Ladies and Gentlemen,

Traffic unsafety can be regarded as the whole of existing and potential critical combinations of circumstances, incidents (conflicts) and accidents in traffic and the individual and social consequences (damages) caused by them. The main feature of incidents and accidents is that they are always preceded by a critical combination of circumstances in traffic. Such critical combination of circumstances for example in a situation can be described as a situation wherein, with unchanged traffic behaviour and/or unchanged traffic situation, the interaction between man, vehicle, road traffic and environment leads to accidents (see Figure 1).

Without taking into account the emotional content of the word, we could simply speak here of a coincidence of circumstances. Such a combination or coincidence of circumstances in a traffic situation is always preceded by decisions, which are jointly determining whether the combination of circumstances becomes critical or not. Such decisions may refer to the purpose and scheme of travel, the mode of transport, the speed of the car and the alertness of the road user (provoked traffic behaviour).

If in the situation of a critical combination of circumstances, anticipating or "normal" change of behaviour is possible, because the road user recognises the critical (combination of) circumstances in time, there is no problem at all.

If there is no anticipating behaviour, or this is not sufficient, an emergency manoeuvre is needed, for instance emergency braking or evasive action.

If the emergency manoeuvre is successful, an incident or conflict is the result. If the emergency manoeuvre fails an accident or collision arises.
Figure 1. Model of the accident process

Social activities and travel needs

Purpose of travel → Transport mode ← Route and timetable

Travel behaviour → Critical circumstances in travel situation

Provoked traffic behaviour

Anticipatory traffic behaviour

Emergency (manoeuvre) behaviour

Incident or conflict

Accident (collision)

Consequences

Chain disturbance → Fright

Consequences

Death, injury, material and environmental damage

Chain disturbance in injury situation

Recovery

(cure, permanent disablement)