

This ceremony marks the beginning of work on the "Route de l'Unité", which is the greatest single project within this overall program.

Canada's contribution in the transportation sector is designed to be comprehensive, integrated and effective. It attempts, in this context, to link the development of air and river transport facilities with land communications.

At this very moment, Mr. President, a fleet bearing the flag of Niger and established with Canadian assistance, has crossed the boundary of Niger, en route to Gaya. The presence of these vessels on the Niger is an example of what can be done by our two countries when the will to succeed is shared so eagerly.

We can be proud of the scale which cooperation between Niger and Canada has reached. This is especially so when one considers the distance which separates Ottawa from Niamey. But apart from distance, there are geographic and human factors, political and material similarities which bring us together. Let us take for example the vast plains and desert regions of Niger. Although they do not resemble the often snow-covered Canadian prairies, the hardness of the soil, its dryness and the effects of wind erosion make them similar. In both cases to make them productive requires the same courage and determination and, on occasion, comparable techniques. For both our countries, economic development requires massive investments in transportation and communication links across vast empty spaces. In the last century, Canada invested enormous sums in railroads;