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The worldwide railway association UIC held its 85th General Assembly in Paris

UIC Governance: Renewed mandates of Chairman Vladimir Yakunin, Vice Chairman Michele Elia and Director General Jean-Pierre Loubinoux for another term.

José Viegas, Secretary General of the International Transport Forum (ITF, OECD), addressed in a keynote speech the main challenges and responses for the transport system and railways.

UIC action will focus in 2015 on cooperation with leading international organisations, sustainable transport and the COP 21 “Train to Paris” world campaign, standardisation, international corridors, education.

The six UIC Regions present significant progress in the implementation of their action plans.

(Paris, 4 December 2014). The International Union of Railways UIC – the worldwide professional railway association – held its statutory meetings, Executive Board and 85th General Assembly, on 3 December in Paris. The Executive Board and General Assembly meeting were chaired by UIC Chairman Vladimir Yakunin, President of JSC Russian Railways together with Mr. Michele Elia, CEO of Italian Railways (FS Italiane), UIC Vice Chairman, and UIC Director General Jean-Pierre Loubinoux.

Keynote speech by the Secretary General of the International Transport Forum (ITF)

At the opening of the General Assembly, **José Viegas**, Secretary General of the International Transport Forum ITF (OECD) was invited to hold a keynote speech on “Key challenges and responses in the transport system”. ITF, with which UIC develops a particularly close and fruitful cooperation, is an intergovernmental organisation with 54 members across the world. It organises meetings and activities of the ITF Council of Transport Ministers as well as the Annual ITF Summit in Leipzig, Germany, acting also as a think tank on economic and transport issues.

In his speech, José Viegas presented how the current and future evolutions, in terms of demographics, climate change and globalisation, will influence the future of transport systems across the world. Key enablers will include connectivity, autonomous vehicles (across all modes), sharing vehicles, cleaner vehicles. Some important trends for the future are: focus on access rather than mobility, necessary coordination with land-use (in particular in urban areas), mobility as a service, release of “blocked” capital through ride-sharing (cars in particular). As far as railways are concerned, José Viegas said *“in spite of interesting progress and some commercial successes, by not being radical enough in the pursuit of new concepts and opportunities over the last 20 years, rail has lost a good part of its previous advantages in emissions, safety, efficiency”....and “Sustainable development requires reinvigorating the railways, in parallel with the evolution experienced by the road” and he concluded “Radical innovation in service patterns and production models is urgently needed to realise railway’s potential for sustainable development and ITF is available and willing to participate in this endeavour”.*

Opening addresses by UIC Chairman Vladimir Yakunin and Vice Chairman Michele Elia

In his introductory address, UIC Chairman **Vladimir Yakunin** first reminded the audience of global trends influencing the development of rail transport, and mentioned in particular the Post-2015 Development Agenda within the UN framework. He also informed the assembly about two mega-projects with high significance for the rail sector, the trans-Eurasian corridor (“Razvitie”) project and the creation of the Silk Road Foundation announced by the President of China at the APEC Summit in November. He said: *“these projects open up extensive opportunities for UIC and for its members in terms of creating a new framework of transport links between China and Europe and the Middle East, on the basis of the legal harmonisation carried out with UIC involvement”*. He also mentioned the UN Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, a key element being transport and transit transportation, as well as the Global Partnership for Sustainable Transport. He stressed: *“I believe that UIC should take the lead in this project in order to promote rail transport as the most efficient and ecologically sustainable mode of transport, especially in terms of transportation prospects in developing states. Moreover, thanks to the decision by UN Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon, UIC has been involved in the work of the High-Level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport”*.

Mr Vladimir Yakunin also highlighted the importance for UIC to focus on regulatory harmonisation in all cooperation all competent international organisations, UN and UN bodies (UNECE, UNESCAP) as well as OTIF, OSJD, CIT... For the UIC Chairman another key area is standardisation. He added *“the main outcome of the unified standards creation will be the facilitation of the border crossing procedures, introduction of advanced technologies and equipment and, as a result, the extension of market access, increase of the efficiency and competitiveness of rail transport, and both international passenger and freight traffic volume growth”*.

In conclusion UIC Chairman underlined that *“a significant amount of work has been achieved in all priority areas of UIC, as the result of the observance of the founding principles of UIC: Unity, Solidarity and Universality”*.

Mr Michele Elia, who attended the UIC General Assembly for the first time in his position as UIC Vice Chairman, thanked the members for his designation and paid tribute to his predecessor Mr Mauro Moretti who was committed for many years to UIC’s international cooperation activities, lastly as UIC Vice Chairman and Chairman of UIC Europe.

The UIC Vice Chairman focused his opening address on the importance of UIC to be recognised for its technical expertise in connection with standardisation and research and development issues, in particular in view of European projects.

Horizon 2020 and Shift2Rail – where individual members are also individually involved – represent important opportunities for UIC that can offer the support of the UIC procedures, its forums and platforms, legal framework.

Whenever technical projects are aiming to improve standardisation or interoperability, UIC should be involved or considered for support. Therefore in the European context it is proposed that UIC examines together with European railway associations how better use could be made of the UIC technical expertise in the railway field with various stakeholders.

