasant cities.”

The report also found that some vehicles sold in 80% of all countries worldwide fail to meet basic safety standards, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where nearly 50% of the 67 million new passenger cars were produced in 2014.

The *Global status report on road safety* 2015 comprises a narrative text combining evidence, facts and best practices with conclusions drawn following the analysis of the data collected for 180 countries. In addition it offers one-page profiles for each participating country and statistical annexes. An interactive online data visualization of the report is also available.

The report is the third in its series and is the official monitoring tool of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. The publication of the report follows the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which includes an ambitious road safety target and precedes the 2nd Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety that will be held in Brasilia, Brazil, 18-19 November 2015.