

Minutes of the Extraordinary General Assembly of ARMFA

The deliberations of the Extraordinary General Assembly of ARMFA was officially opened on Thursday 22 April 2004, at 10.15 a.m.

In his welcome address, Mr. Amouzou-Guenou Assiba, Managing Director of RMF-TOGO and Chairman of the organising committee of this Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA), gave the background of the creation of ARMFA, which was created four (4) months ago in Libreville, Gabon. In view of what would be referred to as internal upheavals, the Association was unable to function as expected by the founders. Hence, the holding of this EGA in Lome, Togo.

According to the Managing Director of RMF-TOGO, the main business in Lome consists of consolidating the gains of Libreville and making some corrections to the texts governing the Association, in order to provide it with better chances of success. To this end, Mr. Amouzou-Guenou Assiba hoped that during the two days of this EGA, energies would be focused on this what will promote the smooth and sound functioning of ARMFA. This, according to him, should be through the adoption of flexible and easily applicable statutory provisions.

After Mr. Amouzou-Guenou, the acting President of ARMFA, Mr. Rapheal Mabenga, after recalling the objectives of the meeting, hoped that deliberations make it possible for agreeing on an official Headquarters of ARMFA, because in his opinion, the lack of a headquarters was one of the major problems he faced during his tenure as President.

Mr. Mabenga apologised for his inability to present an activity report because, according to him, he was not given any handing-over notes. He, like his predecessor, thanked SSATP for the financial and logistical support provided to ARMFA and to this EGA. He also expressed his gratitude to Togo who accepted to host the deliberations of the EGA, regardless of the cost involved.

His Excellency Faure GNASSINGBE, Minister for Equipment, Mines, Posts and Communications, in his keynote opening address, stressed that the Togolese government was very honoured for the holding of this extraordinary General Assembly. As far as the Minister was concerned the management of communication networks, above all, was crucial in all these poverty alleviation initiatives.

Also, the World Bank was pleased that its road management initiative (RMI) had motivated countries to set up second generation Road Maintenance Funds (RMFs) in order to mobilise sufficient and lasting resources for the maintenance of these roads.

Finally, he hoped that the deliberations would focus on:

- The reaffirmation of the objectives of ARMFA, with consultation and exchange of views as their watch word;
- The need to make the organisation more flexible and simple;
- The definition of programme of action compatible with the mission of ARMFA and the diversity of its members.

On this note, Mr. Faure GNASSINGBE declared the extraordinary general of ARMFA open, wishing them full success in their deliberations.

Just after the official opening ceremony, followed by coffee break, real business of the general assembly resumed. Mr. Obi ETA, former Cameroonian Minister for Roads and Highways, the facilitator of the deliberations observed that, before the filling of nominations by member institutions to their ARMFA presidency and other vacant posts on the executive board, there would be amendments proposed by Gabon.

Mrs Ramate TANOI of Côte d'Ivoire, second vice president of ARMFA and who took the floor after facilitator ETA, presented the development that had occurred since the Libreville general assembly.

According to Mrs TANOI, just after Libreville, the newly elected executive board was unable to carry out its missions, which were:

- concluding the administrative arrangements pertaining to the registration of the association;
- opening the bank account;
- preparing and proposing a short term programme of activities;
- this, because of the subsequent resignation of the incumbent president of the association, Mr. Jean Valentin LEYAMA who have been removed as a chief executive of RMF-Gabon.

- the member country to choose for the registration should satisfy the following conditions:

On 1 March 2004 upon proposal of the vice president, with the support of SSATP, a videoconference was held in which the first vice president (Zambia) the second vice president (Côte d'Ivoire) the Auditor (Cameroon), Mali and Chad (founding members) and SSATP actively participated. It was agreed at the end of the videoconference that:

- The first vice president assisted by the second vice president manage the transitional period until the general assembly of 22-23 April in Lome;
- New proposals should be made relating to the legal and administrative problems after in-depth reading;
- That a proposed agenda and a budget be drawn by the Board;
- The practical organisation of the general assembly be entrusted to Togo (host country)
- Cameroon should think about possible amendments of the texts of the association (domiciliation of accounts, analysis and legal approval of the statutes);
- SSATP and Togo should share the costs of the Lome general assembly, given that the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs may not respond favourably considering the short time frame remaining.
- Choosing the venue of registration of ARMFA;
- Commenting on the first draft of the programme of activities that would be presented by the Board;
- Commenting on the projected operating budget.

Finally, Mrs TANOH expressed her sincere thanks to the ARMFA Board, especially to Togo, the host country, and warmly to Mr. Assiba Amoussou GENOU for his personal involvement in the organisation of the general assembly.

During the plenary on the consideration of the statutes, some articles were reworded such as Articles 1, 2, 5, 8 etc... Thus, after these amendments, and subject to the integration of the new wordings, the Statutes were unanimously adopted by the participants.

With respect to the Charter, only item 5-2 was reformulated

When deliberations resumed in the afternoon, after opening by facilitator Obi ETA, the representative of Gabon presented the excuse of his country to the assembly for the inconveniences suffered by the association as a result of the resignation of its representative and incumbent president Mr. Jean Valentin LEYAMA.

However, he expressed the wish that the assembly kindly give him a second chance to take up the challenge for, according to him, the presidency that was entrusted to Mr. Jean Valentin LEYAMA was in fact entrusted to Gabon (see complete intervention in annex).

After this initial information, and before holding the elections, Senegal formerly an observer, was admitted as a member of ARMFA by voting by show of hands at the simple majority of the general assembly. Finally, the Director of RMF-Benin mandated his colleague of Mali to represent him at the General assembly.

The following three nominations were finally retained for the posts of president: Gabon, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire.

