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**SEMINAR ON THE TRANSPORT DATA
BASE PROJECT**

CLOSING STATEMENT

**MR. Layashi YAKER
United Nations Under-Secretary-General,
Executive Secretary of
the Economic Commission for Africa**

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Mr. Chairman,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this closing seminar on the first phase of the transport data base project. I am grateful that despite your demanding responsibilities and pressing obligations you have found time to participate in this important seminar. Your presence here is a clear testimony of your commitment to helping us at UNECA do everything possible to make the data base project a success for the benefit of the transport sector in Africa and for the entire international community in general.

It is already one year since the launching seminar for the project was conducted at UNECA, and those of you who attended the seminar may recall that it laid down the foundation for the implementation of the second part of phase I of the project leading to the actual establishment of the regional transport data base. You may also recall that the studies on transport data market analysis conducted by two Canadian consultants were reviewed during the launching seminar whereby a consensus was reached on the work to be accomplished by each pilot country regarding the finalization of subsectoral performance indicators and statistical normative for the various modes of transport. In this regard it was resolved that UNECA would distribute your work to all pilot countries, including participating subregional organizations and international specialized agencies through a network which was established and agreed upon at the seminar. I am deeply grateful to most of you who responded and communicated data to UNECA for dissemination.

You are well aware that the data requirements for a transport data base go beyond the transport sector. Transport being an intermediate activity, its data base has to comprise all relevant economic, socio-economic and demographic data as well as transport

data themselves. All these have to be collected at various levels for the purposes of national planning. This project had given more emphasis to the problem of data collection methodologies because the extensive data requirements for the establishment of a comprehensive data base are probably the most serious obstacle to its implementation.

I am sure that through your pilot exercises and activities you have by now realized that the existing data sources are often incomplete, highly aggregated or outdated. On the other hand, through field missions to pilot countries, we at UNECA have realized that a huge amount of transport data is available within your countries, for example in port authorities, customs points, ministries of transport, statistical bureaus, etc. But in general these data are neither collected centrally or published or evaluated for special purposes and needs. This is why UNECA has insisted that the first step towards the establishment of a reliable transport data base is to give high priority to the collection of existing data from all available sources.

This seminar should therefore finalize the tasks you have been performing in the past one year and come up with a sound methodology for data collection covering all transport modes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Implementation of phase I of the project is coming to an end and phase II is to begin as soon as practicable after this seminar. UNECA will be the executing agency for this phase and I am of the understanding that you will again consider being pilot cases ready to collaborate with us during the implementation of phase II in the same manner you have done for phase I. The establishment of a data base is an involved exercise and you would therefore have to make

the necessary sacrifice. In order to define the scope of work and activities involved in the establishment and operations of the data base, it will be useful for you to begin your discussions on the subject by first distinguishing between two basic concepts of a data base, namely:

- (i) A system which simply acquires and stores available information and thus makes it more accessible to users; this can be described as a "data library concept", which is increasingly used by international and research organizations.

- (ii) A system which collects specified data on regular and formalized basis according to set norms. The development and maintenance of such a system include continuous interaction with the producers of statistics in order to maintain and improve the data quality and enhance the reporting capacity of data producers (the UN trade statistics and ICAO civil aviation statistics are typical examples of such a concept).

The objective of "establishment of a harmonized and standardized transport data base system" implies the adoption of the second concept. This involves significant, long-term and continuous development work, both at the national, subregional and international levels, and a considerable effort to assist individual countries in upgrading their transport statistics capacity. We need to look at it from the point of view that a programme aimed at the improvement of national statistical capacity is justified not only to establish a harmonized international or regional data base, but also as an instrument of better planning

and management of national transport systems within member States. In this regard I am urging you to stress during your discussion the fact that the advantage of a comprehensive national and regional data base must be proven also to the data sources; or otherwise they will not be willing to deliver data to the regional focal point at UNECA. The responsibility for the collection and administration of data within each of your countries should preferably be assigned to your statistical bureau or the planning office of your governments as these institutions are at least basically familiar with data collection and updating procedures, and know from which sources data may be delivered. The successful implementation of the transport data base will primarily depend on your commitment to the maintenance and improvement of the national transport data which UNECA will expect to receive from you through the experience you are gaining from your on-going activities as pilot countries. The establishment at national level of an efficient machinery charged with the task of submitting data to UNECA is particularly important for the success of the implementation of the data base at the secretariat.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me turn now to the agenda of your seminar.

The first day of your seminar is devoted mainly to the presentations on the various issues regarding on-going activities on the projet. You will first be informed about the general status of the project especially those activities which have been undertaken by UNECA and the World Bank since the launching seminar was held. This will be followed by a presentation on a synthesis of your pilot effort, as we are interested to know the extent to which you have benefitted from the pilot activities conducted so far during the implementation of the phase I of the project. The

refinement of methodologies for data collection in ports, railways, urban and air transport modal methodologies for data collection will constitute the third presentation where you will be expected to exchange ideas amongst yourselves about your countries experience. This will be followed by the UNECA presentations on (i) structures and processes for data collection at UNECA; (ii) infrastructure for the regional transport data base; and (iii) a brief presentation on elements for the dissemination of transport statistics. The last UNECA presentation will be on the framework for phase II project document. This afternoon's session will begin with the World Bank presentation on the draft manual on roads and road transport. The rest of the afternoon will be devoted to group work where you will be more concerned with problems to be addressed to facilitate the structuring and implementation of the transport data base at UNECA. The outcome of your group work will be discussed tomorrow morning at the plenary, before you break again into three sub-groups to look more closely into the manual on roads and roads transport; analyze the pilot efforts on the various subsectors; also analyze a draft project document for phase II; and prepare recommendations on follow-up activities for the project. The third and the last day of your seminar will be devoted again to plenary discussions on the various group presentations and the adoption of your recommendations.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to end this opening address without first thanking the donors present here most-warmly on behalf of all the African pilot countries present at this meeting today, for their invaluable contributions and encouragement and for attending the launching and also the present seminar. We are profoundly grateful to UNDP for earmarking significant resources for this endeavour. As you all know UNDP has already made available at our disposal some resources for starting phase II. Your generosity towards the

project could also be essential. Let us together during this seminar examine very seriously how to mobilize full financing for phase II of the project. I would, therefore, appeal to all our development partners to redouble their efforts in support of the completion of phase II.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are the issues which call for your attention during this important three day seminar. I am convinced that you will address yourselves to them with a clear mind and vision. I am also sure that at the end of your seminar we would have progressed further in our gigantic effort to embark on the second phase programme that will not only be realistic and appropriate, but will also contribute in no small measure to the establishment of a regional transport data base at UNECA, for the benefit of all the users and partners.

Wishing you all the success in your important deliberations, I declare this seminary open.

Thank you for your kind attention.