

FIRST AFRICAN CONFERENCE OF ROAD MAINTENANCE FUNDS

**(From December 15th to 18th, 2003
at the Okoumé Palace Intercontinental Hotel)**

SPEECH OF

**Mr. PAUL MBA ABESOLE
VICE PRIME MINISTER**

**UPON THE OCCASION OF THE CLOSING OF THE
FIRST AFRICAN CONFERENCE
OF THE ROAD MAINTENANCE FUNDS**

Libreville, December 18th, 2003

I would first like to thank all those who have come from far and near and who have wanted to share in this meeting with us. I would also like to thank the donors who have financially contributed to the holding of this conference: **The World Bank, The European Union** and the **French Development Agency**. My gratitude finally goes to the Minister of Public Works, to his collaborators, as well as to those responsible for the Gabonese Road Maintenance Fund, who did everything possible for the successful holding of this meeting that is now coming to an end.

The meetings of this first conference held within the context of the “Association of African Road Maintenance Funds”, have put a priority on the partnership approach, which is supported by the majority of the donors and other participants in the area of development. This approach has been encouraged as the best way towards the success of road maintenance policies on the continent.

The road, as everyone knows, is a factor of social and economic progress. It is at the basis of all national, sub-regional and continental integration. It allows for the unity of our peoples through economic and cultural exchanges. Without a good road in every season, it is impossible to bring healthcare to the most reclusive populations. Without a good road, there can be no development, nor possibility to struggle against poverty.

Gabon, as you know, is a country that has a heavy rainfall, with a dense and thick forest, numerous rivers and streams, and a land surface that is sometimes quite irregular. These constraints demand from us adapted knowledge, that is, those who allow us to control our respective environments, since good knowledge is a means of dominating the natural elements of the world.

The Gabonese Government is happy that this First Conference has taken place here in Libreville. It has allowed for fruitful exchanges between the different Road Maintenance Funds of our countries, which have led to the identification of a common

goal: to struggle against poverty by reducing the costs of transportation, by improving the road network, and by insisting upon permanent maintenance work.

This Conference has also underlined your determination to organise your Funds into an **African Association of Road Maintenance Funds**. This decision is honourable for you, and is a witness to the strong will of our States to work together in the same direction, despite the diversity that our Funds can have in their organisation or in their functioning.

Finally, the holding in Libreville of the “**First Conference of African Road Maintenance Funds**”, has allowed Gabon to dialogue with the donors on the passage of the Road Maintenance Fund to a Second-Generation Fund.

Through my voice, the Government of the Republic repeats its determination to undertake in the year 2004, the reform of the Road Maintenance Fund, in view of moving on to a Second-Generation Fund.

Allow me to remind you that the second-generation Fund is a financing tool for the programmes of road maintenance work; it is financially autonomous and is characterised by:

- The imputation of the cost of road maintenance upon the road user;
- Non-fiscal receipts, such as road user fees, usually based upon the price of gasoline at the gas pump;
- The paying of receipts by the collecting organisms directly into a bank account open in the name of the Fund;
- The disappearance in time of budgetary allocations, since the receipts should be able to cover expenses.

I would already like to express my gratitude to the donors who are willing to help the Gabonese Government in setting up this second-generation road fund and in financing a road maintenance programme when they intervene in this sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen the Delegates;

Distinguished Guests;

It is because the President of the Republic, Head of State, His Excellency El Hadj Omar BONGO ONDIMBA and the Gabonese Government are conscious of the role of the roads as the main tool for integration and development, that our country has actively participated in the creation and setting up of the **Association of Road Maintenance Funds in Africa (ARMFA)**.

I present my wish that after this meeting in Libreville, this young Association should thrive and hold other meetings on the continent which will allow our States to confirm their desire to integrate their road systems.

While thanking you for the conclusion that you have given and the decisions you have taken, I wish to extend to you all a happy return to your homes, with our very

best wishes for a Happy New Year. I hereby declare this “**First African Conference of Road Maintenance Funds**” closed.

I thank you.