

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE
“WEST AFRICA” FOCAL GROUP OF ARMFA**

Bamako, 16 to 18 February 2011

Pursuant to the directives and resolutions adopted at the General Meeting of the African Roads Maintenance Association Fund (ARMFA) held at Addis-Ababa from November 1 to 4, 2010, the “West Africa” Focal Group of this Association met in Bamako, Mali, from 16 to 18 February 2011.

Delegations from Benin, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger and Senegal, took part in these deliberations. The Road Maintenance Funds of Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Togo, absent for various reasons, sent their apologies.

Delegations of seven (7) countries out of the eleven (11) constituting this Focal Group were present at the deliberations.

At the opening ceremony presided by the Focal Group Chair, the Director of the Benin Road Fund, Mr Sylvestre Janvier KOTCHOFA, on the behalf of the Executive Director of the Road Authority – Road Maintenance Fund of Mali (AR-FER) and in his personal name, welcomed all the participants. He went on to thank the Executive Director of AR-FER, Mali, for the warm welcome granted to the various delegations.

The Bamako meeting had among its objectives: examination of the AFMFA action plan and budget for 2011; designation of the host country of the next 2011 General Meeting of ARMFA; and proposal of themes for the technical workshop of the 2011 General Meeting of the Association.

In this regard, the agenda, drafted and unanimously adopted by participants, focused on the following points:

- Examination of the ARMFA action plan and budget for 2011;
- Designation of the host country of the next 2011 General Meeting of ARMFA;
- Proposal of themes for the technical workshop of the 2011 General Meeting of ARMFA;
- Miscellaneous.

Before proceeding with discussion of these various points, the Session Chair, in reaction to a question raised by the Executive Director of the RMF of Guinea, stressed the key points contained in the conclusions drawn at the Addis Ababa meeting, namely:

- 1- Chairs of the Focal Groups are henceforth considered as members of the ARMFA Executive Committee;
- 2- The position of Permanent Secretary/ARMFA is now eliminated;

- 3- An Executive Secretariat of ARMFA will be set up and put in place at the end of a transitional period of three (3) years (2011-2013). For this purpose, a roadmap charting steps for its putting in place will be elaborated by the Executive Bureau.
- 4- The principle of rotating ARMFA Chair will be implemented.
- 5- The working languages of ARMFA will now be those of the African Union.
- 6- The principle of raising the amount contributed by member countries to address the new aspirations of ARMFA is now unanimously accepted.

I- EXAMINATION OF THE ARMFA ACTION PLAN AND BUDGET FOR 2011

The key points of the action plan and budget tabled to the scrutiny of participants were drafted based on the activities retained under the ARMFA development plan (2008-2013) adopted in Maputo, Mozambique and on guidelines laid down by members of the Association during the 9th General Meeting that took place from November 1 to 4, 2010 at Addis-Ababa.

This budget is closed in revenue and in expenditure at the sum of US 200 990 Dollars, down by 0.1% as compared to fiscal year 2010 where it stood at US 201 218 Dollars. The main activities earmarked therein are as follows:

- Participation of the Association at the 24th Permanent International Association of Road Congresses (PIARC) that will hold from 26 to 30 September 2011 in Mexico;
- Organisation of a seminar on building the capacities of the administrative bodies of the Roads Maintenance Fund (Management Committees and Board of Directors), under each sub-region. Through this seminar, the Association is positing closer collaboration with RMF managers, and consequently greater performance for RMF;
- Undertaking of a study towards the progressive putting in place of the Executive Secretariat of ARMFA within the next three years;
- Raising the awareness of officials of Ministries in charge of finance and of road users on possibilities for diversifying RMF resources;

- Undertaking of the simplification, harmonisation, completion and operation of the RMI matrix.

Under the same budget, appropriations were set aside to support the functioning of the Association's Secretariat, which is now run by collaborators of the Executive Director of the Cameroon Road Fund, Current Chair of ARMFA. These appropriations are expected to, inter alia, serve in covering expenditure relating to allowances due to staff posted to the Association's Secretariat in terms of work pressure, lodging and update of the ARMFA Website, production and publication of the semi-annual newsletter, keeping and certification of accounts, accounting and financial audit and procurement of two laptops for the Association.

Following the various presentations and the debates sparked by the presentation of the outline of this budget, participants made some remarks and formulated several recommendations.

1- Introductory note

Participants insisted that it should be specified that resources will be derived solely from member contributions, maintained at their current level of US 2 500 Dollars per member and US 1 250 Dollars per associate member for fiscal year 2011.

With respect to consumption, participants recommended that the activities projected for the transitional period should be clearly defined such as to facilitate monitoring of their execution. In this context, participants recommended that the elaboration of the roadmap to put in place the Executive Secretariat of ARMFA should be sped up.

2- Resources

Some participants contested the amounts recorded as outstanding contributions attributed to certain countries, while others urged for precisions on the required procedure in validating the sums contained in the budget document. At the end of discussions, participants made the following recommendations:

- Entry in the table, of the cutoff date for consumption of resources for fiscal year 2010;
- Portrayal under a column to be inserted in the table, of shortfalls between execution and projections for fiscal year 2010;

- Justification of these shortfalls to find out their source and propose remedial measures to address them in future.

