

**Ministerial Opening Statement by Monsieur Bruce Thompson,  
European Commission,  
SSATP Board member representing bilateral donors**

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Honourable Ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Mr Chairman, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity of making a brief statement at the opening of this Ministerial Meeting. This Ministerial Forum is the high point of SSATP's Assembly this year.

The European Commission recognises the important role that transport plays in contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction in your countries. Such recognition has been turned into practical support by you, Honourable Ministers, as transport is one of the two focal sectors of our development cooperation in 13 of the 18 countries you represent.

In all your countries you are striving to improve the provision of appropriate transport infrastructure and facilitate the delivery of transport services that you have already recognised as vital for transport to effectively contribute to the MDGs. You have set transport targets and clearly laid down indicators in your declaration at the Meeting of the African Transport Ministers held in Addis Ababa, in April this year, under the auspices of the African Union. This achievement was a good example of the SSATP's with its African stakeholders.

SSATP is once again seeking your political encouragement and support in strengthening the implementation process of its Long Term Development Plan as it approaches its mid-term point. I am sure you will rise to the challenge as the Ministerial Group did in last year. I look forward to the fruitful outcomes of your deliberations.

Thank you, Mr Chairman