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**UIC, the Worldwide Railway Organisation, and FIATA, the International Federation of Freight Forwarders, launch the 8th edition of Market Place Seminar taking place from 14 – 15 September 2017 in Duisburg, Germany**

***Inland Hubs: Key towards Rail Freight Corridor Development***

*(Duisburg, 15 September 2017)* The 8th edition of Market Place Seminar, jointly launched by UIC, the International Union of Railways and FIATA, the International Federation of Freight Forwarders, and sponsored by FELB, is currently being held in Duisburg, Germany from 14 – 15 September.

Following previous seminars held in Prague, Barcelona, Istanbul, Hamburg, Vienna, Trieste and Antwerp, this 2017 edition is taking place under the heading *Inland Hubs: Key towards Rail Freight Corridor Development*, with a special focus on the development of transcontinental corridors.

Attended by around 80 participants, this two-day seminar is the opportunity for actors such as railway undertakings, freight forwarders, logistics companies and corridor development organisations to debate the key issues including the new Silk Route, rail freight growth on corridors, solutions to bottlenecks, as well as overcoming challenges in the logistics chain. Highlights of this year's edition include a technical visit to the Port of Duisburg.

The conference started on 14 September with a welcome to all participants by **Sandra Géhénot, UIC Freight Director**, on behalf of **Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General**, followed by **Ivan Petrov, Senior Vice-President of FIATA**, and **Kai Homann, Head of Tourism for Duisburg**.

Jean-Pierre Loubinoux wanted to highlight that: *“When the mobility of goods and people is tackled in an increasingly wholistic way, it is very natural for operators to work collaboratively, to improve the chain of logistics. This approach clearly meets UIC’s philosophy in all its actions: share, open and connect. The agenda of this new market place is co-organised with FIATA in order to better understand and work together for the satisfaction of our customers.”*

In her introductory message, Sandra Géhénot said: *“Corridors are a tool to achieve better market-oriented rail products. This is true both at European level with the implementation of rail freight*

*corridors (the RFCs) as well as for transcontinental corridors. Corridor development is about setting the stage for future mobility needs. It is also about understanding what the customer wants and in that context, highlighting the role of railways as part of this mobility challenge.*

*Duisburg very much symbolises the first port of call for Eurasian traffic into Europe.*

*When Eurasian traffic is evoked, silk roads immediately come to mind. But they are not just something from the past or a buzz word. The ancient and historic trade route between China and Europe is coming back to life as one of the biggest infrastructure projects of the 21st century with many implications for economies around the world.*

*She went on to say: “Corridors are a global topic in a worldwide economy. For this reason, UIC has made corridor development one of its priorities.”*

*According to Ivan Petrov: “Over recent years, rail traffic between China and Europe has become more popular. Rail transport is an excellent alternative to maritime transport, especially from Chinese hinterland loading points. However, a crucial factor for a major shift to rail of the predominantly maritime freight traffic is the existence of modern, interoperable and ideally also intermodal inland hubs like Duisburg here with one of Europe’s most important inland waterway ports.”*

This year’s seminar is organised around four thematic sessions:

- Transcontinental corridors: myth or reality for business development
- Connecting land-locked regions
- Accessibility of freight corridors
- Paperless, online and real-time

Over the first day, participants discussed the status of corridor development both in Europe and for Eurasian links. The vivid discussions provided qualitative insight regarding the development of rail versus maritime and the “Belt and Road” initiative, which aims to facilitate connectivity and enhance economic cooperation. The need for an efficient network, with connected multimodal hubs was also very much highlighted with concrete best practice examples both in Europe and Asia).

The UIC-FIATA Market Place Seminars offer a lively exchange platform for all sector specialists to debate transport solutions and business opportunities.

UIC currently works with all stakeholders to foster partnerships between all these actors involved in intermodal transport to ensure that international multimodal corridors become a reality.

The next major event for rail freight will be the Global Rail Freight Conference (GRFC) to be held from 20 – 22 June 2018 in Genoa, Italy.

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