



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

ECA/RCID/005/01

STAFF MEMBER ON MISSION:	Mohammed Jemal Economic Affairs Officer Regional Cooperation and Integration Division
PURPOSE OF MISSION:	To participate in the 37 th session of Trans Sahara African Road Liaison Committee (TRLIC), representing ECA
VENUE OF THE MISSION:	Algiers, Algeria
DATES OF THE MISSION:	13 to 15 February 2001
CITATION or ACTIVITY:	Operational activity (Advisory service to TRLIC)

I. INTRODUCTION

The Trans- Sahara African Highway is one of the Trans-African Highway (TAH) network inter-linking the six Sahara African Countries, namely, Algeria, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Tunisia. The Trans- Sahara- African Highway network has played a significant role in integrating the road transport infrastructures and services of these Countries and therefore enhanced the physical integration of the sub-region as well as the development of better relations and economic co-operation among them.

The projects of the Trans- Sahara African Highway had been implemented under the guidance of the Trans- Sahara African Road Liaison Committee (TRLIC), which was first established by Algeria, Mali, Niger and Tunisia, after getting their independence at the beginning of the 1960s. The Committee has been later on joined by Nigeria and Chad and the Permanent General Secretariat of the TRLIC was set up in 1971 within the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

The TRLIC is now functioning as one of the inter-governmental Authorities established by the ECA, which is the prime mover behind the implementation of the Trans African Highway (TAH) theme as part of the two consecutive Transport Decade Programmes (UNTACDA I and II).

Among the different inter-governmental Authorities that are in charge of TAH implementation, TRLIC is the only Committee actively functioning at present. The committee consists of the Directors of the Road Authorities of the respective countries functioning under the directives of a Secretary General.

The 37th Session of TRLIC has been held in Algiers from February 13th to 15th, 2001 and ECA was among the participants invited to take part in the session. The report of the proceedings of the Session is attached as Annex I to this report.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION

The main objectives of the mission were:

1. For the ECA to be enlightened on the status of the Trans Sahara African Highway by the presentations regarding the different issues of the projects such as financial constraints and other main issues that will be very useful for the upcoming proposed activity of organising donor's conference for financial mobilisation. ECA has considered this activity in its Bi-annual programme of 2001/02 that a Round Table Meeting be held for the mobilisation of financial resources in order to support the implementation of the different transport projects of Trans- Saharan Africa.
2. To contribute to the different activities of TRLIC considered in the session and provide advisory services to the proposed Transport Strategy of one of the member countries, based on the experiences of the formulation of sub-sectoral strategy of UNTACDA I and II and its later implementation.

III. ACTIVITIES DURING THE MISSION

3.1 Participation in the TRLC Session, Algiers, 13-15 February 2001

The first two days of the session had mainly focused on general Conference procedures, and the presentations of activity report by the Secretary General, progress reports of the Trans- Sahara African Road Projects per country, budget and other financial reports as well as reports based on the visits of certain road rehabilitation projects by the Secretary General.

The afternoon session of the second day has focused on the Transport Strategy of Algeria. The presenters were from the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Algeria. The presentation had mainly concentrated on the different modes of transport and reflected the past and future Transport policy and strategic issues of the different sub-sectors. After the presentations the participants have raised different questions in relation to the different issues. One of the questions raised by the ECA representative was in relation to the problems of the land locked countries that include Chad, Mali and Niger among the member states, on how the Transport Strategy will address the problem of these countries.

The presenters considered this question as important and regarding the land locked countries in the Sahara Africa the policy/strategy will address the problems and shall be formulated in such a way that the problem of facilitation and other related obstacles can be solved.

The next day (on 15th February 2001) the Session adopted the "Organization of donors conference" as a separate agenda and discussed it thoroughly. It was finally agreed that both ECA and TRLC will work closely from now on in organizing the required donors conference in order to mobilize financial resources for the financing of Trans Sahara African Road Projects.

According to Mr. Kader Benamara who represented the OPEC in the Session, some indications were seen in the financing of Projects. Regarding the proposal for a training session in Tamanrasset (a technical meeting to be held by the end of 2001) it has won the interest of OPEC fund, and Mr. Benamara, Director of the OPEC fund for international development confirmed his commitment in supporting the projected seminar. He further recalled that his institution is currently working for promoting integration in Africa where it now contributes 50 % of its total annual funds (i.e. about 3 million dollars). In addition, he had ensured that the OPEC is ready to discuss in terms of loans with eligible member countries in a bilateral set up and documentation brief on the OPEC fund was handed over to all committee members.

