

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Your Excellency Ambassador / Naglaa El-Hosseiny representative of his Excellency Mr. \ Erastus J. O. Mwencha, the Secretary General of COMESA. Honorable Heads of Delegations, Ladies and Gentlemen, Guests of Egypt and COMESA, Ladies and Gentlemen My dear colleagues in the Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of communication, Press corp.

On behalf of his Excellency DR. Essam Sharaf, The Minister of Transport I am glad and honored to welcome you here in Egypt where you have honored Sharm El-Sheikh and Egypt by accepting our invitation to (be here between) come between your friends in the ninth meeting of the Committee of transport. This meetings are under the auspices of his Excellency Dr. Ahmed Nazif – Prime Minister, I also convey to you on behalf of Egyptian people our deep gratitude for enduring all the troubles to come in this hot summer, your mere presence is a sign of solidarity of the people of COMESA with Egyptian people after the tragedy which took place in Sharm El-Sheikh last month and we seize the opportunity to thank his Excellency General / Afifi – governor of South Sinai, and Sharm El-Sheikh Council and all the Security Organizations for their cooperation and enthusiastic efforts by all the people and Agencies who participated in preparation of this meeting.

It is a good fortune for us here that this meeting coincides with the first ever presidential elections in Egypt where we have luckily being fortunated to the election of his Excellency Mr. President Mohamed Hosny Mubarak as the president of the Arab republic of Egypt for another term.

We also thank the COMESA Secretariat for their dedication and cooperation and their fast acceptance of the Egyptian request to change the city from Alexandria to Sharm El-Sheikh. This acceptance alone speaks a lot about COMESA spirit and it is absolutely important for all the Egyptian people that we felt this spirit shining from your smiling faces and your charming presence let me thank every one of you individually for coming here

The objectives of our meeting are to prepare ourselves to make the coming meeting of their Excellencies the Ministers a very successful one. We have to sweat heart to present to them the practical and easy to implement Agenda and suggestions.

We need to harvest the outcome of all the past meetings and workshops especially the last workshop in Alexandria when we, the COMESA People, for the first time had set an example for the international regional organizations by being not selfish, by being very practical, by being innovative in concentrating our efforts not to fulfill the needs of every participant member state at one time, but to fulfill the needs of our member states consequently, because we understood and believed that we and COMESA and even our individual countries don't have the required resources and money to implement and finance all the projects at the same time. Prioritization is the key of the success. Concentration of efforts is another key for success. Unselfishness is unique contribution of COMESA spirit. In the last workshop, we discussed the criteria needed to choose and compare all the existed privileged and listed them accordingly, because we listened to the wisdom of forefathers we listened to the wisdom of the great African liberalization leaders and we copied the mechanism of our neighboring European Union, which decided to take one step at a time where they decided to choose one mega project for every certain project of them which does not have to cover all the European countries at the same time. This concept of concentration and prioritization coincides with the philosophy of demand, but it differs a little bit from what we used to say in COMESA

Secondly, while we gather here in this air-conditioned hall in this beautiful city, we must forget this surrounding luxurious atmosphere and remember the reality of transportation in COMESA in our countries.

Yes, we have accomplished a lot but we still have a lot of challenges. The first and the utmost urgent one of them is the common understanding of the importance of transportation. In reality, we need to convince not only our public opinion or the people of the media or the international donors, but even our governments and our practical parties and even our wives and children that without transportation we can not implement our development plans. We can not think about increasing our exports if we do not have roads, railways, ports, and laws. I always wonder why this fact of life is missing. Why only explanation now is that we did not work hard enough to convince the ordinary men and women in the street how important is the infrastructure of transportation for his families that own future.

We have to convince people before the ministers of planning or the ministers of finance that all their other efforts are going to be in vain without adequate transportation and modern

infrastructure for transportation, how they build factories and cultivate lands without assigning budget for roads, network of transportation, developing ports, etc.

How they think of getting bigger and have more muscles without improving and enhancing the blood vessels starting by the important one the artery. We need to take care with our artery first before going to the very small blood vessels necessary in the tip of our fingers.

The second challenge for us in COMESA is that in reality very few people realize what COMESA had already given them. When the U.S.A. Agency does something in my country, they insist on putting a sign of U.S.A. Aid on the project.

I don't see COMESA sign in the roads or the bridges near my villages. I do not see the COMESA flag on the vessels calling on my ports. Why do I care about COMESA? As an ordinary man, I do not see what COMESA gives me.

This is a very important part and it is essential for our success not only to think in the terms of what we need as experts, but in the term of what people need and how can we bring their support to our transport projects. We had not convinced our people with the importance of COMESA. Mr. Tarek who is in a factory in Cairo now, MRS. Mary who is in her house in Rwanda, Mr. Moudiba who is now in a field in Uganda, and Mrs. Margaret who is a in a university in RD Congo, they do not know or hear about COMESA because they do not feel the positive effect of COMESA in their day-to-day life or in their future. And this is exactly why we have the Egyptian newspapers publishing news about us in the fifth or sixth page, and that is exactly why the ministers of planning did not bother themselves to allocate the needed budget for the COMESA transportation projects.

I tell you the truth, my wife does not care about COMESA except if I am traveling to Lusaka and forgets all about COMESA when I am back from Lusaka... we need to change this, we need to think and work hard , not to write nice and elegant words in our reports, but to choose one big mega project in every sector of transportation, only one , and collect and gather all our forces and all our horses behind it believing unselfishly that today is the time of Uganda, but tomorrow it will be my time because we can not do all in one time.

My dear friends, I wish you all the success in your professional meeting. I wish you all the happiness in your lives. I wish you all the pleasures which we had planned to offer you while you are here in Sharm El-Sheikh because our sons need you to succeed.

Thank you.

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.