Statement by Ahmed Sadoudi  
Date of Meeting: November 30, 2000

**Burkina Faso CAS & Community-Based Development Project**

Thank you Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to discuss the CAS and Community-Based Rural Project for Burkina Faso.

By all accounts this is a poor country facing many challenges, but with a determination to improve the economic and social standing of its people.

My chair supports both the CAS and the Project.

Let me tackle first a number of issues raised in the CAS. Are the core benchmarks for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the CAS adequate or appropriate? My worry over these issues have been tempered by my discussions with Mr. Hassan Tuluy, the Country Director. Yet, use of words such as “swift” and “speed and level of implementation” undermines the process, we seem, then, to be concentrating on the transactions without bearing in mind the sustainability of the end product. Where a government like that of Burkina Faso has demonstrated its commitment over the period and its determination to reform, as demonstrated by the efficient outcome for example of its Telecom privatization, it should not be rushed to implement projects/programs just to meet some set deadlines.

Again absorptive capacity is one of the benchmarks to be used in assessing performance. However, at base of weak absorptive capacity is the weak institutional capacity described in such clear terms under Risks in paragraph 95. This seems like overlooking of a fundamental problem.

The Bank and the Burkinabe government both agree that rural development, particularly agricultural development, adding value to products and exports, hold the key to the country’s growth. Yet none of these factors feature as benchmarks or triggers.
This chair would therefore want to see the emphasis placed on creating the physical infrastructure, mobilizing both human and fiscal resources to achieve this rural breakthrough.

Mr. Chairman, this is not to say that we do not support the CAS and the Project. All that we wish to emphasize is that sequencing and benchmarks appear not to be clearly relevant. Indeed we give our strong support to both.

There are a number of interesting features in both papers, which we commend.

Let me begin with the decentralization effort and the commitment shown by the government.

The decentralization program is underlined by a law on local government and the government’s willingness to establish a National Forum. This would provide the vision and the needed national guidelines to ensure sustainability even in case of a change in government.

The other interesting feature is the use of NGO’s and contractual technical groups to implement parts of the program, including training. These are quite innovative and we would watch with interest.

Another feature, which we support, is the proposed technical assistance credit for private sector development. This would provide support for the remainder of privatization, but most important, promote the development of a strong indigenous private sector.

On coordination, we welcome the close coordination between the Bank, Donors and the Government. In a country like Burkina Faso where capacity is weak at every level, and existing fiscal and human resources are stretched thin, it is essential for all partners to work together, to achieve maximum efficiency.

Finally, we recommend strongly that the NGO’s that participate in the program must work within the framework of the project and guidelines set by the Government.

Thank you.