

Admiral Sherine Hassan Speech

Honorable Guests
Honorable Head of Delegations
Dear colleges from friendly COMESA countries



On behalf of H.E Dr Essam Sharaf THE EGYPTIAN MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, I welcome you all in your home EGYPT, he was more than willing to attend this workshop with you but he couldn't, for a sudden change of his schedule, he promised to be with us all day Monday.

We gathered here in ALEXANDERIA, not as experts, or representatives of our beloved countries only, but as AFRICAN BROTHERS and above all as friends.

OUR aim is to reach the objective of our workshop in the easiest way, to prepare solid easy to implement agenda for the coming meeting of our ministers in Sharm El-sheikh next month.

Hoping that this one month period before their meeting will allow ample time for all the COMESA experts to review our work in all our countries, add their input to our work, make it more scientific, and more detailed.

1- Why we are here?

Because we believe that one day period between the expert meeting and the minister meeting is not enough to produce solid sound agenda, for the ministers to discuss and endorse.

2- WHY we have to sweat and work hard before the expert meeting?

Because our people deserve that, our children need that, and because Africa in general and COMESA in particular are full of resources, and yet full of problems, which we can help to solve through our collected wisdom.

THIS collected wisdom of yours gathered here, must help in producing achievable goals and improve the existed means of transportation in air, land, sea and rivers of COMESA.

WE do not need nicer document,

There are surpluses of them, we already have a lot of MOUs, charters, agreements, communiqué....., you name it we have it.

BUT with all these documents , our ports are still empty, ...our railways are still not sufficient, ...our roads are still not adequate, our ships are not enough ...,our sky is full of non COMESA aircraft.

THERE is something that needs to be done, beside signing all these documents, and proposing all these projects.

MALAY, ZAMBIA, ZIMBABWE had signed and implemented all the required road program 7 out of 8, and I leave to them to judge the impact on their transportation.

IN MARITIME sector we discussed 7 items on the action plan in our last meeting, and GOD only know how many of them had improved the lives of our citizen.

ON our last meeting we discussed many transportation and communication programs.....**DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY?**

They were 170 projects.

I do not think that we had enough memory to recall their names, or that we had time to go through them in detail...let alone counting their cost, and here I am not speaking about funding them all, GOD forbidThe estimated cost of 150 of them was over 9 **BILLION US\$ ONLY**. SOME of them were really funded, most of them were not.

IN maritime sector alone there were 29 projects, 11 of them were EGYPTIAN.

BECAUSE EUROPE is richer and bigger than COMESA, THE EUROPEAN transportation white paper speaks only about one, I repeat one program.

In the last 5-7 year they implemented one maritime project called SHORT SEA SHIPPING and the new one is going to be implemented in the coming 5 years called motor highway of the sea.

Should we do that ... Concentrate our effort and money in one big program, or because we are richer and more capable we should stick to our current way. The question is worth answering in this workshop.

Concentrate or fragment?

DO WE FACE PROBLEMS?

In my humble opinion, which you do not have to accept, we do face many problems...But all of them can be addressed and solved.

If we concentrate our effort on one major, mega project in every sector of transportation and communication, if we forget about our ego, and think big, one step at a time, this year my neighbor, and my turn will be the next, our limited resources need to be well directed, not to be fragmented.

Every time we meet we want to go home with triumph, by insisting that our needs are addressed before our neighbor needs.

USA becomes one country only when they concentrated their money and efforts on mega projects.

In railway they connected the Pacific ocean with the Atlantic ocean in the 18th century And dug Panama canal for the same reason; connecting the two far ends of AMERICA, THEY FORGOT ABOUT CONNECTING Texas with Nevada until connecting the two coasts, and in roads.... They consider the AMERICAN HIGHWAY connecting states THE MEGA PROJECT not insisting on connecting every town and city, by the way they completed this gigantic project only when general EISENHOWER became president.

When bothers me is not only this question of priority, but also the lack of understanding the importance of transportation in our societies, the big barrier is not the money but the understanding of the people, the media, and even the GOVERNMENT.

How can we convince them that our countries cannot survive or grow if they do not have efficient transportation net?

How can we convince them that every country is a living entity which needs transportation net in sea, air, land, river to transport people and commodity, and raw materials for life to continue exactly as human body needs blood vessels to transfer food, oxygen, and waste between the different parts of our bodies, otherwise we will stop breathing and stop growing and ultimately vanish.

How can we convince them, if we ourselves are not convinced?

Because if we are convinced, then we ourselves should also be convinced that, priority here also applied, the artery is thousand times more important than small blood vessels.

If the artery clogged the body collapses, but if the small blood vessel blocked it can be replaced by another blood vessel.

SO where is the artery of COMESA? IN road –network

In railway- network..., in maritime sector ...,in inland water network?

I wish that we here can reach common understanding of our real problem; the core of it.

THAT we can identify the project, convince our colleagues with the importance of concentration of forces as the most single important element of success.

In the end, I wish you all, all the best, enjoy your stay in Egypt, enjoy your work, and above all enjoy the friendly atmosphere you brought with you to us here in this workshop.

GOD help us all if we did not deliver what our people back home deserve, but I am full of confidence that together we can, and "insha ALLAH" we will.