



**ORGANIZATION OF  
AFRICAN UNITY**

Secretariat  
P. O. Box 3243

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AFRICAIN**

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REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL ROAD LINKS  
IN AFRICA



REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL ROAD LINKS IN AFRICAA - General Introduction:

1. The transport network bequeathed to our Continent by the colonialists was planned to enable African countries to communicate more easily with the outside world rather than with themselves. Consequently, the absence of standardized communication routes from country to country within Africa has contributed to the restraint of trade between neighbouring countries and the hampering of real co-operation and integration of African economies.

The African countries remained linked to their metropolis which saw in them a source for cheap raw materials and a suitable dumping ground of the very raw materials transformed into manufactured goods.

2. It is only during the last ten years that African countries have been able to look to a different future, attempt to orientate their progress in such a way as to satisfy specifically African interests, and develop inter-dependent economic structures in keeping with these interests. The following major Trans-African Highway projects are among these fundamental concerns:

- The Mombasa-Lagos Trans-African Highway;
- The Trans-Sahara Highway
- The West African Highway (Dakar/Fort-Lamy)
- The East African Highway (Gaborone/Cairo).

3. The importance of safe and cheap transport for the economic and social well-being of a developing region like Africa is too well known to call for detailed study. In brief, the existence of strong road links between African countries could promote inter-African trade in raw materials and manufactured products; exchanges which are at present very limited. On the one hand, this could have the effect of a significant mutual encouragement for countries trying to support their industries to substitute imports and on the other, lead to a greater economic inter-dependence resulting in a closer inter-African economic co-operation, if not economic integration, in Africa.

4. As the Council of Ministers had hoped, the object of this report is to give an exhaustive account of the state of advancement in the study and works on the Trans-African Highway and the Trans-Sahara Highway as well as a general picture of the present state of the West-African Highway. The fourth major international road link in Africa, the East African Highway (Gaborone/Cairo), is still in the project stage. The OAU General Secretariat would like to seize this opportunity to suggest strongly to the Council of Ministers that future phases of these important projects be carried out henceforth, with the full participation and co-operation of the OAU General Secretariat. Indeed, it is important that OAU be asked to take an active part in the realization of projects which will have an enormous impact on the economic development and social well-being of African peoples.

## B - STATE OF ADVANCEMENT OF THE TRANS-AFRICAN HIGHWAY PROJECT

### I Introduction

5. The Trans-African Highway project is intended to cover a distance of 7,000 km from Mombasa (Kenya) to Lagos (Nigeria), passing through Kampala (Uganda), Kisangani (Zaire), Bangui (CAR) and Bafoussam (Cameroon) by an all-weather highway.

6. The work needed to carry it through consists essentially of improving existing roads, new construction representing roughly 7% of the total length. The project originates from resolution 226 (X) of the ECA Ministerial Conference which was held in Tunis in February 1971. This resolution called upon the Secretariat of the Commission and Member States concerned to study the possibility of linking the road sections crossing Africa from East to West so as to draw up a layout of a Trans-African Highway, using existing networks.

### II. First Meeting of the Trans-African Highway Co-ordinating Committee

7. On the basis of this resolution, an initial meeting of the Trans-African Highway Committee was held from 14 to 18 June 1971, in Addis Ababa, bringing together representatives of the six countries concerned, Western industrialized countries and principal international bodies. The main result of this first

meeting was the creation of the "Trans-African Highway Bureau". The main mission of this Bureau would be to undertake a pre-feasibility study of alternative routes for the highway, taking into account the wishes of the governments in order to prepare a paper identifying sections which require reconstruction or up-grading, to enable it to make recommendations for the optimum alignment.

8. The next stages consisted in conducting complete feasibility studies to be entered in complete files before embarking on the physical construction of the highway, which is to be the object of five-year programmes to be submitted to the governments concerned. It had also been understood that as and when the physical construction and improvement of the road sections proceeded satisfactorily, the regulation of passenger and goods traffic would be studied with a view to harmonizing, if not standardizing the entire international Trans-African Highway.

### III - Meeting on the assistance of industrialized countries to the Project:

#### Pre-feasibility study of the Project:

9. From 29 September to 1st October 1971, the Bureau organized a meeting to determine the assistance of industrialized countries in the realization of the project. Different offers of assistance were made during the work of the meeting, notably, the sending of experts and technicians, the granting of subsidy and work on the undertaking.

10. Great Britain's offer was preferred because it had the advantage of being overall. Indeed, the Government of the United Kingdom has undertaken to finance the "Pre-feasibility Study" on the Trans-African Highway. T.P. O'SULLIVAN & Partners, a London firm of Consulting Engineers, was appointed and successfully conducted the pre-feasibility study on the entire Lagos-Mombasa route between November 1971 and February 1972. Their conclusions were put down on 1st March 1972 in a document which was circulated to the governments of East and Central Africa and international institutions as well as the principal Western industrialized countries.

11. It was, in fact, the O'SULLIVAN report which was the basic document at the Bangui Conference, for it was its analysis

and its evaluation that were to be the object of a final agreement between the six African Governments concerned as regards the final layout of the Trans-African Highway.

