

## My Dear Friends,

**T**hanks to everybody's support, our Association is moving forward in an outstanding manner, while methodically laying solid foundations to instill a new impetus to its activities. We are progressively adapting to the requirements of our radically changing operating environment. In this vein, the Management Committee, which met at the Headquarters in Cotonou, from 15 to 16 June, 2009, made a bold stride forward. The meeting helped in strengthening the A.C.A.'s unity and in promoting solidarity among its members. On that occasion, some misunderstandings were cleared, while an approach was adopted with the aim of pulling all our companies together towards clear-cut vision and prospects. These vision and prospects would effectively contribute to the sustainable development of our cotton segments. The Management Committee reviewed the activities conducted since the Arusha General Assembly and outlines the working broad lines for the period remaining before the Yaoundé Yearly Days. I seize this opportunity to salute the enthusiastic spirit and method with which our friend, Mohamed IYA, has embarked upon the preparations for the first edition of this yearly event of our Association in Central Africa. A vote of thanks is also due to our former Presidents, Célestin Tiendrébéogo and Ibrahim Malloum, for their foresighted advices.

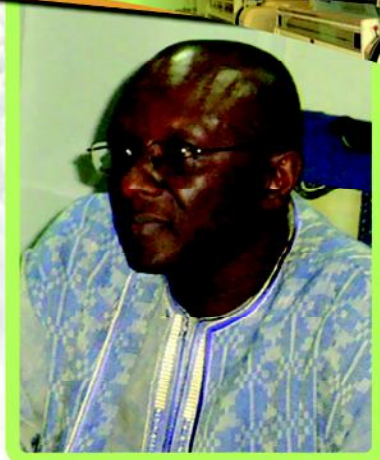
Furthermore, the Management Committee decided to:

- Set up 5 Technical Commissions (Agronomy, Ginning, Transport, Metrology-Filing, Marketing and Promotions)
- Propose to the AProCA the signing of a Strategic Partnership Agreement
- Work out the Association's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan

The partnership draft agreement with AProCA is now finalised, following a broad based consultation between members of the Management Committee. The Terms of Reference of the strategic planning exercise were exhaustively discussed, amended and adopted, while the implementation process will soon start. The Technical Commissions are being set up. About ten companies have appointed their focal points in respect of each of the commissions, thus enabling the A.C.A. to mobilise, right now, a network of over 50 experts, ready to start working. I hereby call on all the companies that are yet to send to the Permanent Secretariat the list of their respective focal points (one per Technical Commission, i.e. five per Cotton Company) to kindly do so earliest. There is no doubt that this unprecedented harnessing of skills and experiences from the four corners of the continent shall yield tremendous results. Harmonising all these talents and energies towards the same and one goal, that is the permanent efficiency of our Association, in order to promote the African cotton segments, will certainly constitute an innovation with outstanding results. This is the due time to speed up works on improving our web site, with particular regard to the opening of six private spaces for each of the five Technical Commissions and the Strategic Planning Group (Cf. *Terms of Reference for drafting the A.C.A.'s Strategic Plan*).

On the occasion of the last Management Committee, the decision taken at the Arusha and Lusaka General Assembly to strengthen our Permanent Secretariat, with the recruitment of two new qualified staff members, was finally executed, following an excellent supervision job carried out by our friends, Tiéna COULIBALY and Georges OSEIKU. The outcome of the interview held by the Management Committee with Miss Béatrice M'PO and Mr. Victorin AVIYENOU was quite impressive. I warmly welcome them and hereby encourage them to spare no effort and initiative designed to strengthen our Association. These two newly recruits shall enable us consolidate transparency and efficiency in the management

operations, on the one hand, and to ensure collection, wide and timely dissemination of information pertaining to the African cotton amongst members and to the public at large, on the other hand. In this way, the A.C.A. would gradually serve as a reference body to be reckoned with, as an information and resource centre with regard to the African cotton. Our web site shall also be modernised and serve as a data bank designed to meet the demands of the cotton world. Some of our Commercial Managers and Heads of Filing Departments availed themselves of the trade promotion tour in Thailand to consult with one another and spell out some strategy lines of thought towards promoting and protecting our cotton. The Technical Commissions' meeting will make it possible to comprehensively look into the said lines of thought and move forward to the evolvement of integrating projects.



I represented the A.C.A. at the COS Cotton Meeting, on 6 July, 2009, at the ACP House in Brussels. Upon reviewing the former « Action Plan of the EU / ACP on Cotton », the meeting adopted an « Action Framework Proposal (Revised) in respect of the EU / Africa Cotton Partnership » which has been submitted to members of COS Cotton for amendment. We shall actively participate in working out sub-regional agricultural and industrial policies in order to contribute, together with our AProCA's partners, to creating a suitable environment for the development of our cotton. The Brussels trip also made it possible to formulate a request to the COS Cotton for the funding of our Technical Commissions and strategic planning process. The said request is being considered and I am optimistic that the outcome would be satisfactory. The President of AProCA, our friend, François TRAORE, and I, seized the opportunity to hold a short working meeting to look into our common problems. We agreed on the urgent need to formalise our excellent relationships through the signing of a partnership agreement.

Our statutes restructuring drive is somewhat dragging behind schedule. The Arusha General Assembly extensively discussed about this issue and insisted that the elaboration process for the new statutes should be concluded before their adoption in Yaoundé, next March. We also noted that extensive interactions within the Association would help in reaching a consensus on the restructuring of our statutes, towards its approval in Yaoundé. The commitment of each one of us is therefore being called for, so that the numerous reminders sent out by our Vice-President, Dr. Mohamed Abdin Ali, quite busy on the subject-matter, do not prove futile. Let everyone of us send in his/her amendment proposals so that, through the strategic dynamic drive, we could provide our Association with statutes to fit its ambitious goals.

I hereby renew my wishes to all, for a successful agricultural and marketing season. May the ITC Meeting, expected to take place in Africa, for the second time in two years, (Cape Town 2009, after Ouagadougou 2008) mark the beginning of new take-off for the African cotton. We must, at all cost, ensure the sustainability and profitability of our companies within an extremely hostile environment. The courage, resourcefulness and adaptation ability of cotton farmers, professionals and officials of African cotton companies will usher in the rebirth of the African cotton. The A.C.A. is just the catalytic support base towards the qualitative and profitable processing operations ■