

## Road Safety Forum Launched in Latin America



*The meeting examined the road safety trends and experiences from 11 countries.*

A major new regional road safety initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean has been launched following a two day workshop held in mid January in Santiago, Chile.

Hosted by the United Nations Regional Commission, ECLAC, the meeting examined the road safety trends and experiences from 11 countries. It highlighted the successful experience of Chile in reversing a rising trend of road crash fatalities.

In the mid 1990s the country was facing a sharp increase in deaths to over 2000 a year from a population of 15 million people. Following the adoption in 1993 of a multi-sectoral road safety policy implemented by the National Commission for Traffic Safety, the number of road fatalities in Chile began to decline and has since dropped to less than 1600 deaths a year.

The workshop explored the potential to encourage other countries in the region to follow Chile's success. It was agreed to establish a Regional Road Safety Forum for Latin America and Caribbean which will encourage a multi-sectoral approach to road safety promotion and the exchange of good practice among a wide range of stakeholders. The new Forum will meet again in San Jose, Costa Rica in mid September this year.

Keynote speakers at the Santiago meeting included Chile's Minister for Transport, Mr Jaime Estevez Valencia and the Health Minister, Dr Pedro Garcia Aspillaga. The event was co-chaired by Ms Karla Gonzalez, former Vice Minister of Transport in Costa Rica and Dr Mark Rosenberg, of the Taskforce for Child Survival. The FIA Foundation was represented by its Director General, David Ward.

Other participants included representatives of 13 countries from the region, including national road safety councils, public health bodies, NGOs, automobile clubs, the Pan American Health Organisation, the InterAmerican Development Bank, ECLAC, and the World Bank. The event was jointly organised by the Chilean National Commission for Traffic Safety and the Taskforce for Child Survival, with sponsorship from the FIA Foundation.