U.N. to ban texting by drivers of its vehicles

19 May 2010 20:39:25 GMT

Source: Reuters

UNITED NATIONS, May 19 (Reuters) - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said on Wednesday he was banning all drivers of United Nations vehicles from texting while driving, to back efforts to curb a practice believed to kill thousands of people each year.

Ban made the announcement at a U.N. event where the United States and Russia issued what they called a "global call to end distracted driving."

Ban said he was issuing an "administrative instruction" to promote road safety that would include a prohibition on texting at the wheel. U.N. officials said the world body's legal department was studying the order and could not say what sanctions anyone caught sending text messages on cellphones or other hand-held devices while driving would receive.

The instruction potentially applies to all U.N. employees, of whom there are more than 70,000 worldwide.

"I want every driver in the world to get the message: texting while driving kills," the U.N. chief said.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said that in the United States alone, nearly 6,000 people died and more than half a million were injured in "distracted driving" crashes in 2008.

Some 32 countries have passed laws restricting the use of cellphones and other hand-held devices while driving.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said measures to combat the "epidemic" of distracted driving were being incorporated into an action plan being prepared by the World Health Organization and other U.N. agencies for a road safety decade due to run from 2011 to 2020. (Reporting by Patrick Worsnip; editing by Mohammad Zargham)