



SAFETY 2026

16th World Conference on Injury
Prevention and Safety Promotion

Ubuntu Cape Town Declaration for a Safer World

16th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion — Cape
Town, South Africa, 1–4 September 2026

1. Purpose and Context

This Declaration is a consensus statement issued by participants of the 16th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion. It sets out a shared global framework for preventing violence and injury over the coming years. Its central premise is drawn from the African philosophy of Ubuntu — "I am because we are" — meaning that no person's safety is secure while others remain exposed to preventable harm.

Violence and injury are not random or unavoidable. They are shaped by the social, economic and political conditions in which people live, and can therefore be reduced through deliberate action.

2. The Problem Being Addressed

More than 4.4 million people die each year from injuries—both unintentional and violence-related.

This burden falls hardest on low- and middle-income countries, and on people facing poverty, discrimination and exclusion everywhere.

The people most at risk generally have the least access to prevention, care and recovery services, and the least influence over decisions that affect their safety.

Thirty years after the World Health Assembly named violence a public health priority, prevention knowledge has grown, but effective methods remain unevenly applied, underfunded and hard to access for many affected communities.

Current global pressures — conflict, inequality, climate shocks, unsafe transport and workplaces, harmful digital environments and social fragmentation — are compounding these risks.

The current priority now is not proving that prevention works, but implementation, financing and sustaining it at scale, with clear accountability for results.

3. Five Shared Commitments

We organise this Declaration's commitments into five themes. Each combines a goal with practical actions governments, institutions and partners are asked to take.

Commitment 1 — Make Safety a Whole-of-Society Priority

- Recognise safety as a social, economic and development imperative, requiring sustained leadership, investment and planning across government.
- Treat violence and injury prevention as core to health, development and social cohesion, reflected in policy, budgets and planning.
- Safety strategies must recognize digital spaces as an increasingly important environment in which people interact, form relationships, exchange information and are influenced.
- Coordinate action across sectors such as health, education, justice, transport, housing and digital governance.
- Create or strengthen a national lead agency with the authority and resources to coordinate this work and track progress.
- Fund sustained, multidisciplinary prevention capacity at national, regional and local levels.
- Connect national policy to local implementation and community priorities.
- Build responsible partnerships between government, civil society, researchers and the private sector, while keeping public accountability for outcomes.
- Ensure that these partnerships are governed by transparent conflict-of-interest safeguards and do not compromise public accountability or prevention goals.

Commitment 2 — Address the Root Conditions That Produce Harm and Inequity

- Tackle the structural, social, commercial and environmental conditions that create or concentrate risk.
- Reduce risk at the source through regulation, standards and accountability for harmful commercial practices.
- Pass and enforce laws that reduce unjust differences in exposure to violence and injury.
- Direct extra investment and attention to where risk is greatest, without abandoning population-wide prevention.
- Give particular attention to people and communities affected by conflict, displacement, disaster and climate-related shocks, including those living in humanitarian settings.
- Design and evaluate programmes with attention to gender, age, disability, migration status, geography and socioeconomic circumstances.

Commitment 3 — Design Safer Systems, Places and Technologies

- Apply "safe-systems" and "safety-by-design" principles that anticipate human error and reduce the chance that mistakes turn fatal. Greater vigilance is required to identify and address risks within online environments.
- Improve safety in mobility, workplaces, homes, schools, public spaces and products, with attention to informal and gig-economy workers.
- Regulate and test products and technologies throughout their lifecycle.
- Address risk concentrated in informal settlements through better planning, housing and infrastructure.
- Link prevention with mental health support, trauma care, rehabilitation and long-term recovery.
- Treat self-harm and suicide as preventable, requiring accessible support and care.
- Apply safety-by-design in digital environments and govern emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, to protect safety, equity, privacy and human rights.

Commitment 4 — Centre Communities, Youth and Lived Experience

- Ensure communities and ordinary community members, young people, survivors and affected families meaningfully participate in shaping and evaluating solutions, not just being consulted.
- Build mechanisms so participation genuinely influences decisions and resource allocation.
- Make participation voluntary, safe, accessible and free of practical or financial barriers.
- Create age-appropriate ways for children and young people to influence policies affecting them.
- Combine lived experience and indigenous knowledge with professional and scientific expertise.
- Report back transparently on how community input shaped decisions and results.

Commitment 5 — Turn Evidence into Accountable Action

- Build data and surveillance systems with community participation, that reveal patterns of violence and injury and identify emerging risks, with strong privacy safeguards.
- Research agendas should be shaped by genuine community needs and should produce evidence that is relevant and useful to those most affected.
- Collect disaggregated data to expose inequities, and publish findings in accessible, usable formats.
- Use digital tools and artificial intelligence to strengthen analysis and forecasting, subject to human oversight and transparent governance.
- Invest in research and implementation science, especially where evidence gaps are greatest.
- Mobilise sustained, transparent, pooled financing across sectors, including responsible private and philanthropic contributions that support rather than replace public responsibility.
- Set measurable national and subnational indicators and targets.
- Give the national lead agency responsibility for monitoring progress and pushing corrective action.
- Researchers should commit to meaningful reciprocity by regularly returning findings to communities in accessible formats, showing who is safer, who remains at risk and whether commitments are being met.

4. A Living Global Commitment

This Declaration is framed as a flexible reference document rather than a binding treaty. It asks governments, institutions and communities to adapt its commitments to their own contexts, and asks national lead agencies to use it as a benchmark for reviewing progress and gaps over time.

It also calls on future World Conferences on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion to track implementation, share lessons across countries, identify new and emerging risks, and renew or strengthen the global commitment as circumstances change.

5. Closing Message

We close by returning to the guiding idea of Ubuntu: that the safety and dignity of every person are bound to the safety and dignity of others. It calls on governments, institutions, communities and partners to act with urgency, shared responsibility and courage, so that everyone can live free from preventable violence and injury.

“I am because we are — and none of us is safe until all of us are safe.”

