

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THE ROLE OF ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE (MINISTERS' SESSION)

Monday 20 October 2003 (8.30 – 12.00 a.m.)

INTRODUCTORY REPORT

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1. THEME

The theme of the Minister's Session is "**Sustainable development – the role of Road infrastructure**". During the last few years, transport policy throughout the world, suggests a change in the role of government from supplier to regulator. This change places the emphasis on government's role as enabler of competition and the custodian of environmental and social interest. Following the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, government's role has further been emphasized as a causal agent to sustainable development. Although many definitions for sustainable development exist, most of the definitions revolve around sustainable development as a holistic concept, a strategy that requires the integration of economic growth, social equity, and environmental management. The focus of sustainable development can thus be traced to bettering the quality of life and emphasizing the need for solutions rather than problems. The role of road infrastructure in achieving this will be examined and discussed during this session.

The session will provide opportunities for political decision makers and policy makers to exchange and share their views and experiences on three topics related to the theme. These topics include "**Mobilising partnerships for sustainable development**", "**Does private investment support sustainable development?**" and "**Good Governance a prerequisite for sustainable development**". The Ministers responsible for road infrastructure from the member countries will participate in the session.

2. SUMMARY OF PROGRAMME

The Ministers' session will begin on the morning of 20 October and last for approximately three and a half hours. The Minister of Transport of South Africa will officiate and chair the meeting.

In order to maximize participation, the format of the meeting will be arranged in two tier panels consisting of 6 Ministers and 6 Specialists / Ministers. An independent facilitator will facilitate the programme and direct questions to the two panels. The panel consisting entirely of Ministers will be afforded the opportunity to provide their views and experiences on the questions posed, while the second panel, consisting of the Specialists / Ministers will pose further questions of clarity to the first panel and comment. The session will consist of a first session of approximately 1 hour 45 minutes during which presentations on the three topics will be delivered. This session will be followed by a 30 minutes break where after a second session will continue with questions to the panels of approximately 1 hour 45minutes.

The Minister of Transport of South Africa will conclude the discussions and officially close the Minister's Session.

3. INTRODUCTION TO THE SELECTED TOPICS

The Minister's Session is divided into three topics. The following is introductory briefs on the selected topics:

3.1 First topic - Mobilising partnerships for sustainable development

Throughout the world, governments have engaged in partnerships to achieve their goals of sustainable development. These partnerships, ranging from the private sector, NGO's, labour organisations to the scientific and technological communities, are primarily entered into, to bring about a wider range of talents, resources and social development.

Many partnerships, especially with NGOs, frequently work to increase the skills and assets of human capital within a country and play an important role in attacking poverty. More commercial partnerships such as public-private partnerships also play their role in job creation and skills transfer desperately needed for the development of developing countries and countries in transition.

Since the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, it has been speculated that partnerships will be one of the major outcomes of the Summit. It is believed that new paradigms and new approaches for development programmes and projects will pave the way for solutions through partnerships. The role of civil society has in recent years also been recognized as a formidable force. In partnering with civil society, not only will a better understanding of the issues be created but also the drive and commitment of civil society can be harnessed to achieve sustainable development at grass roots level.

In this segment the ministers can expect to share and exchange their knowledge and experiences to allow building on existing programmes and policies. New approaches and thoughts will also lead to further discussion and research to develop future solutions to current problems. It will be expected from the Ministers to address the following:

- *Policies and programmes for promoting partnerships*
- *New approaches and initiatives in partnering*
- *Clarifying the scope and modalities of effective partnering.*

3.2 Second topic - Does private investment support sustainable development?

Private capital is becoming more and more the principal source of external financing for developing countries and countries in transition. It is thus essential that private capital be used as a tool for the implementation of sustainable development. In harnessing the power of private capital, partnerships, co-investing and the role of International Financial Institutions play a pivotal role in supporting the flow of capital and developing domestic capital markets. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) also plays a huge role in development and growth in developing countries and countries in transition. FDI has been known to stimulate economic growth, increase a country's production base, introduces new skills and creates employment. FDI also has a positive impact on social development as it not only creates employment but also serves as a tool through which poverty in developing countries can be reduced. Finally FDI also increase the tax revenues of the public sector thereby creating additional funds to be used by the public sector.

However, synergies need to be created and enhanced through the shaping of policies. Policies relating to taxation and investment and those creating an enabling environment for private investment are especially important in creating these synergies. The question is also frequently asked as to what the role of the private sector and even development agencies should be in creating these synergies.

It will be expected of Ministers to discuss the following questions:

What improvements are required from governments to facilitate private investment towards sustainable investment and the role of civil society in the monitoring thereof?

3.3 Third topic - Good Governance a prerequisite for sustainable development

The challenge facing all societies is to create a system of governance that promotes, supports and sustains development. However, the search for a clearly articulated concept of governance in market economies has only just begun. Sound governance is a subset of governance wherein public resources and problems are managed efficiently and in response to the critical needs of society. Effective democratic forms of governance rely on public participation, accountability and transparency. While public participation and transparency speaks for itself, accountability must be seen in the light of public and financial accountability. Public accountability covers the spectrum of approaches and practices used by governments to ensure that activities and output meet intended goals and standards. While realisation of the government's goals and objectives is a subject of complex and long-standing debate, financial accountability presents an urgent challenge that requires an immediate and practical solution, especially given the rising concern for transparency and responsible governance.

The perceived absence of integrity in governments severely weakens the credibility of democratic institutions. Improving integrity, or developing and implementing strategies for the prevention or control of corruption, is an integral part of ensuring accountability. Since governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance also focuses on the formal and informal role players involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision.

It will be expected of the Ministers to discuss the following questions:

The relationship between Good Governance and sustainable development with regard to:

- *Civil Society;*
- *Accountability;*
- *Transparency;*
- *Responsiveness;*
- *Effectiveness and efficiency;*
- *Equitability; and*
- *The rule of law.*

Good governance's role in minimizing corruption.

Good governance to ensure that all views in society are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making.

Additional Topics

- Promoting economic growth through competition will ensure sustainable development.
- Social development is not only a spin-off but also a necessity for sustainable development.
- The role of Science and Technology in sustainable development.