

Opening Statement by the SSATP Program Manager Mr. Zaza Ramandimbiarison

.....

Honorable Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great honor and renewed joy that I address you for the first time in my capacity as the person responsible for the program, for the opening of the different thematic sessions of the SSATP Program. The organization of these activities is a perfect illustration of our efforts to synergize the initiatives taken to achieve the objectives of this program.

Honorable Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Board and the program team, allow me, first of all, to extend a warm welcome and a pleasant stay in Lesotho to all the delegations present. I would also like to seize this opportunity of thanking the Government of Lesotho for agreeing to host this Annual Assembly of the SSATP and for facilitating its organization. This testifies to the fact that the highest authorities of this country are eager to reaffirm their support for the goals of the program.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, during the last three years, SSATP has formulated work programs within the framework of its Long-Term Development Plan (LTDP), which took into consideration the latest thinking on poverty reduction and growth. The program shows today that it is starting to bear fruit. The African Ministers of Transport provide leadership for the main aspects of the program and ensure that the outcomes of the activities of SSATP are mainstreamed into national transport and poverty reduction strategies. The Ministerial Declaration adopted in Bamako at the 2005 annual meeting of the SSATP clearly showed that African countries are determined to take ownership of the strategies formulated in order to implement them fully.

The activities of the SSATP coincide perfectly with the Short-Term Action Plan for infrastructure formulated by the African Union and NEPAD. The action plan of the REC TCC/ SSATP is the main instrument used by the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Regional Economic Communities to facilitate trade in Africa and regional integration initiatives. Similarly, the SSATP is actively contributing to achieving the objectives of NEPAD by working through the African Development Bank (AfDB)

The SSATP's donors, namely the European Commission (principal donor), Sweden, Denmark, Norway, France, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the World Bank (host), which finance the Long-Term Development Plan, are principally engaged in developing a policy which will make it possible to articulate transport strategies based on the objective of poverty reduction and growth. I wish to

thank them for their support. They define our main direction through the Constituent Assembly and the Board of the SSATP. It must also be noted that the outcomes of SSATP activities are now starting to be incorporated into the donors' strategies for aid to countries and to the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have all agreed to "Anchor transport strategies in poverty reduction and growth strategies". The Long-Term Development Plan, the action plan aimed at achieving this objective which was adopted at the 2003 annual meeting in Kigali, extends from 2004 to 2007. Today, we have reached a stage where results must be measured and questions asked as to whether we are reaching our target objectives.

The mid-term review of the Long-Term Development Plan which will be presented in the course of this meeting will enable us to assess the progress achieved towards attaining the strategic outcomes of the Long-Term Development Plan and, in particular i) to favor an integrated program approach and ii) to promote transport strategies which help to reduce poverty and stimulate growth.

I hope that the year 2007 will consolidate the outcomes resulting from the strategic framework of the Long-Term Development Plan and strengthen the commitment of our donors to the SSATP. Our meeting will mark a decisive step in analyzing the outcomes of our program and in defining the future framework of the next plan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am firmly convinced that we will succeed together in taking advantage of the international environment and the experience of these last few years to strengthen further the synergy created by this program for the development of transport in our countries. I strongly believe that each one of us, to the extent of his/ her involvement, will do everything possible to achieve that end.

It is my hope that we shall together follow our path energetically and creatively, and I extend to each one of you all my most cordial wishes for the success of your meeting. Thank you for all you have done and will continue to do to keep this partnership alive - with enthusiasm, conviction and talent - ensuring that it becomes ever more useful and efficient.

I am eager to hear your views and remain at your disposal to make a difference for Africa.

Thank you