While the resources were under scrutiny, Cape Verde, Guinea and Mali contested the amounts attributed to them as outstanding contributions. In the face of this situation, participants recommended that:

- The Chair should request each country to confirm the statement of outstanding contributions owed the Association;
- Henceforth, any payment made out to the Association must be evidenced by a receipt issued by the Chair;
- All member countries of the West Africa Focal Group of ARMFA contesting the amounts of outstanding contributions attributed to them should produce all proof of payments made to the Association to the Chair of ARMFA (enclosing copies to the Leader of the Focal Group);
- The items “Outstanding contributions” and “Cash position at the beginning of 2011” of the budget resources table should be adjusted as settlements are made.

3- Consumption table

Interventions focused on the format of the budget document presented, the separation of investment budget for the operating expenses of the Executive Bureau, the merging of some budget heads and the clarification of activities indicated under certain items.

Following the discussions, participants recommended the:

- Elaboration of a proper budget nomenclature for the Association in view of normalizing the presentation of the ARMFA budget;
- Indication in investment budget of the two laptops to be procured so as to facilitate the calculation and accounting of their depreciation as well as their transfer to the Executive Secretariat, when the latter is put in place. Similarly, participants recommended that a review of the Association’s fixed assets be carried out prior to the putting in place of the Executive Secretariat of ARMFA;
- Merging of Items A1 and A2 of the consumption table under a single heading: “Functioning of the Executive Bureau”;

- Distinct indication in the budget of the number of staff members posted to the Secretariat of the Executive Bureau such as to enable an appraisal of the relevance of allotments made;
- Enhancement of Item A3 of the consumption table with entry of an additional head “Special support to focal groups for the organisation of the 2011 budget examination meeting for ARMFA”. This head will be endowed with US 16 000 Dollars, representing US 4 000 Dollars per focal group, with the total evolving from US 24 000 Dollars to US 40 000 Dollars. This additional allocation will be charged to the unallocated resources of the budget;
- Reformulation as follows of the heading of Item A4 of the consumption table: “Support to the organisation of the Annual General Meeting”;
- Specification in the budget of the content of the head “Procurement of expendable office equipment”;

Regarding some development activities, participants requested clarifications on tasks to be accomplished as part of their execution, the Terms of Reference as well as conditions for their implementation, in view of appraising the relevance of the options taken and validating the appropriations adopted in the budget. These are activities entitled “Elaboration of the ARMFA marketing plan”, “Study for the progressive putting in place of the Executive Secretariat of ARMFA within the next three years”, “Communication strategy to negotiate road tariffs” and “Study for improving the operation and update of the RMI matrix”.

In terms of the organisation of a training seminar/workshop for ARMFA member countries on “Improving the quality of participation of members of Management Committees and other Boards of Directors in the functioning of RMF”, participants recommended the adoption in future budgets of a symbolic contribution from member countries.

To conclude discussions on this point, participants empowered the Chair of the Focal Group to obtain the expected precisions from the Executive Bureau of ARMFA and notify member countries thereof before the holding of the budget adoption meeting .

II- DESIGNATION OF THE HOST COUNTRY OF THE NEXT ARMFA 2011 GENERAL MEETING

Following discussions on this point, participants, by acclamation, designated Benin to host the 2011 Annual General Meeting of ARMFA, on behalf of the Focal Group. Mali may, in case of last minute disappointment, replace Benin in organising the said General Meeting. RMF Directors of Benin and Mali welcomed the choice of their countries with much enthusiasm and thanked participants for this honour bestowed on them.

Also, Senegal was designated to host the Annual Ordinary Meeting of the Focal Group for 2011. At the suggestion of the Cape Verde delegation, it was decided that this meeting should be followed by a field trip that may be conducted in Cape Verde given the specificity in the maintenance of certain road structures recently carried out in this country and that kick-started the creation of the RMF.

The organisation of a technical seminar for member countries of the Focal Group is also planned for 2011. Either Guinea or Ghana may be granted the organisation of this seminar.

Participants, while deploring the repeated absence of some RMF at meetings, urged the Leader of the Focal Group to lobby among them for greater participation at meetings of the group.

III- PROPOSAL OF THEMES FOR THE TECHNICAL WORKSHOP OF THE 2011 GENERAL MEETING OF ARMFA

Participants, at the end of lengthy and fruitful debates, retained three themes that will be submitted to the Executive Bureau of ARMFA to be developed at the next General Meeting of the Association. The themes are:

Theme 1: “Ten (10) years of road maintenance reforms in sub-Saharan Africa: balance sheet and outlook”

Theme 2: “Matching road maintenance needs – available resources: what strategies for a sustainable funding of road maintenance”.

Theme 3: “Impact of road maintenance funding on job creation”

IV- MISCELLANEOUS

Under miscellaneous, participants exchanged views on recent developments at the level of their respective RMF since the last meeting of the Focal Group held in Niamey, Niger. These views allowed each country to learn from the experiences lived by the others, mostly with regard to the implementation of Rule 14 of WAEMU.

DONE AT BAMAKO, 18 FEBRUARY 2011

RAPPORTEUR
SENEGAL

SESSION CHAIR
BENIN

Pierre SENE

Sylvestre J. KOTCHOFA