



SAFER & CLEANER USED VEHICLES FOR AFRICA: Main Takeaways

Organized by the Africa Transport Policy Program (SSATP) and the African Road Safety Observatory in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the webinar on “Safer and Cleaner Used Vehicles for Africa” was very well attended, attracting a total of 110 participants from around the world. The overall objective of the webinar was to shed light on the quality of used vehicles exported to Africa and the need for regulation.

Today, only about 2% of the world’s vehicle fleet is in Sub-Saharan Africa; nevertheless, Africa bears a disproportionate number of the world’s road fatalities (well over 10%). With the continued economic growth of African countries, the continent’s motor vehicle fleet is projected to grow tremendously over the next several decades—this risks exacerbating the already dire situation. So, how do we put in place measures now that will not propagate serious injury and fatality rates in the future? We need to understand the root causes with a view to fixing them.

Many developing and transitional countries rely on used vehicles to meet their mobility needs. Used vehicles can provide affordable access to high-quality vehicles that meet advanced safety and environmental standards. However, most African countries lack minimum safety and environmental standards resulting in the importation of used vehicles that are highly polluting and pose significant road safety risks. Adopting vehicle standards to control what is permitted to ply on the roads will make a difference in the continent’s safety outcomes. Both used vehicle importer and exporter countries have a responsibility to

ensure that only the best available technology is traded, with importing countries putting in place minimum standards and exporting countries helping ensure exported vehicles meet them.

How can Africa adopt a harmonized approach to address this issue?

Africa needs to promote the development and implementation of minimum criteria and standards that importing and exporting countries can use to curb the trade in obsolete, ageing, unsafe and polluting vehicles. This can be done in the following ways:

- Promote the implementation of (preferably harmonized) import standards. Training and building the capacity of inspectors to enforce the import standards and returning used vehicles that do not meet them to their countries of origin will be key. An initial focus could be on the 15 ECOWAS countries.
- Set up in country vehicle inspections and maintenance programs with a focus on ensuring road safety and reducing vehicle emissions. This would entail capacity building, training, and education of personnel, which is good for employment as well. A phased approach that takes into account where a country stands should be implemented, and some African countries are already taking steps in the right direction. Good practices can be found in Cameroon and Senegal.
- Set up safe disposal and recycling networks for end-of-life vehicle waste management. This is also important considering the current trends and for future proofing. It is only a matter of time that used electric vehicle batteries will enter the continent, and we can expect a run for "[minerals for climate action](#)" in the future. Indeed, reusing and recycling of minerals found in electric vehicle batteries could also provide a business opportunity for material recovery. From an environmental and human health perspective, full and safe recycling will be very important.

The World Bank is preparing a report on motorization management which will provide guidance on how African countries may want to achieve a holistic approach. Ultimately, looking at both the environmental and safety issues together will provide the necessary synergy for ensuring safer and cleaner vehicles enter the African continent.