#### IV - Second Meeting of the Trans-African Highway Co-ordinating Committee

12. The second meeting of the Trans-African Highway Co-ordinating Committee was held in Bangui, Central African Republic, from 10 to 14 April, 1972. The object of that meeting was to adopt a highway linking the Gulf of Guinea to the Indian Ocean.

13. The meeting was guided in its choice of this layout by the hypothesis that it was essential for the Trans-African Highway to be an all-weather road throughout and that it was desirable that it be both cheap and serve regions having strategic, economic or administrative importance. After exchanging views, the Committee laid down the Trans-African Highway as follows:

Kenya: Mombasa-Nairobi-Mau Summit-Eldoret-Malaba (919 km)

Uganda: Malaba-Kampala-Fort Portal-Kasindi (659 km)

Zaire: Kasindi-Beni-Komanda-Kisangani-Dulia-Bangassou (1554 km)

C.A.R.: Bangassou-Bambari-Bangui-Bouar-Garoua Boulai (1318 km)

Cameroon: Garoua Boulai-Tibati-Banjo-Bafoussam-Mamfe-Ekok (1070 km)

Nigeria: Ekok-Enugu-Benin City-Lagos (855)

14. The Bangui meeting also laid down the future stages of the project which have been summarized as follows:

- (a) feasibility and engineering studies;
- (b) implementation and supervision of construction works on the Highway;
- (c) various studies on traffic regulations, movement of goods and persons and customs regulations;

(d) enlarged participation: For a real change to ensure a real integration of African economies, the Committee's attention was engaged by the association of the East and Central African countries with the Trans-African Highway. The Trans-African Highway should constitute the backbone of all the road inter-connection network of countries like Burundi, the Peoples Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Niger, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Chad and Zambia.

V. Meeting on feeder links to the Trans-African Highway

15. A meeting on feeder links to the Trans-African Highway was held in Addis Ababa from 12 to 14 September 1972. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Burundi, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Sudan, Chad and Zambia. Congo, Gabon, Niger and Somalia, were also invited, but did not attend.

16. The feeder roads agreed upon to link the Trans-African Highway are as follows:

Burundi: Bujumbura-Kigali--Mbarara and thence to Kampala (851 km) or to Kasindi (764 km)

Congo: There are two possible links to the Trans-African Highway:

(1) Brazzaville-Ouesso-Baoro (1476 km)

(2) Brazzaville-Lambarene-Yaounde and thence to Garoua Boulai (1394 km) or to Bafoussam (1154 km)

Ethiopia: Addis Ababa-Moyale-Marsabit-Nairobi (1566 km)

Gabon: Libreville-Mitzic-Yaounde and thence to Garoua Boulai (1394 km) or to Bafoussam (1154 km).

Niger: Niamey-Maradi-Kano-Jos-Enugu (2065 km)

Rwanda: Kigali-Mbarara and thence to Kampala (555 km) or to Kasindi (468 km)

Somalia: Mogadiscio-Kisimayu-Libai-Nairobi (1342 km)

Sudan: Khartoum-Juba-Kampala (2143 km)

Tanzania: Arusha-Nairobi (277 km)

Chad: There are three possible links to the Trans-African Highway:

(1) Fort-Lamy-Sarh-Sibut (1009 km)

(2) Fort-Lamy-Garoua-Ngaoundete and thence to the Trans-African Highway (898 km)

(3) Fort-Lamy-Maiduguri-Jos-Enugu (1422 km)

Zambia: Lusaka-Arusha-Nairobi (2411 km)

VI. Meeting to determine assistance from the industrialized countries to the Project: Feasibility study:

17. A meeting to determine assistance from the industrialized countries for the feasibility studies of the Trans-African Highway was held in Addis Ababa from 9 to 12 October 1972. As a result of this meeting, the financial offers made by the industrialized countries for the feasibility studies of some sections of the Highway were as follows:

Zaire: Kasindi-Membasa-Kisangani (813) - Belgium  
Kisangani-Bangassou (714 km) - Japan

C.A.R. Baoro-Garoua Boulai-Tabati (217 km) - France

Cameroon: Garoua Boulai-Tibati (357 km) - Italy  
Tibati-Foumban (326 km) - Germany (F.R.)  
Bamenda-Ekok (225 km) - ADB

18. These offers of assistance, which represent a total amount of about US\$8.61 million, cover 2680 km (42 per cent of the Highway). As of this date, finance has not yet been obtained for only 800 km of the Highway (13 per cent), estimated to cost US\$1.95 million, which are distributed as follows:

C.A.R. : Bangassou-Bambari (354 km) and Bossembele-Baoro (240 km)

Nigeria: Abakaliki-Ekok (206 km)

The Trans-African Highway Bureau has already requested some developed countries and international financial institutions to assist in the carrying out of the studies on the 800 km.

19. It should however, be mentioned here that the Governments of the United Kingdom and France have expressed their preparedness to finance the cost of the study of:

- (a) international travel and trade; and
- (b) road traffic and vehicle regulations.