3.2 Consultation with Country Representatives (data/information on the status of Trans Sahara African Highway Road Sections and missing links)

The ECA representative has contacted all the participants from member countries after the session, to provide him with the current data on the road sections and the missing links of Trans Sahara African Highway (TSH). Some of them provided with the required data while the others only promised to send the information later to ECA.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The work carried out by TRLC in the organisation of the meeting has been a success in view of all aspects of the conference.

The discussion on the proposed Round Table Meeting had reflected a common interest between the committee and the ECA representative, and it has been agreed to follow stage by stage approach for the implementation.

As soon as the Secretary General has identified the projects for donors' consideration and submit the project profiles to ECA as agreed, donors should be notified and the required modalities should be set by ECA in relation to the venue of the Round Table Session and the level of representation.

In order to maintain the momentum that is already established at the session, ECA should continue with the close follow up on the implementation of the proposed donors meeting.

**REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 37TH SESSION, ALGIERS,
FEBRUARY 13-15, 2001 (TRLIC)**

TRANS-SAHARAN ROAD LIAISON COMMITTEE

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GENERAL SECRETARIAT

REPORT OF THE 37TH SESSION

ALGIERS, FEBRUARY 13-15, 2001

Report of the proceedings of the 37th session Algiers, February 13-15, 2001.

The 37th session of the Trans-Saharan Road Liaison Committee (TRLC) was held in Algiers, from February 13th to 15th, 2001 under the best organisation and work conditions.

Mr. AMARA BENYOUNES, Minister of Public Works, made a formal opening of the session, in the presence of Mr. Abdelkader MESSAHHEL, Deputy Minister with the State Minister of Foreign Affairs, in charge of African Affairs, and of their Excellencies, the Ambassadors of Mali, Tunisia, Chad, and the First Counsellor at the Embassy of Niger.

Mr. AMARA BENYOUNES recalled the regional economic impact of the trans-saharan road and Algeria's commitment to the materialisation of the project. He also informed that the rehabilitation work of the Tamanrasset-Ain Guezam track would be completed in less than two years, which will provide a new beneficial access to the Mediterranean ports to neighbouring friendly countries. His address is appendixes to the report.

Mr. MESSAHHEL stressed the role of transport infrastructures and regional integration aimed at by TRLC members.

Mr. Mohamed AYADI, Secretary General of the TRLC, emphasized that the Committee was showing much interest in the quality of investment and had high economic concerns.

From then on, the proceedings of the session were chaired by Mister Farouk CHIALI, Algerian Director of Roads, in accordance with the following agenda:

- **TUESDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 13th, 2001** **10 am**
 1. Official opening of the session.
 2. Adoption of the agenda.
- **TUESDAY AFTERNOON, FEBRUARY 13th, 2001** **3 pm**
 3. Presentation of the bi-annual progress report of the Secretary General.
 4. Subscription fees.
 5. Present situation regarding internal regulations/ statutes.
 6. Secretary General's account of his visit to the rehabilitation site of the Tamanrasset-Ain Guezam track.
 7. Technical meeting in Tamanrasset by the end of 2001.
- **WEDNESDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 14th, 2001** **9 am**
 8. Country-by-country review of progress reports of the trans-saharan road projects.
 9. Discussion on the desirability of holding a round-table conference under ECA auspices.

10. Presentation of the general accounts report for the financial year 2000 by the auditor.
11. Presentation of the draft budget by the Secretary General.

• **WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, FEBRUARY 14th, 2001** **3pm**

12. Lecture on Algeria's transport policy strategy delivered by the Head of the Board
13. Directors at the Ministry of Transport.
14. Discussion on the holding of the round-table conference.
15. Venue of the next session.

• **THURSDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 15th, 2001** **9am**

16. Examination and adoption of the report of proceedings.
17. Closing ceremony.

**PRESENTATION OF THE BI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT OF
THE SECRETARY GENERAL**

1. The Secretary General of the TRLC presented his six-month report and answered questions. He called special attention from the committee members on the two following points:
 - ECA's wish to reactivate the prospect of holding a round-table conference to look into financing opportunities.
 - The need to discuss organisational arrangements for the training seminar in Tamanrasset.

