Russian Police in the international fight for road safety

The decision of the problem of road safety has become one of the priorities of international cooperation. This problem is also one of the actual items on the agenda of the United Nations. Today not less than 1,2 million people are killed on the roads of the world. Over 50 million people are injured on the roads. Expenditures arising from injuries caused by road traffic accidents are more than 500 billion dollars annually. It costs up to two percent of gross output to some developing countries.

Effort made by national governments today are just disproportionately small in comparison with the degree and scale of "quiet war" on the roads worldwide.

The experts of the World Health Organization estimate that if people don't undertake strong measures, death on the roads will increase twice by 2020. Only cardiovascular diseases and suicide can take part in this awful competition. Today the situation in ensuring the safety on the roads can be described as devastating global crisis.

It's not a secret that this problem is very actual for Russia. There were about 168 thousand traffic accidents on the roads of the country in 2009.

21,3 thousand people were injured in these accidents. Socio-economic damage the effects of road traffic accidents in Russia was 2,5 percent of gross output.

The high accident rate and the low level of security on Russian roads have several reasons. The first of these reasons is the sharp increase of the number of vehicles. Only 250-300 thousand new cars appeared on the Russian roads earlier. Nowadays the growth of vehicles has increased several times. The second reason is a bad quality of the roads. Unfortunately, the road infrastructure of Russia fell behind the required development for decades and appeared not to be ready for so many cars. And it concerns not only the federal highways but the roads of regional, municipal and local levels. The third reason of accidents is traffic congestions. Today every citizen of a big Russian city knows how acute the problem of country's traffic congestion is. People lose a lot of time in them though they could spend this time more usefully. According to estimates made by the specialists of the Moscow Automobile and Road Institute the economic damage of

road congestions in Moscow is 39 billion rubles (850 million euro) a year. Poor conditions of traffic in large cities lead to deterioration of environmental conditions and to growth of the number of road accidents. The fourth reason is the low legal culture of citizens.

85% of road accidents occur because of the fault of the participants of traffic, especially because of the drivers violating the speed regime and driving the car intoxicated. And not all of them understand the consequences of their drinking and disorganization on the roads. The fifth reason is the poor social security and weak financial support of the inspectors of state traffic police that serve in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia. Heavy, harmful and hard work of police officers is paid very modestly. The salary of the traffic police inspector is only 8-10 thousand rubles per month (about 190 euro) though he conducts the roads 8-12 hours a day despite the heat or cold.

It is practically impossible to feed the family getting such money. That's why young police officers often leave the traffic police for other departments of the police or just retire from the police. So it is very difficult to employ trained, competent and honest young people for serving in traffic police in Russia.

Taking into consideration all these reasons of high accident rate on the roads Russia was interested in active development of broad international cooperation. That's why Russia became one of the initiators of decision the problem of overcoming the global crisis in road safety within the UN General Assembly. Several resolutions were passed on this subject with the participation of our country. For example, the resolution 62/244 of the General Assembly from 25-th of April 2008 in which the initiative of Russia to carry out the first global ministerial conference.

This conference was held on 19-20 November 2009 in Moscow under the motto "Time to Act" and was a major international event which was implemented in close cooperation with the United Nations. The purpose of this conference is to develop mechanisms of control of the global road safety starting with the systematization of documents on this subject (speeches, reports, discussions, decisions) to the compilation of a single base of the world experience. This base will help to solve the national problem of road security.

It is noteworthy that despite the obvious importance of this problem for all countries of the world, the meetings of this level have not been conducted yet. Russia in this sense has become "a pioneer" of international cooperation in the field of road safety.

The first global ministerial conference on road safety gathered the Ministers of Interior from more than 70 countries and specialists in this field from 150 countries. The participants told a terrible statistic: 12 people are killed every minute in the road accidents of world.

The greatest number of death is recorded in the countries with a law and middle income. According to statistics seven million people are killed from car accidents annually in the world. Besides 700 children die in road accidents every day. According to forecasts if the situation is not improved road accidents will become one of the leading causes of death by 2020.

