3rd December 2013.

**REPORT ON THE PLENARY MEETING OF NEPAD’S INFRASTRUCTURE CONSORTIUM FOR AFRICA (ICA), HELD IN ARUSHA, ON 14TH NOVEMBER 2013.**

ICA was created by AfDB in 2005 and this was its 9th Annual meeting.

The meeting was hosted by the EAC and funded by DFID and AfDB.

The meeting was co-chaired by Rachel Turner of DFID and Alex Rugamba of AfDB.

The official opening was conducted by Hon. Samuel John Sitta, Tanzanian Minister for EAC.

Around 100 delegates attended.

In the panel discussion, FESARTA re-iterated the following:

* There should be one REC for East and Southern Africa. The Tripartite was in place and there was one Tripartite unit; the Project Preparation and Implementation Unit (PPIU). Why not one REC? It would make harmonization and implementation much easier. FESARTA requested the International Cooperating Partners (ICPs) to give more support to creating one REC.
* The ICPs should continue to support the development and upgrading of infrastructure, including roads, bridges and city bypasses.
* Regional harmonization and standardization guidelines were necessary before governments could be expected to implement the regional recommendations. More support was needed from the ICPs, both in funding and capacitation. There were too many projects in place (load limits, third party insurance, dangerous goods, abnormal loads, road user charges, etc) which were not finalized. FESARTA understood that TMSA was addressing this.
* The Tripartite NTB system was a good one and fully supported by FESARTA. FESARTA worked with the system to resolve the problems. But, only 50% of the road transport NTBs had been resolved. Furthermore, FESARTA did not believe that the EAC NTBs were fully integrated into the Tripartite system. Most of the NTBs occurred through arbitrary and unprofessional implementation of regulations and procedures – both at borders and along the corridors. Or, governments did not implement regional recommendations and so created obstacles to the free-flow of goods. Many NTBs were not easy to resolve, since implementation was often based on existing or new national legislation. But, this legislation did not always facilitate trade and therefore needed to be changed. More support was required from the ICPs, both in funding and capacity; to ensure that the root causes of these NTBs were removed.
* Cross-border transport should be regulated through quality rather than quantity – permits were not necessary and there was too much control from cartels. Return loads were often difficult to source. However, it was noted that transporters in some less-developed countries were not in favour of transport liberalization.
* Self-regulation could bring about better harmony between transporters and authorities. In addition, it had been shown to improve the profitability of the companies implementing it.
* Corridor monitoring was essential to provide information before implementation of projects. SSATP and the TradeMarks were doing good work on this.
* Generally the private sector, through the regional associations, participated well at regional level. Transporters wanted to move freely along the corridors and this agreed with the regional objectives. However, there was insufficient private sector participation at national level. The RECsneeded to put more pressure on national governments to work with the private sector.
* Improved trade facilitation was unlikely to drop transport prices. Input costs continued to rise and so improved facilitation would only result in lower price increases until the region was more competitive with international levels. It was noted, for example that trucks on the route between Johannesburg and Cape Town covered up to 24000kms per month and therefore their prices were internationally competitive. In East Africa, trucks sometimes only covered 6000 kms per month and so prices were high.

Outcomes from the meeting

* Monitoring of corridors was essential for learning and accountability.
* Corridor management institutions were to play a stronger role in trade facilitation and to have ”teeth” to effectively lobby national governments.
* The NTB system also needed more “teeth” to enable it to be more effective.
* The private sector was to play a more important role and move towards self-regulation.
* Financing was not the biggest issue, though there was a definite need to capacity-build the RECs.
* Ports needed more input to make them more efficient.

Barney Curtis.