I. SUBSCRIPTION FEES

2. ALGERIA is up-to-date, until 2000.
3. MALI is in arrears for 1998 and handed in copies of transfer orders issued for the year 2000, for an amount of 17 000 000 CFA Francs , i.e. 24 000 dollars instead of 34 000. The Mali representative informed that parity re-adjustments would be catered for upon payment of the next contribution.
4. NIGER is in arrears of all subscription fees. The NIGER representative informed the participants that a new mail had been forwarded to the Ministry of Finance with a view to paying subscription arrears.
5. Tunisia is up-to-date until 2000, and handed in copies of transfer order for the 2001 payment.
6. Nigeria is in arrears for 1999 and 2000. Nigeria's representative informed that the transfer process of the 1999 subscription is well advanced.
7. CHAD is in arrears for 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000. Chad's representative requested new invoices from the Secretary General regarding subscription arrears, so as to re-activate the necessary procedure with the Ministry of Finance. Payment of the subscription for 2000 is in process.

II. INTERNAL REGULATIONS/ STATUTES

8. There have been no noteworthy developments on this issue. Some committee members asked the Secretary General to forward a new mail with regard to statutes (with stamp and signature).

ACCOUNT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF HIS VISIT TO THE REHABILITATION SITE OF THE TAMANRASSET-AIN GUEZAM TRACK

9. In November 2000, the Secretary General travelled to the site together with a road consultant. The company rehabilitated 20 kilometres to-date. The depth of the un-coated pavement is 15 centimetres of unprocessed gravel. Over a thirty-kilometre section, this depth has been increased to 40 centimetres in a view of poor soil resistance. The Secretary General wrote his comments, which he duly forwarded to the Algerian Direction of Roads/Highways.
10. The Secretary General recalled that the TRLC is following up on site works. In due time, a technical and economic report will be drawn up, showing the validity of the track rehabilitation technique.
11. Technical issues were discussed. Committee members showed great interest in this experiment considered as a pilot- project by the Algerian Director of Roads, insofar as what is sought for is how to make savings through gradual renovation.

TECHNICAL MEETING IN TAMANRASSET BY THE END OF THE YEAR 2001

12. The Secretary General submitted a draft proposal for a training session in Tamanrasset to the committee members. In this connection, he raised two points:
 - Is it possible that trainees travel to Tamanrasset by road in order to alleviate transport expenses, accounting for about 30 % of total cost of the training seminar held in Chad?
 - Is it desirable that the training seminar and the TRLC session are held jointly?
 - The Secretary General requested committee member's support and, more particularly, support from the representative of Tunisia, to get Tunisian experts to take part in the TRLC training activities (in the form of a paid assignment), in order to benefit from their expertise and learn from the surveys conducted in Saharan areas.
13. Committee members felt that, first, the session should be held as distinct from the training seminar and, second, trainees' driving over such long distances was likely to place them at great risk, in various respects.
14. Committee members asked the Secretary General to consider new alternatives for seminar arrangements. He, then, will make the appropriate decision depending on donors' response in terms of funding.
15. Upon chairman's request, Mr. Benamara, Director of OPEC Fund for international development, confirmed his commitment in supporting the projected seminar. He further recalled that his institution is currently working for promoting integration in Africa where it now contributes 50 % of its total annual funds, i.e about 3 million dollars.

He mentioned the readiness of his institution to discuss in terms of loans with eligible member-countries in a bilateral set-up. A documentation brief on the OPEC Fund was handed in to all committee members.

COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY REVIEW OF PROGRESS REPORTS OF THE TRANS-SAHARAN ROAD PROJECTS ALGERIA

16. Tamanrasset-Ain Guezam section: 400 kilometers

Rehabilitation work on a 169-kilometer distance was launched on July 15th, over a 24-month period. Over the whole 400-kilometere distance, the purpose is to process the most difficult portions and to renovate gradually. The Algerian Minister of Public Works emphasized his interest in the project at the opening ceremony and announced he would visit the site in the forthcoming days.

17. Silet-Kidal section, through Tinzaouatine: 380 kilometers.

The minutes of the final report of the feasibility study were handed in to the Ministry of Public Works by the consulting firm. Mali asked for a copy of that report for a good coordination of the project, and would appreciate if the Secretary General could follow up on that matter with the Ministry department concerned.

MALI

18. Sévaré-Gao section: 558 kilometers

The maintenance of this section requires a yearly budget of 800- million CFA Francs. The Mali representative informed that his government had made an outstanding effort in granting a 650- million credit out of its budget.

