

## **PRESS RELEASE: TCM Sectoral Council deliberate on Railways Master Plan**

### ***Ministers witness signing of EAC Transport Strategy and Road Sector Development Programme***

**East African Community Headquarters, Arusha, Tanzania, 17 April 2009:** The first Extraordinary meeting of the Sectoral Council on Transport Communications and Meteorology was held from 15-17 April 2009 in Arusha, Tanzania. The meeting, which deliberated mainly on the draft East African Railways Master Plan, was chaired by the Chairperson of the Sectoral Council and Minister for Infrastructure of the Republic of Rwanda, Hon. Eng. Linda Bihire. Others in attendance were Hon. Philipe Njoni, Minister of Transport, Posts and Communications, Burundi; Hon. Eng. John Nasasira, Minister of Works and Transport, Uganda; Hon. Chirau Ali Makwere, Minister of Transport, Kenya; Hon. Samuel Poghio, Minister for Information and Communication, Kenya; Hon. Dr. Wilfred Machage, Assistant Minister of Roads, Kenya; Hon. Ezekiel Chibulunji, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure Development, the United Republic of Tanzania; Hon. Dr. Maua Daftari, Deputy Minister of Communications, Science and Technology, Tanzania; Amb. Julius Onen, EAC Deputy Secretary General (Projects and Programmes); Permanent Secretaries and senior officials from the infrastructure sector.

The Sectoral Council considered the draft East African Railways Development Master Plan and made fundamental recommendations on the draft plan and gave the Secretariat and the Task Force on the Plan three months to incorporate the Ministers comments and proposals and come up with the final document.

The Sectoral Council also directed the Secretariat, in consultation with Partner States, to urgently solicit financing to undertake the detailed design, environmental and social impact studies and financing options for the identified priority lines of the Project; and undertake a study on the feasibility of the Public Private Partnerships for infrastructure development in the region including the legal and legislative framework to support the arrangement.

The Sectoral Council also considered the preparation for the launch of the Arusha-Namanga-Athi River Road Construction Project by the Presidents of the United Republic of Tanzania, HE Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete and of Kenya, HE Mwai Kibaki scheduled for 28 April 2009. Presidents from the other EAC Partner States will witness the launch.

The Arusha – Namanga – Athi River road development project is part of the EAC Road Network Project Corridor No. 5 running from Tunduma in Tanzania to Moyale in Kenya. The construction of the project is co- financed by the African Development Bank for the Kenya component and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency for the Tanzania component. The construction of this project is being implemented in two lots; Lot T (Tanzania Section): Arusha – Namanga (105 km). Construction commenced in July 2008 and is expected to be completed by July 2011. Lot K (Kenya Section): Athi River – Namanga (135km). Construction commenced in November 2007 and completion is expected by November 2010.

The Sectoral Council also witnessed signing of the contract on the study for the EAC Transport Strategy and Regional Roads Development Programme between the EAC Secretariat and Africon Ltd. Amb. Julius Onen signed on behalf of the EAC Secretariat, while the EAC Permanent

Secretaries in charge of Infrastructure/or Works and Transport signed on behalf of the Partner States. Mr. Paris Marques, the Unit Manager, International business signed on behalf of Africon, the Infrastructure Design and Management Solution company based in South Africa.

The objective of the EAC Transport Strategy is to identify regional strategic priorities and resources for transport sector development and operational needs for the medium term in line with EAC development goals. The development of the transport sector strategy involves consulting services, experts meetings and stakeholder consultations/workshops to assess in detail all modes of transport in their regional dimension. The strategy will be the EAC key planning document guiding the regional policies and investments in the transport sector for a ten year period (2010 – 2020).

The EAC Transport Strategy is in the overall context of the East African Trade and Transport Facilitation Project, which is a regional project aimed at facilitating transportation and flow of goods across the borders. Transport costs in the region constitute an average of 30% of the value of exports and imports and this has in turn made the region less competitive on the international scene. It is, therefore, against this background that the World Bank approved preparation of the Project with a main objective of reducing transport costs in the region.

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