After the counting of the votes, Togo won the presidency with eight (8) votes against five (5) for Côte d'Ivoire and two (2) for Gabon.

For the first vice president, Zambia was the only candidate and was elected with thirteen (13) votes and two (2) blank votes

For the second vice president, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Madagascar vied.

Côte d'Ivoire was elected with ten (10) votes against three (3) for Kenya and two (2) for Madagascar.

Finally, Cameroon retained the auditor for which it was candidate anyway.

The elections were conducted by secret ballot at a simple majority. A new ARMFA executive board is presented as follows:

President: Assiba AMOUSSOU-GENOU (TOGO)
First Vice president: Henri CHIPEWO (Zambia)
Second vice president: Mrs. Ramata TANOI (Côte d'Ivoire)
Auditor: Joseph Claude GWED-BI-MINYEM (Cameroon)

Following his election, the new president of ARMFA expressed his gratitude to the facilitator, Minister Obi ETA. He then expressed his satisfaction with the atmosphere in which the nominations were filed and the spirit in which the elections were held. He finally promised on behalf of the new executive board to lead the association and to boost it to hold an ordinary general assembly within two years.

After this intervention, the meeting closed. The new members of the executive board withdrew to hold the first meeting.

- possibility of creating an association of legal entities;
 - possibility of having foreign members (more precisely, foreign legal entities)
 - possibility that the headquarters of the association be abroad or transferable abroad
 - possibility of obtaining grants and subsidies from various organisations.
- it was clearly indicate moreover that the choice of the country of registration was purely technical and has nothing to do with that of the president of ARMFA.

It was also agreed that the facilitation of the Lome discussions be entrusted to Mr. Jérôme Obi ETA, former Cameroonian Minister for Roads and Highways, and that SSATP partially bears the costs to the tune of \$US 20,000 over the total of costs of organising the Lome General assembly of US\$ 46,000. The difference is to be borne by Togo.

According to Mrs. TANOI, the Lome meeting should make it possible for:

- approving after reading and consideration, of the draft statutes that would be presented after amendments to take account of the shortcomings and omissions in the initial draft;
- restructuring of the board following the resignation of Mr. LEYAMA and considering the new text

On Friday, 23 April 2004, deliberations of ARMFA commenced at 9.30 a.m under the Chairmanship of Mr Assiba Amoussou-Guenou, newly elected President. He on behalf of the new Executive Board expressed thanks to the General Assembly and further gave his word that wide and systematic consultation will be the watchword of his term of office.

After a brief recall of the activities of the previous day, the President proposed an amendment to the programme of the morning. He thus obtained the authorisation of the General Assembly to propose the draft Internal regulations later on, which would be amended and adopted through electronic mail. The General Assembly then retained the operating budget, programme of activities and the ARMFA partnership strategy, as agenda.

In prelude to the committee work, proposed the following to ARMFA:

- Assistance of an external consultant, responsible for solving the problems of the secretariat, tools and bilingualism;
- Establishment of an indicator project and a common operating report that will be pre-tested five voluntary countries;
- Organisation of sensitisation, mobilisation and apprenticeship seminars within and around RMFs, in order to assist in revitalising their relations with the partners and the Ministeries of Finance.

After the contributions of SSATP,

Two committees were formed, to study the draft programme of activities and the partnership strategy between ARMFA and other institutions.

Committee n° 1 chaired by Zambia comprised: Cameroon, Mali, Kenya, Central Africa, Senegal and Gabon. Committee n°2 was under the chairmanship of Cote d'Ivoire and comprised: Zimbabwe, Chad, Madagascar, Niger, Lesotho and Togo.

After the Committee work on the draft programme of activities, Committee 1 proposed that:

- a list of all non-RMF-members of the association be drawn up for a possible recruitment:

- its quarterly newsletter through the E-mail be established
- the secretariat should institute a strategic plan for the next five years;'

Concerning activities, the committee hoped that:

- the pilot countries of the indicator project would be chosen quickly in order that the study would be conducted by October 2004.
- training needs be identified within the RMF members to make up for the lapses in this area.
- Designing of a website this year.

To add to the proposals of Committee 1, Committee 2 hoped that:

- the drawing up of the draft internal regulations would be entrusted to the Executive Board;
- study trips should also be undertaken to non francophone or non Anglophone countries;
- emphasise should be laid on the selection of a consultant, especially the selection criteria should be communicated to all the members of the Association.

After discussion, all these proposals were adopted.

The Executive Board submitted for the approval of the members, a draft operating budget. The budget was criticised. It was agreed that the observations and contributions serve as a basis for producing a general budget taking account of the operating expenses and the financing of the Association's own activities.

The amount of annual dues was maintained at \$ 2,000 per RMF member for the year 2004.

The General Assembly also chose Kenya to host the next ARMFA General Assembly in November/December 2004. Alternatively, Niger was chosen as the alternate country for the organisation of the next General Assembly.

Deliberations for the morning of Friday 23 April 2004 ended at 2.00 p.m. with a lunch.

The Executive Board and the representatives of SSATP withdrew for a closed-door meeting at about one hour thirty minutes.(1.30H) which was followed by the closing ceremony.

During this ceremony, the summary of proceedings was presented followed by a special motion from the participants to the Head of State Gnassingbe Eyadema, introduction of the newly elected executive Board, and then the reading of the closing address of Mr. Faure Gnassingbe, Minister of Equipment, Mines, Posts and Telecommunications, through his Representative, Mr. Amoussou-Guenou, President of RMF-TOGO and President of ARMFA.

Minister Gnassingbe, in his address, once again thanked ARMFA for the choice of Lome as host country of this G.A and expressed the gratitude of the government for the choice of a Togolese executive to head the Association.

The meeting was closed at 5.45 p.m. by President Amoussou-Guenou Assiba.