What a fascinating 2 days it has been… indeed, a daunting 2 days. Many interesting and innovative approaches to international road safety have been discussed and I would like to reflect on the 5 key priorities that have struck me at this historic conference:

Children are extremely important; indeed they are our very foundation. As we heard in the UNICEF representative’s opening remarks, we need to focus on children and support child orientated safety measures, such as… safe routes to school, safe cycle and play areas, in vehicle safety, to name but a few areas for attention.

All too often it is the mothers of child victims who bear the brunt of road collisions, as was so vividly illustrated by brave Casey Marenge from Nairobi.

Young people are so often victims of road crashes, but as we heard yesterday, they are also extremely keen to harness their eagerness and to be part of the solution. We must embrace that enthusiasm, and I wholeheartedly commend the YOURS Moscow youth declaration to you all.

The private sector can also help, as is already exemplified by the work of companies like Shell, Total, Michelin and General Motors in the Global Road Safety Partnership which the UK is also pleased to support.

I was also struck by the comments from the Minister of Public Works and Transport from Uganda. Road accidents cost his country 2.7% of GDP. The General Secretary of Ground Transportation from Senegal mentioned that $3bn annually is spent on health costs associated with road crashes in Africa. This is roughly equivalent to 2% of the entire continent’s GDP. It is therefore clear to me, that tackling this silent pandemic is of striking social and economic importance. Hospital beds are regularly occupied by victims of road crashes. This cannot be right. This can be prevented.

And I think the position was best summed up by the Director General for Road Safety in Malaysia this morning, when he said “Action on road safety should not be seen as a cost, but an investment.”

Let us also remember that whilst ambitious, our target of saving 5 million lives and preventing 50 million injuries over the next 10 years only maintains the status quo of 1.3m deaths per year.

The task ahead of us is clearly significant, making the declaration, which the UK wholeheartedly supports, all the more important. Yesterday, I was delighted to announce GBP1.5m extra UK support for global road safety. This will be managed by the World Bank Global Roads Safety Facility and I would encourage other delegates here today to join us in sponsoring this trust fund.
I particularly welcome the joint statement released earlier in the month by seven multilateral development banks (Including the World Bank). This outlined four broad categories of measures that they will implement to promote road safety.

As I conclude, let me congratulate the Minister of the Interior of the Russian Federation on the enhanced efforts that his government is implementing to tackle their domestic road safety challenges. Allow me also to pay tribute to the leadership being displayed by President Medvedev in supporting these systematic programmes which will benefit all Russian people, young and old alike.

Finally, I would like to endorse the suggestion that we meet again (at Ministerial level) in five years time to assess progress. In the meantime, we must agree tangible measures for next week, next month, next year.

(This speech represented existing departmental policy but the words may not have been the same as those used by the Minister.)