

**First African Conference of the Road Maintenance Funds
From December 15 to 18, 2003 at the
Okoumé Palace Intercontinental Hotel**

**Welcome Speech by Mr. Egide BOUNDONO SIMANGOYE
Minister of Public Works, Equipment and Building**

**Excellencies,
The Prime Minister, Head of the Government,
Ladies and Gentlemen the State Ministers,
The Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen the Representatives
of the International Organizations,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the moment here today in Libreville upon the opening of the **First African Conference of the Road Maintenance Funds**, I would like to take this pleasurable opportunity, as **Minister of Public Works**, to welcome you to Gabon – all of you who are participating in the conference and who have come from far away.

I would like to express a special thanks in the name of the service that I am responsible for, and also in my own name, to **His Excellency The President of the Republic, Head of State, El Hadj Omar BONGO ONDIMBA**, who by always putting the roadways at the center of the priorities for the development of our country, has given his support and consideration for the holding of this forum in our beautiful capital. My thanks also go to the Prime Minister, Head of the Government, who has accepted to preside over the official opening ceremony for this event.

I would like to salute the presence here today of the honorable representatives of our brother countries, as well as those of the different international and sub-regional organizations, intervening in the sector of road transport infrastructure. It is important to underline that without the active support of the **World Bank, the European Union, The African Development Bank, the French Development Agency, the Program for Road Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Government and the President of the Republic, this First African Conference of Road Maintenance Funds** could not have taken place.

This is the first time that the present forum involves our country and it is the first time it is occurring on the entire African continent. It is taking place at a moment which is particularly delicate where road maintenance work is confronting numerous problems. This is just a measure of how important this meeting is for our country. Until today, road maintenance has always been a budget line item for the State. And as such, its financing depended upon fiscal receipts which were more or less available. The systematic non-payment of these resources has been a handicap which was unfavorable to the guarantee of a continued and durable road maintenance program.

With the holding of this meeting, the support of the donors of the funds, in addition to the continued political support and firm determination of the Head of State, we do hope to succeed in setting up a **Second Generation Road Maintenance Fund**. This is thought as a more highly performing tool, the financing of which would not be entrusted to the State, but rather to a co-management unit associating the road users. The **RMF** shall directly manage the non fiscal road user fees, to be paid by the users for the use of the roads.

The autonomy of this new **RMF** should allow it to act more efficiently, despite the internal and external controls. That is, the supporting ministry, the legal auditing offices and the road users represented within the Administrative Council shall exercise a strong power and unaccommodating right that cannot be set aside.

The meeting in Libreville therefore appears to be an important milestone in the history of road maintenance for our country.

During the three days of our meeting, we hope to become better informed concerning practical experiences of African Road Maintenance Funds; notably, in terms of the :

- role and organization of road maintenance funds,
- ways and means for collecting the resources,
- management methods and accounting tools,
- the supervision of work program,
- the sharing of the resources among the network managers,
- the monitoring performance indicators

From this **First African Conference of Road Maintenance Funds**, we do indeed hope to have positive results. Let's go forward then, so that the debates shall lead upon suitable and useful solutions for our countries that are all confronted with the never-ending problem of road maintenance.

I thank you.