

**SPEECH BY LORD ROBERTSON OF PORT ELLEN**  
**CHAIRMAN OF THE FIA FOUNDATION**  
**AT THE GLOBAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON ROAD SAFETY**  
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One delegate said to me the other night. 'If coming through an airport I was asked why I was here and I said I'm in the business of clearing anti-personnel land mines, the response would be a salute and a word of genuine warm praise.

But if I tell them that I'm travelling for road safety and the response is likely to be a yawn and a look of bored indifference.'

And wasn't he right?

So why on earth, I ask you, is that? After all, road crashes kill many more people, in many more countries than land mines. And Road crashes also maim, disable, fracture, traumatise and hospitalise millions of people, especially young people, right across the world every day of every week of every year.

Why is it that this catastrophic loss of life and health on the world's roads has not engendered the same feeling of revulsion and anger and desire for action as did land mines and malaria and HIV Aids?

I speak to you as a former Minister of Defence who supervised the destruction of all of Britain's land mines and I personally destroyed the very last one left in my country. I was so proud that day because it was a job done, after outraged public opinion across the world had said they must all go.

Why then can the world look on at road crashes, with cars and vehicles driven by adults, which kill 250,000 children and teenagers every year and brutally injure and maim ten million others, and not rise up in similar rage?

After all that cohort of the population from 5 to 29, for whom road crashes are the number one cause of death, represents the world's future. They will be the doctors and scientists, the inventors and the entrepreneurs, the farmers and engineers, the artists and indeed the political decision makers of our future.

The ones who will work, and earn, and pay the taxes which will in turn pay the rising costs of the pensions, medicines and the care homes for the rest of us as we grow older in increasing numbers.

So why are we so complacent as road traffic kills and injures so many of this seed corn Generation?

Are we incapable of seeing that we don't actually need to research and invent new expensive vaccines for this international epidemic? They already exist and we know what they are.

Slow down, that needs to be our message. Slow down in streets to school. Slow down in crowded cities. Slow down and protect pedestrians. Slow down and protect the air. Slow down and save lives.

Slow down!

Simple. Effective. Life saving. Implementable. And urgent. Slow down!

Just think. If there was one simple answer for ending premature deaths of babies?

Wouldn't we do it?

If there was one simple way of ending plastics in the oceans?

Or one simple way to end the drugs and opioid crisis?

Or one simple way to end the global plague of child abuse on the internet?

Would we not be mad and irresponsible and culpable if we did not do it?

So we have one way to reduce the slaughter - by just slowing down the speed of traffic.

Slow down. It's a simple message. Enough to grab attention to the scandal of the damage being done to the youngsters we will all depend on.

Of course, you will say it's not enough. We need helmets and seat belts, less alcohol, better roads, more education, safer cars too and you are right but get attention with 'slow down' and the rest will follow.

Slow down. Just say it and repeat it over and over again until Ministers of Transport, and Health, and Interior and Development, and Finance, and Prime Ministers too, get the message. Slow down

And then, perhaps then, when it penetrates, what we have seen here in Sweden where last year the number of young people dying on the roads was close to zero, it might just happen across the planet.

And that will indeed be a day when we can all feel proud.