## Editorial Statement

The Transport and Communications Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific is a peer-reviewed journal published once a year by the Transport Division (TD) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The main objectives of the Bulletin are to provide a medium for the sharing of knowledge, experience, ideas, policy options and information on the development of transport infrastructure and services in the Asia-Pacific region; to stimulate policy-oriented research; and to increase awareness of transport policy issues and responses. It is hoped that the Bulletin will help to widen and deepen debate on issues of interest and concern in the transport sector.

Safer roads and mobility is one of the five pillars of the UN Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. The pillar emphasizes the need to raise the inherent safety and protective quality of road networks for the benefit of all road users. Activities under this pillar include encouraging governments to set a target to "eliminate high risk roads by 2020", identify hazardous road locations or sections where excessive numbers or severity of crashes occur and take corrective measures accordingly; and also to promote the development of safe new infrastructure that meets the mobility and access needs through use of independent road safety audit findings in the design and other phases of new road projects.[i] One of the pillar activities also emphasizes research and development in safer roads and mobility by completing and sharing research on the business case for safer road infrastructure.

In this regard, the current issue of the Bulletin features articles on the theme of "Designing Safer Roads". The first article on "Recent progress in road safety in the ESCAP region", prepared by the ESCAP secretariat, sets the context by providing an update of overall progress in road safety in ESCAP member States. It describes some of the measures which countries are implementing with regard to vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists) and road traffic related laws, as well as trends regarding safety along the Asian Highway network. The last part of the article describes a number of key road safety initiatives which are being implemented by multilateral agencies in support of the global Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020).

The remaining three articles relate to the engineering aspects of safe road designs. The second article on "Safe Road Infrastructure Design for Highways", emphasizes the importance of putting in place a good infrastructure regime in order to reduce road accidents along highways. By comparing desirable standards for Safe Road Infrastructure Design with undesirable standards for each of the key elements, it notes that engineers can play a crucial role in building safer roads. The uniformity of such desirable standards is also a key element in design of safe roads. In this context, developing country engineers can learn from proven Safe Road Infrastructure Design practices of developed countries.

Roadway Factors, including roadway and roadside design elements, play an important role in determining the risk of traffic accidents. The article "Road Safety Aspects of Road Infrastructure" also describes some of the most important factors influencing both the frequency and severity of road crashes. It notes that while road design itself contributes to only a small percentage of road accidents, road design combined with other factors such as driver behaviour accounts for over a third of road accident causes. It stresses the need to integrate concepts such as the "Forgiving Road Side Design" and the "Positive Guidance" approach into the engineering design of roads to minimize the risk of road accidents.

The final article, on "Engineering Design Standards to Ensure Road Safety: Experiences from India", presents recent road safety statistics from India. Noting the tendency for the number of accidents to rise with the upgrading of roads, it questions the traditional practice of putting the responsibility of road safety on the individual road user rather than on the designer of roads. The article highlights some best practices from the perspective of road design, which, if applied can help to reduce road accidents and fatalities. The design aspects dealt with in this article looks especially at the eradication of road injuries for non-motorized transport and vulnerable road users.

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[i] Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, United Nations, New York. Retrieved from: http://www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action/plan/plan_english.pdf