

**Closing Ceremony  
of the First African Conference of the Road  
Maintenance Funds, December 18<sup>t</sup> 2003**

**Presentation of Mrs Mehrnaz TEYMOURIAN, the  
Resident Representative of  
the World Bank in Libreville**

In the name of the World Bank and its partners within the SSATP (Programme of Transport Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa), I would like to personally applaud the initiative of the Road Maintenance Fund in Gabon, brought by the Government of the Republic of Gabon, which led to the holding in Libreville of this First African Conference of the Road Maintenance Funds.

Libreville this week has seen the representatives of more than 20 countries – all executives responsible for Road Maintenance Funds or similar organisms in their countries, together here to set up their professional association on an African scale.

They have also been able to define the major orientations for the activities, and at least sketch out their action plans upon the mutual support and exchanges of experience between professionals.

They have confirmed that the principle that will support their collective action is the commercialisation of roads through the Second Generation Road Maintenance Funds.

Their support shall especially be turned towards the members who have come from countries wherein such reforms have only just begun, and also towards other countries wherein they are envisaging restructuring or reconfiguring in order to go in the direction of the commercialisation of the road network.

This event, to which all the donors of the active road sector in Gabon have been associated and have given their contributions, has created a magnificent opportunity here in Gabon to make all those concerned, in the road sector as well as in the media and the

general public, aware of the important stakes in road maintenance and the specific nature of its financing.

Having listened to the dialogue between the donors and the Gabonese authorities, that took place at the same time as the Conference, we can imagine that this conference will be leading to a reform process in the Gabonese RMF that will allow us to soon go beyond the present limitations and intrinsic fragility.

To secure the financing for road maintenance work by guaranteeing a regular income from steady non-fiscal resources coming as directly as possible from the road users, to absolutely reserve these financial resources for the purpose of doing road maintenance work, to manage this process in complete transparency by associating all parties; that indeed is the ambition that seems to be taking form here in Gabon.

The near future shall allow us to see if the new energy coming from this Conference can find here in Gabon an almost immediate application. This, of course, would be an extremely favourable sign, marking the destiny of this African Association of Road Maintenance Funds, which has just come to birth here in Libreville.

In any case, the support of the World Bank is a certainty; notably, through its role in the SSATP, as well as for ARMFA through a partnership to be established, as in Gabon within the framework of a reform process to be reflected upon and created.

These are crucial stakes, to make the financing of road maintenance work effective, to re-establish and assure a good quality and a fair cost to be paid by the road users over all the African road networks, and I would like to congratulate you all here for having supported this effort in such a concrete and pragmatic way.