



**The 12<sup>th</sup> UIC Regional Assembly for the Middle East was held in Jordan, at the Dead Sea.**

***Adoption of a Strategic Action Plan 2013-2020 for Middle East Railways – plans made for the International UIC RAME Seminar on Railway Interoperability in Qatar and the International Business Forum on Financing in Istanbul in 2014 – Saudi Railway Organization (SRO) President elected as new UIC RAME Vice Chairman – Afghanistan Railways to join UIC and UIC Middle East***

(Paris, 12 November 2013) The 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UIC Regional Assembly for the Middle East (RAME) was held on 10/11 November 2013 at the Dead Sea in Jordan, at the kind invitation of Eng. Hussein Krishan, Director-General of Aqaba Railway Corporation (ARC) and Mr Salah Al Louzi, Director-General of Jordan Hejaz Railway (JHR).

The Directors-General Meeting of 11 November was chaired by RAME Chairman Süleyman Karaman, Director-General of TCDD together with Eng. Hussein Krishan, UIC RAME Vice Chairman and Mr. Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, Director General of UIC. Member railways from the following countries took part in the meeting: Iran (RAI), Iraq (IRR), Jordan (ARC, JHR), Saudi Arabia (SRO), and Turkey (TCDD). Afghanistan Railways, candidates for UIC membership, were invited. Also attending were Mr Abbas Nazari, Director of the UIC Middle East Regional Office based in Tehran, and Mr Paul Véron, Director, UIC Coordinator for the Middle East.

The 12<sup>th</sup> UIC RAME Meeting was opened by H.E. Dr. Lina Shabeeb, Minister of Transport of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Dr. Shabeeb declared *“he highly appreciated the role of UIC and in particular the activities of the UIC Middle East Region as they were summarized in the “Amman Declaration” of November 2012. Railways can take much benefit from the exchange of information and know-how, from the work on interoperability and creating common standards, in particular in the field of safety management, and in organizing training programs to enable staff members to become increasingly qualified. UIC’s important role is to advise members from the region on technical issues”*.

At the opening, UIC Middle East Chairman Süleyman Karaman underlined the number and importance of railway projects in the region, with the recent inauguration of the Marmaray Project in Turkey linking Europe to Asia in Istanbul, and the further development of high-speed and conventional rail in Turkey. Members from Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia as well as Afghanistan, successively presented their projects and railway development plans, illustrating the dynamism of rail transport in the region.

In his opening address, UIC Director General Jean-Pierre Loubinoux stressed that *“a series of important meetings of the UIC Regional Assembly had been held in Jordan: RAME Meetings in 2008 in Amman, 2011 in Aqaba, the High-level Conference “Rail Vision and Perspectives for the Middle East” in November 2012 in Amman, which ended with the unanimous approval of the “Amman Declaration”, a road map for joint cooperation activities between railways at regional level in the months and years to come. The 12<sup>th</sup> RAME Meeting at the Dead Sea will mark a new milestone with the publication for the first time of a strategic document, the “Strategic Action Plan 2013-2020” which will help to define a shared Vision and provide a coherent picture of railway developments in the region. This strategic document, as it already exists in UIC for Europe and Asia and soon will for Latin America, will constitute a reference point and provide support, through which all members can communicate their vision – highlighting the added value of rail - to their stakeholders and authorities...”*

The UIC Regional Office Director Mr Abbas Nazari informed the Directors-General of the progress of the cooperation with international organizations (e.g. with ECO for the follow-up on a memorandum of understanding) and financial institutions such as the Islamic Development Bank.

#### **The UIC Middle East Action Plan for 2014**

The UIC RAME Action Plan for 2014-2015 includes a number of international events on strategic, technical and operational issues. Let us mention in particular:

- the *1<sup>st</sup> UIC RAME International Seminar on Railway Interoperability*, to be held at the invitation of Qatar Railway Corporation, QRC, Qatar, which will address all aspects of technical, operational, legal, commercial and human interoperability,
- the *11<sup>th</sup> UIC ERTMS World conference* to be held in Istanbul on 1-4 April 2014 on the essential issues of rail traffic management, control-command, signalling and radio communications,
- the *1<sup>st</sup> UIC RAME International Business Forum* (dedicated in particular to financing and investments) with the participation of decision makers, international institutions and banks, business partners, etc.

Another focus of regional cooperation within UIC Middle-East, is training. A recent training program at the Middle-East Rail Training Center (MERTCe), in Eskisehir (Turkey), focused on rail safety management and the development of a rail safety database. The next information and training session scheduled for January 2014 will focus on safety and security.

## **Governance of the Middle East Regional Assembly: SRO President is new UIC RAME Vice Chairman**

RAME Members unanimously confirmed the governance of the UIC Regional Assembly for the Middle East for the period ending in December 2014. Considering their high personal commitment to the promotion and development of RAME activities, Mr Süleyman Karaman, Director-General of TCDD, was confirmed as RAME Chairman until the end of 2014. Mr Mohsen Pour Seyed Aghaie, the new President of Iranian Railways (RAI), and Eng. Hussein Krishan, Director-General of Aqaba Railway (ARC) were confirmed as UIC RAME Vice Chairmen.

Mr Mohammad Khalid Al Suwaiket, President of Saudi Railways Organization (SRO), who expressed his great interest in being closely involved in UIC RAME activities, was elected as a new Vice Chairman of UIC Middle East.

For the first time, Afghanistan Railways who have applied for UIC and UIC RAME membership, took part, as guests, in the 12<sup>th</sup> RAME Meeting at the Dead Sea. After ratification, the UIC Middle East Assembly will consist of 14 members.

Finally, at the invitation of Mr. Süleyman Karaman, the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UIC Regional Assembly Middle East was scheduled to take place in spring 2014 in Istanbul.

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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