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Successful 1st edition of the Conference on Railway Standardisation in Paris

From Technical Leaflets to International Railway Standards – an historical opportunity for Railway Harmonisation

(Paris, 10 June 2014) On 10 June 2014, the first edition of the Conference on Railway Standardisation, organised by the International Union of Railways (UIC), was held in Paris, grouping together all major stakeholders involved in this important issue for the railway system. Among them, international organisations, professional associations, representatives of the industry, manufacturers and legal representatives of legal frameworks and other actors of the Railway Community, discussed the status of the practical situation of the most important phases of railway regulations.

This conference also mainly stood for a moment of reflection about the future and a strategic collective enrichment of the concept of Standardisation, whose aim is to collect experience, results, make technological choices, structure and assemble them in a coherent and efficient manner, to define and ensure minimum levels of interoperability, safety and to facilitate daily operations and service.

Standardisation at UIC was re-launched following the Beijing General Assembly in December 2010 and has passed some relevant milestones: the creation of the Standardisation Platform, the introduction of International Railway Standards, the identification of the Clusters to reconstruct the economic and technical link between standards and real service implementation.

During the Opening Session, keynotes speeches were made and reported by Vladimir Yakunin, President of Russian Railways, UIC Chairman, Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General, Alberto Mazzola, Senior Vice President International Affairs, Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane representing the UIC Vice Chairman and by Libor Lochman, Executive Director of the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies.

UIC Chairman Mr Vladimir Yakunin underlined, through a written declaration, that *“the landmark decision taken by the UIC General Assembly at the session in July 2012 on the establishment of the Standardisation Platform initiated the process of integrating the standards for 1520 mm and 1435 mm gauges. [...] Today there is a need to conduct the transport business according to international standards, thereby ensuring effective, high-quality transport services and a highly organised managerial structure”*. He added: *“In addition, if we resolve the issues related to standardisation, we will preserve the operational compatibility and integrity of the railway system”*.

Mr Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General, mentioned: *“There is constructive cooperation between UIC, manufacturers and European stakeholders for the worldwide promotion and implementation of these “standards”. Synergies with the supply industry and EU in the framework of “Shift2Rail” should also have important consequences in terms of improving harmonisation and interoperability.”*

He added: “New projects of intercontinental, long distance rail corridors, such as future corridors linking Europe to Asia, also strongly advocate for more standardisation (including harmonisation between different gauges of 1435 and 1520 mm). The need for strong harmonisation and standardisation relates to technical and operational aspects as well as to legal, administrative and human resources aspects. [...] While the ultimate goals to reach in rail transport are shared, the ways and strategies to reach these goals may be quite different (because of the high-level performances required, because of the need to safeguard the amortisation of investments made, because it is not possible to create service disruptions, etc)”.

Mr Alberto Mazzola, Senior Vice President International Affairs, Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane representing the UIC Vice Chairman, said: “In former times the structure of the Railway Operating Companies, at least in Europe, was monolithic, the links to the governments of the different countries were tighter and the market was less influenced by globalisation. This situation was also mirrored in railway standardisation, where the regulatory framework in most cases was relevant to Infrastructure Managers and to Railway Undertakings, the osmosis of technical solutions and technologies with other sectors was not particularly diffused and the design capacity of the railways was very high. Now the context has changed because the organisation of modern societies has separated the regulatory aspects and the industrial specification, while leaving a grey area in the system integration and in the operational procedures that indeed constitute the interface to the production of the railway service”. He added “the introduction of the International Railway Standards meets these needs as well as the search of coordination with the other international standardisation organisations and we expect that UIC will continue in this vein and will offer its asset of knowledge as a common high return investment.”

Mr Libor Lochman, Executive Director of the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies, declared: “The standardisation of spare parts is still a crucial issue and we have to be aware that suppliers do not generally support it and are lobbying against this standardisation activity. If partners to define functional requirements for spare parts cannot be found, I do encourage the UIC members to follow a purely RU and IM approach without the competitive domain being touched. UIC can be an excellent platform for gathering the needs and requirements and summarise them formally. The specifications are to be based on the operational experience and existing requirements. [...] For closing open points in the TSI, CER calls its partner association UIC to support the work by adding the closure of open points to the annual and multi-annual work programme of the UIC Standardisation Platform and/ or Rail System Platform. Defining the closure of open point must be driven by the interest of railway undertakings and infrastructure managers, not by regulators, not only by suppliers. Any lack of standardisation causes unnecessary costs which ultimately have to be passed on to our customers. Standardisation is not a step backwards but a leap forward into a competitive European railway market. The standardisation will increase the interoperability, cost effectiveness and efficiency of European railway operations.”

A first session, which was dedicated to “the global cooperation oriented to concrete and tangible results”, gave the floor to Mr Hiroshi Tanaka, Director of the Railway International Standards Centre – Railway Technical Research Institute, Member of the International Electrotechnical Committee (IEC) and of the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO), Mr Philippe Citroën, Director General of the Association of the European Rail Industry (UNIFE) and Mr Gianfranco Cau, Secretary of the UIC Standardisation Platform.

A second session was dedicated to the legal implications, particularly with regard to interoperability and safety, through a presentation made by Mr François Davenne, Secretary General of the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) and a presentation made by Mr Andreas Schirmer from the European Railway Agency (ERA).

The combination between investments and technical platform was discussed during a third session, bringing together Mr Henry Marty-Gauquié, Director, European Investment Bank (EIB), Mr Jean-Pierre Audoux, General Manager of the French Federation of Railway Industries (FIF), Mr Marco Caposciutti, Technical Director, Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane / Trenitalia and Mr Jean-Marie Bodson, Technical Director of ALSTOM Transport.

Mr Baoshi Huo, Director, Department of Science and Technology, China Railway Corporation, Mr Sergey Gerasimenko Deputy Head of the Division of the Technical Policy Department JSC "Russian Railways" (RZD) and Mr Marc Antoni, from French Railways (SNCF) discussed in a final session dedicated to successes at worldwide level, giving the audience the opportunity to learn about the experiences of the Railway Operating Community.

To conclude this conference, Mr Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General, said: *"All major stakeholders, international organisations and professional associations are definitively committed to promoting railway standardisation. A strong willingness was expressed today to combine forces (OTIF, ERA, UNIFE, EIB, ...) to progress towards these goals and bring benefits for markets and societies. Standardisation doesn't happen for standardisation's sake but for the benefit of customers (clients, citizens, transport companies, ..) for a safe, sustainable transport, characterised by a high level of security and energy efficiency."* He was pleased to hear that International Standards Bodies (ISO, IEC...) are willing to involve railway operators in their work. In that respect, *"UIC can act as a catalyst for the definition of customer needs and railway operator expectations"*.

To continue this need to develop these close cooperation links between major actors of Standardisation, Mr Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General and Mr Frans Vreeswijk, Secretary General of the International Electrotechnical Committee (IEC), will sign a Cooperation Agreement on 12 June 2014 in Geneva, establishing the role of UIC and IEC and specifying the principle of complementarity, in order to cover all the aspects of the railway system which are currently being standardised.

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