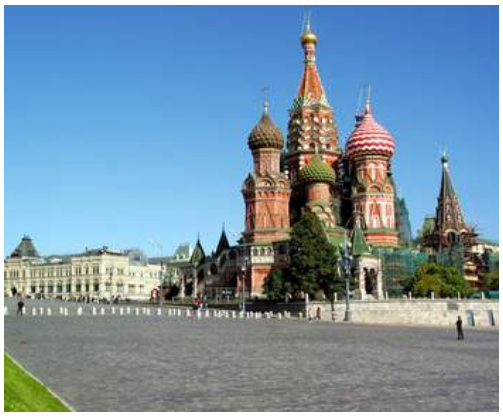
"The problem of safe traffic regulations has become global in nature, and there are no boundaries between states", said the Minister of Internal Affairs of Russia, Rashid Nurgaliyev, opening the conference,"Today it is impossible to deal with it effectively only in the framework of national and regional programs. We must unite our efforts to develop meaningful solutions, a common strategy for all countries in the next decade."

Nurgaliyev told foreign colleagues that the federal program, adopted in 2005, is the basis of Russia's national strategy on road safety. It seeks to reduce by 2012 the number of deaths in road traffic accidents a half times in relation to the level of 2004 (34,5 thousand people). He emphasized that these measures allowed to reduce the number of dead at 6, 5 thousand people in the condition of rapid fleet growth (about 3 million units per year).

“Russia’s experience has shown high efficiency of combination of promotional measurers and administrative penalties for violators”, said Nurgaliyev, “But this punishment should be supported by the population. And here there must be a very important interaction with the media, public organizations and religious faiths. The main thing is impact positively on people’s minds, especially on the young people, because 30 percent of victims – young people.”

The president of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, who had visited the conference, spoke about the economy of road accidents.

The head of state began with the brief statistics: the annual damage of road traffic accidents reached 500 billion dollars in the world, 100 billion of which are in developing economies.



“A huge sum of money could be spent on other purposes, in particular, for the development of these countries”, said Medvedev. More than 3, 5 thousand people in the world die on the roads every day, more than 1 million people die because of the road accidents for a year, and every fifth of them is a child.

“In fact, every year a big city disappears from the map of the world”, summed up the president.

The main causes of accidents are traffic violations, drunk drivers and poor driving culture. Medvedev criticized the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia and the State Inspectorate for Road Traffic Safety for the delay in the execution of presidential orders and urged the international community to coordinate international efforts to prevent accidents on the roads.

The President urged to change national laws so that drivers who are deprived of their rights in one country of the world, could not get them in another country without retraining. He asked the leading car manufacturers to make vehicles safer, without overstating the prices. Medvedev also ordered the government to develop a special program of teaching drivers the rules of first aid. In his opinion, every person who sees an accident must have basic skills in first aid to support those who got into trouble.

The chief state Inspector of Road Safety of Russia, the colonel – general of police, Victor Kiryanov, thinks that it is necessary to coordinate the efforts of state and society to bring order to the Russian roads. “The main thing today is to work directly with road users. This work includes activities on the promotion of traffic safety and the formation of legal consciousness of citizens. We must be sure that every person knows the consequences of non-compliance with road safety regulations. Every man must be responsible for his behavior on the road.”

The Regional Director of UNICEF (UN Children’s Fund) of Central and Eastern Europe and CIS, Steven Allen, said that the main cause of children’s death now is road accidents. “A child dies in the world every two minutes”, he stressed, “and we are here for an hour.”

He paid attention to the main cause of high infant mortality. According to S.Allen, children do not know how to behave on the roads. Besides, their short height is not considered in the design and construction of the road system. “Such questions should be more carefully thought out”, says Allen, “The installation of children’s seats has reduced infant mortality by 70%, and older children up to 45%”.

Unfortunately, infant mortality on the roads is an actual problem in Russia. Therefore, Russian people pay a great attention to this problem in regions of this country.

Within teaching young people traffic regulations, as well as the development of forms of cooperation and interaction between pedagogical collectives of educational institutions with units of traffic police to prevent road traffic injuries, a specialized group for young traffic inspectors was set up in the Kirov branch of the Juridical College of International Police Association.

The main activity of the group is an organization with traffic police units of the Kirov region of joint research activities on the rules of the road, improving the legal awareness and prevention of dangerous behavior of road users.
Young inspectors are members of the voluntary people's squads of GIBDD of the Kirov region, and take an active part in regulating and patrolling the road, the organization of propaganda among pupils.
Thus, the First Global Ministerial Conference on road safety has become a historic event: the first issue of safety was discussed at such a high level. The Moscow Conference brought together all those people, who really fight for the safety on the roads of the planet, to develop meaningful solutions of this global problem.
It is apparent that this problem must be solved by all the states together. Delegates expressed their hope that the year of 2009 will be the beginning of transition from individual, regional and national programs on road safety to the global system that takes into account the peculiarities of different countries and the best international practice.

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