19. The Gao bridge

A consulting firm in charge of the technical performance study, over a 12-month period, with funds allocated by the Islamic Bank of Development, has now been selected, namely SOCETEC (Mali) and SCET (Tunisia). Technical studies will start during the first quarter of 2001.

20. The Gao-Kidal section: 350kilometers

The economic survey on this project dates back to 1998. A request for the financing of technical studies was made to the Islamic Bank, with regard to the Gao-Bourem portion (90 kilometers), on February 18th, 1999. Following upon the 36th session, a new up-dated request was forwarded to the Bank, in October 2000.

21. Kidal-Silet section, through Bouressa: 380 kilometers.

The final draft of the feasibility study is with the Algerian Ministry of Public Works. The committee asked the Secretary General to see to it that Mali is duly consulted before any final decision is made, as is usual practice.

NIGER

22. Algerian border-Arlit: 203 kilometers

The situation remains unchanged since completion of the feasibility study. Niger made no request to Algeria for funding technical studies.

23. Agades-Arlit

The technical studies performed by the BCEOM consultants are financed by CONCERTA, which will fund the rehabilitation of that section for an amount of 3 million CFA Francs. CONCERTA asked the public works Administration to come up with a work priority programme to be carried out in 2001 for the above amount, and to draw up an action programme beyond 2001 for the remaining part of the works.

24. Agades-Zinder

Niger has just repaid arrears outstanding with the Islamic Bank, according to the interim agreement signed in April 2000. Thus, cooperation with that institution can be resumed. The Niger representative informed the committee that a funding proposal by Libya remains pending.

A request was made to the Islamic Bank for the up- dating of technical studies and the achievement of an environment impact assessment over the 130 kilometers that remain to be asphalted.

The Secretary General reaffirmed his readiness to be of assistance to Niger in managing this project, if the Niger representative expresses a clear willingness. Clarification on that assistance was provided to the Niger representative by the committee members.

25. Zinder-Nigerian border/ Zinder- N'guigmi

Those two sections are heavily deteriorated and need in-depth rehabilitation, with funds still to be found.

26. N'guimi-Chadian border: 117 kilometers.

That portion of the road is still in a track condition. A request for funding was made to the European Union in 1998 in pursuance of a regional fund programme to finance studies, works and supervision.

TUNISIA

27. Tunisia's own section has been completed since 1973

NIGERIA

28. The discussion focused on the project involving jointly Nigeria and Chad, according to the two following identified variants:

- Maiduguri-Bol-Massaguet-Djermaya-N'Djaména.
- Maidurguri-Djimtilo-Djermaya-N'Djaména.

29. The Secretary General recalled that he was still expecting Nigeria to send a formal mail wherein Nigeria would express her agreement for a joint feasibility study. A request will then be drafted with a view to financing the study. This draft request will be presented by the Secretary General of TRLC and submitted to Chad and Nigeria's consideration before it is finalized and officially forwarded by each country to financial bodies for a grant.

30. The committee asked the Secretary General to write a reminder in that respect.

CHAD

31. *N'djaména- Djermaya: 36 kilometers*

Calls for tenders have been issued for re-inforcement works. Bids have been deposited, opened and analysed. The selection process is underway.

Djermaya-Massaguet: 47 kilometers

Works are completed and the section has been opened to traffic.

32. *Massaguet-Massakori: 70 kilometers*

The Islamic Bank of Development expressed its agreement for financing the technical and feasibility studies of that portion. The consulting brief and the short list are in the process of elaboration.

33. *Massakori-Niger border Massakori-Bol-Niger border: 490 kilometers*

BADEA (The Arab Bank for African Development) expressed agreement for financing the pre-feasibility study of that portion. The consulting brief and the short list are in the process of elaboration.

34. *Linking-up with Nigeria.*

Chad is waiting for Nigeria's agreement to carry out a joint feasibility study.

**DISCUSSION ON THE DESIRABILITY OF HOLDING
A ROUND-TABLE CONFERENCE UNDER ECA'S AUSPICES**

35. The round-table session aims at bringing together donors for sensitising to and explaining recipients' concerns and objectives. The discussion reflected a common will to hold this session. Jointly with the representative of the Economic Commission for Africa, it was agreed to follow a stage-by-stage approach:
- A. The SG will draw up a list of those projects the countries wish to present to donors' consideration;
 - B. The SG will then submit the list, with a short background for each project, to ECA. The document will include a presentation of the trans-saharan road project as a whole;
 - C. ECA will submit the project to a list of donors to identify whether they are prepared to participate in the round-table session;
 - D. If the principle of holding a session prevails, detailed projects will then be prepared for examination by donors' according to the round-table requirements;
 - E. The venue of the round-table session will eventually be made final by ECA. Participants' level representation will be identified and a final agreed; at least four months in advance.

