



Vision Impact Institute and African Council of Optometry Support Efforts to Include Vision at 1st African Road Safety Forum

Organizations advocate for inclusion of vision in road safety discussion

- ***Poor eyesight of road users is a main risk for road traffic injuries worldwide.¹***
- ***Eighty percent of all vision impairments can be prevented.²***
- ***Africa has two percent of the world's cars, but 20 percent of the road deaths.³***
- ***Some 650 people are killed each day in road accidents throughout Africa.⁴***

Marrakesh, Morocco – November 13, 2018 – Today the [Vision Impact Institute](#), a nonprofit supported by Essilor's Vision for Life Fund, and [The African Council of Optometry](#) (AFCO) applauded the industry's efforts to include vision in the road safety conversation at the 1st African Road Safety Forum. In 2017, at the World Congress of Optometry, the Vision Impact Institute, together with the World Council of Optometry (WCO), also welcomed the partnership between Essilor and the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) to similarly promote the role of vision in road safety.

This year's forum, the first of its kind in Africa, will be held in Marrakesh, Morocco, from November 13 – 15, and will serve as a platform for exchanging expertise and good practices in the area of road safety. The strategic and institutional management of road safety, financing of strategies, integration of new technology, and capacity building are just a few of the areas that will be discussed.

"For years, vision has taken a back seat on the road safety agenda – in fact, we have seen it virtually disappear from the global discussion," says Kristan Gross, Global Executive Director of the Vision Impact Institute. "We are delighted to see the topic included in this forum right from the outset. Since its inception, the Vision Impact Institute has worked to raise the priority of

healthy vision for drivers as one of four key areas of focus. Our efforts to create change in this area, both globally and specifically in Africa, include building awareness through research on the role of healthy vision in driving.”

According to the [World Health Organization](#), every year 1.25 million people are killed in road crashes around the world and 50 million more are left seriously injured. In Africa some 650 people are killed each day in road accidents throughout the continent.⁴ It is through campaigns like the one developed by the South African Optometric Association with the theme ‘*Let’s Not Meet By Accident - Have Your Eyes Tested*’ that avoidable road fatalities can be curbed. The AFCO has adopted this campaign and will be rolling it through other African countries.

“As optometrists, we know that road safety begins with good vision, and I am pleased that the 1st African Road Safety Forum is committed to including the topic on its agenda,” says Mr. Patrick Mawila, President of the African Council of Optometry. In acknowledging the undeniable fact that vision is the basis for decision making for both drivers and pedestrians, this Forum presents an opportune moment to confront the role of poor vision in road fatalities. While, in much of the continent, public awareness is low and access to quality vision correction i.e. glasses remains limited in many regions, it’s the discussion that will take place this week here that should be applauded as a crucial first step in prioritizing the role of vision on the roads over the coming years. I would like to implore all stakeholders here today not to look away. Let us put our hands together in eradicating uncorrected refractive error as a step towards road and general safety.”

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About the Vision Impact Institute

The Vision Impact Institute's mission is to raise awareness of the importance of vision correction and protection to make good vision a global priority. Its Advisory Board is comprised of five independent international experts: Pr. Kevin Frick (United States), Pr. Clare Gilbert (United Kingdom), Pr. Kovin Naidoo (South Africa), Mr. Arun Bharat Ram (India), and Dr. Wang Wei (China).

The Vision Impact Institute is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which receives support from the Vision for Life Fund from Essilor, the world leader in ophthalmic optics. The Vision Impact Institute hosts an interactive web platform, a unique data base of research, available at visionimpactinstitute.org.

About The African Council of Optometry

The African Council of Optometry (AFCO NPC) is a registered nonprofit organization (2014 / 070542 / 08). The mission is to facilitate the enhancement, coordination, and development of eye health and vision care by optometrists and other interested stakeholders on the African continent. Membership is open to optometry associations, optometry institutions, and interested organizations whose objectives or interest

support and/or align with the objectives of AFCO. The board is comprised of Patrick Mawila (President) Anguyo Dralega (Immediate Past President), Richard Maveneke (President-Elect), Adesuwa Agbontaen (Treasurer), and supported by the South African Optometric Association as the Secretariat. To learn more, visit africaoptometry.wixsite.com/afco.

Vision Impact Institute Contact Information

Andrea Kirsten-Coleman
Global Communications and Awareness Manager
andrea.kirsten@visionimpactinstitute.org

The African Council of Optometry Contact Information

Patrick Mawila
President
president@africaoptometry.org

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- ¹ [World Health Organization, Training Manual: Road Traffic Injury Prevention, 2006.](#)
- ² [World Health Organization. Blindness and Vision Impairment: Key Facts. Oct. 2018](#)
- ³ [OMS, La Sécurité Routière Dans La Région Africaine, 2015](#)
- ⁴ [United Nations News, Oct. 2017](#)