The Bureau is currently preparing a five-year programme for the implementation of the Trans-African Highway project.

VII. Third meeting of the Trans-African Highway Co-ordinating Committee:

Mombasa (10 to 14 April 1973)

20. The task of the Mombasa meeting was:

- (a) to inspect the section of the Trans-African Highway in the territories of Uganda and Kenya;
- (b) to assess and take note of the progress made up to date in the implementation of the Project;
- (c) to study the report on the feasibility study of the Trans-African Highway and other related matters;
- (d) to take decisions on the assistance that will be required during the later stages of the Project.

C. The Trans-Sahara Highway

21. A joint Trans-Sahara Road Committee was set up in 1964. Grouping four countries bordering the Sahara (Algeria, Tunisia, Mali and Niger) and representatives of the UNDP, this Committee is responsible for studying and finalizing a road link project between Africa north of the Sahara and Africa South of the Sahara.

22. As a result of the Algiers meeting held in November 1971, a final project was laid down. The UNDP will contribute 2.3 million dollars and the countries directly concerned, namely, Algeria, Mali and Niger will contribute US\$750,000 in the financing of the overall engineering design studies. About 3,000 km road will be constructed in Algeria, Mali and Niger. The total cost is estimated at about US\$86 million. Though the ways and means of financing this project have not been finally decided, it is envisaged that each country would bear the cost of the road constructed in its territory, in other words, 1,900 km in Algeria, 670 km in Mali and 600 km in Niger. The three sections would meet at a point O, lying at about 40 km south of Tamanrasset in Algeria and stopping in El-Gorea in Algeria, Gao in Mali and Arlit in Niger. Tunisia thus finds itself automatically linked to the Trans-Sahara network through the already existing Algeria-Tunisia communication routes.



23. On 16 September 1971, President H. Boumedienne officially inaugurated works on the first section falling within Algerian territory. Niger has already started work on a section towards the North. The pre-feasibility technical studies of the entire highway have been carried out under the auspices of the UNDP and an international consortium will carry out the engineering design studies of the Highway in accordance with a US\$2.3 million contract signed with the UNDP.

24. This Trans-Sahara road link which has always been the dream of the countries bordering the Sahara is now almost a reality. Principal international institutions are greatly interested in the project because its economic returns are unquestionable. The World Bank and the ADB are following works on the project very closely and would be ready to participate in financing them.

D. Trans-West African Highway

25. The West-African Sub-regional Conference on Economic Co-operation, held at Accra (Ghana) from 27 April to 4 May 1967, recommended that priority be given to "the need for an all-weather road link spanning the entire sub-region, including standardization of road practices and regulations and the simplification of frontier formalities."

26. There are two alternative routes for an all-weather road spanning the West African sub-region from West to East:

- (a) either a route near the coast which would traverse Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Dahomey and Nigeria, or
- (b) a route which would cross Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Upper Volta, Niger and Nigeria. This route would be at no great distance from the northern boundaries of Guinea, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo and Dahomey.

27. It may be that the completion of a road spanning the entire sub-region is not strictly capable of realization and that what is required is either two roads, one near the coast and the other in the hinterland roughly following the 12th parallel, or, the selection of one of these routes and the improvement of feeder links with the countries not actually traversed by it.

### E. Conclusion

28. Thus, these four Pan African road networks constitute the essential elements of a real change leading to real integration of African economies. This sufficiently elucidates the possibilities of achieving a plan or a programme setting up on the one hand, an expanded network covering the sub-regions of the East, Centre, West and North of the African Continent, and on the other, linking the Gulf of Benin to the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea and the Canary Islands. This global manner of conceiving the infrastructure of the African road network is the only one capable of fostering the development of intra-African trade.

29. Since its inception, the OAU General Secretariat has followed with constant interest and particular attention, the various phases of the implementation of the Trans-African Highway. However, the OAU General Secretariat is not a member of the Bureau of this Highway. Similarly, it is with much effort that the Secretariat has interested itself in the realization of other pan-African Highway projects. The General Secretariat is of the view that it would be highly desirable that the future phases of these important projects be carried out with the entire co-operation of OAU, because the effective participation of the OAU General Secretariat in these projects constitutes a sure and sufficient guarantee and an additional precaution that Africa's interests will be fully studied, analysed and safeguarded in the course of the various negotiations.

30. This is to emphasize that a resolution inviting the ECA and the six countries through which the highway runs to include the OAU General Secretariat in the Trans-African Highway Bureau could prove opportune for the moment. On the other hand, the OAU General Secretariat would like to suggest to the Council of Ministers to recommend to all the countries through which the other pan-African road links would traverse to accomplish their projects with the close collaboration of the OAU General Secretariat. What is more, this will enable the OAU Council of

Ministers to follow closely, the development of all the projects since it would use the opportunity to request the OAU General Secretariat to submit complete periodic reports on the state of advancement of the studies and works on the major international road links in Africa in general and on the Trans-African Highway in particular.



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