**PRESENTATION OF THE GENERAL ACCOUNTS REPORTS
FOR THE 2000 FINANCIAL YEAR BY THE AUDITOR**

36. The balance sheet report was adopted with a few minor remarks.

**PRESENTATION OF THE DRAFT BUDGET BY
THE SECRETARY GENERAL**

37. The committee expressed the wish that donors' potential receipts could be shown as forecast estimates. The draft budget was adopted with this proviso.

LECTURE ON ALGERIA'S TRANSPORT POLICY STRATEGY

38. The lecture was delivered by Mr. Abdeladim BENALLEGUE, Head of the Board of Directors at the Ministry of Transport. The text of the lecture was handed over both in French and in English.

VENUE OF THE NEXT SESSION

39. The next session will be held in Niamey during September 2001. A final date will be decided upon jointly by Niger and the Secretary General.

MOTIONS

The committee members adopted motions of thanks to his Excellency ABDELAZIZ BOUTEFLIKA, President of the People's Republic of Algeria, to Mr. AMARA BENYOUNES, Algerian Deputy Minister with the State Minister for Foreign Affairs, in charge of African Affairs Issues, for the warm welcome and the heartfelt hospitality extended to the committee members.

TRLC
37th SESSION OF TRLC ALGIERS, FEBRUARY 13-15, 2001-02-19
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROCEEDINGS

ALGERIA Chiali Farouk Aicha Aiche	Directeur des routes MTP Ingénieur Chef de bureau
MALI Siraba Traoré Keita Gabouné	Conseiller Technique au MEATEU Directeur National des Travaux Publics
NIGER Babra Bako	Directeur Technique à la DG des Travaux Publics
TUNISIA Achour Moncef	Directeur général des ponts et chaussées.MEH.
NIGERIA L.O.Chude J.C.Nnorukah	Assistant Director (Highways) Planning and Development Assistant Director (Highways)Construction NW
CHAD Hassan Saline Klamti Jean Baptiste	Directeur des routes au Ministère des TP, de l'Habitat et de l'Urbanisme Chef de la Division Travaux neufs
OPEC Kader Benamara	Directeur de la recherche et de l'information
ECA Jemal Mohamed	ECA, Economic Affairs Officer
TRLC Ayadi Mohamed	Secrétaire Général

**37th SESSION OF THE TRLC
ALGIERS, FEBRUARY 13-15, 2001**

FOR ALGERIA CHIALI FAROUK DIRECTEUR DES ROUTES	FOR MALI SIRABA TRAORE CONSEILLER TECHNIQUE AU MEATEU
FOR NIGER GARBA BAKO DIRECTEUR TECHNIQUE A LA DG DES TRAVAUX PUBLICS	FOR TUNISIA ACHOUR MONCEF DIRECTEUR GENERAL DES PONTS ET CHAUSSEES
FOR NIGERIA L.O CHUDE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (HIGHWAYS) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	FOR CHAD HASSANE SALINA DIRECTEUR DES ROUTES

ANNEX II

**OPENING ADRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS**

**AT THE THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF
THE TRANS-SAHARAN ROAD LIAISON
COMMITTEE**

February 13, 2001

Today, we are brought together again by the trans-saharan road, through its liaison committee.

For thirty-six years now you have been able to keep the link alive and the project going, according to the pace of our respective economies and the tempo set by the availability of human resources and material means.

Algeria feels honoured, once more, that her partners in this project can attend today's session. We wish them a warm welcome and a pleasant stay.

I thank my colleague, Mr. Messahel, their Excellencies the Ambassadors, the representatives of national and international bodies, the General Directors of companies, for attending this African meeting, thus enhancing its significance. I also thank our friends from the media for accepting to cover this event, spreading news both to the countries of the trans-saharan link and internationally.

Between the meeting of the liaison committee held a year ago, here, at the Aurassi hotel, and today's occasion, the Algerian Ministry of Public Works has regained its full-right position within the government of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria after ten years of being incorporated into various groupings: Ministry of Equipment, Ministry of Equipment and Housing, Ministry of Equipment and Inland Development, Ministry of Public Works, Town-Planning, Inland development and Environment.

For the information of those among our guests--and we hope their numbers will keep increasing- who have no knowledge of the project, allow me briefly to outline the far-reaching objectives set, in 1964 in Algiers, by the six African countries concerned, members of the Trans-Saharan Road Liaison Committee (TRLIC), as well as the work already achieved, and the remaining stages to be undertaken in the light of past experience, periodic assessments and revised work-schedules.

Three thousand kilometers of tracks have been completed over thirty years. In spite of difficult economic, social and political circumstances, each member country has faced up to the challenge and kept the project alive. The representatives of our countries have been able to meet repeatedly in order to make joint efforts and uphold the same cause, bearing in mind the economic need to develop a road network.

It was on their initiative, in 1971, that the permanent General Secretariat, the TRLC, was set up within the Economic Commission for Africa. I, for one, am well aware that this committee is highly commended by international bodies such as OAU, ECA, UNDP and OPEC, which I thank on behalf of my country and the five other countries concerned.

Moreover, TRLC sessions are providing good opportunities for exchanging experience: road specialists and experts, especially those who have an interest in road development in a desert set-up, can perform technological and scientific assessment surveys.

As far as my country is concerned, I would like to emphasize a few points which, as I see it, are crucial for a good understanding of the project and its completion, for a lasting development of the whole area.

1. In our view, the Tamanrasset-Ain Guezam section, located on the Algiers-Zinder-Lagos-Niamey-N'jamena main axis, provides a link between Algeria, Nigeria and Chad, while paving the way for the development of the whole area. Algeria, through her Minister of Public Works, is giving much importance to the project and made a pledge to open up the portion on Algerian territory to the traffic of goods and persons within a two-year period.
2. The Tamanrasset-Tinzaoutine section located on the Algiers-Gao- Bamako axis is bringing Algeria and Mali closer to the other partners of the TRL network. Algeria has by now completed the geotechnical and geometric surveys related to that part which is her responsibility. Technical and economic studies are well underway.
3. The Ghardaia-Gabes section, which is on the Tunis-Algiers-Tamanrasset or Tunis-Gabes-Ghardaia-Tamanrasset line, comes in addition to the regional structure linking up Mediterranean countries to countries in the Sahel.
4. The whole road network across the Sahara made it possible for the technical staff of the six countries to coordinate their actions with TRLC assistance.

The work they have done is of great value and I take this opportunity to congratulate not only those who are present today in this room, but all those who, although not attending, have offered support in that grand accomplishment.

I will just briefly mention the seminars, training and continuous improvement sessions, made available to member-countries' technical staffs, monitored by the committee's Secretary General and sponsored by financial institutions.

Let me extend my warmest thanks to OPEC, which, *inter alia*, provided back-up for training activities in a desert environment, for the benefit of engineers, nationals of TRLC member-states.

Although the project is undoubtedly of a technical nature, it also carries much social and political impact. Indeed, those living in the area from time immemorial have made it a tradition to walk through the desert or ride on camel's back, along the same age-old routes ending up in Tamanrasset. They are now offered a new mode of transportation, enabling men coming from more remote parts of the continent to join in. We are in charge of building integration into the future.

I also wish to stress the importance of up-keeping and maintaining this facility. As economic choices have been geared to reducing investment costs, no provision has been made for a surface layer or what we call "le noir" in our technicians' jargon! There is a need, therefore, for regular upkeep and maintenance expenditure.

Politically, the heads of those States bound by the Trans-Saharan Road take every possible opportunity to promote the development of this trans-sahelian backbone, giving the highest importance to solidarity and regional integration in Africa.

Algeria is intent on continuing her untiring efforts and providing the necessary means, for surveying and carrying out new works, while maintaining already-achieved sections, up to ultimate completion. On this occasion, we invite our five other partners to continue their efforts, so that we can all eventually meet in a common gathering, when trans-border mobility between countries in the Sahel and in the Sahara finally becomes a reality.

I take this opportunity to invite Mr. Ayadi, in his capacity as Secretary General of the committee, to travel to Tamanrasset with me on the 25th and 26th of February. We will drive on together, on the trans-saharan road from Tamanrasset to Ain Guezzam.

I am aware that transport policy strategy in Algeria is the main topic you have selected to account for the importance of a sound road network in the Deep South and in the Sahel countries.

I am most grateful for that, and wish full success to your proceedings.

I declare the 37th session of the TRLC open, and thank you for your kind attention.