Director General's report on UIC activities and achievements in 2014

In this report UIC Director General **Jean-Pierre Loubinoux** highlighted that 2014 was another busy year with many projects that have been achieved, others under preparation or underway, with a remarkable trend to improve their management, both at global and regional levels.

With regard to coordination or management by UIC of technical projects in Europe, it is worth mentioning that since 2008, 200 projects have been undertaken, including terminated and on-going projects. Of those 200 projects, UIC is positioning itself vis-à-vis the European Commission as a coordinator for projects (12 projects have been coordinated for five years, worth 22 times the value invested by the members), or as a partner for technical tasks and dissemination (for 42 projects representing 90 times the small amount invested by our European members).

In 2014 key changes occurred in the European Union funding process for rail topics. In particular the first call for "Horizon 2020", funding in 2014 enabled UIC to be involved in eight applications representing a total investment of 41 million euros, with low financial input from members.

Important changes and perspectives are connected to the EU promoted "Shift2Rail" project in the field of railway research and innovation where UIC will endorse a series of responsibilities on behalf its members. In the technical and research field, UIC is increasingly engaged in projects aiming to improve interoperability, interfaces, accessibility.

Another range of new technical projects are related to the regional or multiregional dimension (e.g. on security, safety, high speed, training programmes, etc.).

Concerning UIC's global activities, UIC Director **Jean-Pierre Loubinoux** informed the General Assembly that 40 global events, congresses, conferences, seminars, workshops, were organised in 2014 by UIC or in partnership with UIC, in 30 countries from all five continents, bringing together over 5,000 people from around the globe and covering all areas of railway operations or management. These conferences and events represent a total of 30,000 man-days of creativity, networking, benchmarking...

Focus on Standardisation, Sustainable Transport, Education

Among global activities achieved in 2014, UIC Director General **Jean-Pierre Loubinoux** emphasised the progress in the essential issue of standardisation under the coordination of the UIC Standardisation Platform.

Activities in this field include three levels of cooperation: developing International Railway Standards (IRS) for worldwide application on the basis of updated "UIC Leaflets", developing standardisation Clusters (e.g. Clusters for High Speed Rail System and for Europe-Asia Freight Corridors) and updating of the "UIC Leaflets". Positive results were reached with the signature of an agreement with IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission), technical cooperation was improved with OSJD and UIC will be cooperating closer with ISO (International Standardisation Organisation).

The recent period was marked by the conclusion of several MoUs and agreements. UIC Director General underlined that long-term progress has been made in the recognition and credibility of UIC in the field of environment and sustainable transport, in particular in the framework of United Nations and their specialist institutions. The UIC action has been led in two ways: by asking to improve UIC's consultative status to the UN and UN ECOSOC, and by working with all UN partners and bodies. This made it possible to organise the widely promoted UIC Low Carbon Rail Transport Challenge as a side event at the last UN Climate

Change Summit in New York. Jean-Pierre Loubinoux added: *“Being personally appointed as a Member of the High-level Advisory Group to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Sustainable Transport gave UIC a new, unique and important role in this domain in representing the world wide railway community. This positions the railways as a key player and creates a link with the international railway campaign (“Train to Paris”) that UIC is coordinating with its members in preparation for the UN Climate Change conference COP21 due to take place in Paris in December 2015”.*

Another key project at global level in the educational field is the launch of the first ever Executive MBA on Rail and Intermodal, a project fully supported by this assembly. The UIC Director General announced that 200 applications for candidates had already been received from all the regions, and after a strict selection process, 17 candidates will form the first intake of this Executive MBA.

Key actions for UIC in 2015 will focus on the development or launch of new projects (with the stabilisation of member fees), the development of cooperation projects at regional and multi-regional level, and giving new momentum to global activities (with the international “Train to Paris” campaign for COP 21 in December as a the climax of the year’s events).

UIC Research and Innovation Awards 2014

In the framework of the 85th UIC General Assembly, the 2nd UIC Research and Innovation Awards were presented in the presence of Mr Boris Lapidus, Chairman of the UIC International Railway Research Board IRRB. Winners received their prizes within the six categories Safety and Security (including signalling issues), Sustainable Development (including energy, noise, vibration, emission issues), Rail System (rolling stock, infrastructure and interaction), Rail Freight Customer Services (including new business models) and Cost Reduction (increasing competitiveness) as well as two “honorary categories” of the Young Researchers Award and Lifetime Achievement Award (honouring those who have dedicated their career to railway system innovation) and two special prizes.

Reports on activities of the UIC Regions

Members of the UIC General Assembly were informed of the progress in the implementation of the action plans of the six UIC Regional Assemblies. These reports highlighted the rapidly increasing number of projects and cooperation activities in all UIC regions, in application of their respective “Visions” (Strategic visions and action plans were coordinated by UIC and finalised one year ago).

Reports on regional achievements were presented by Mr Mohammed Rabie Khlie, Director General of Moroccan Railways (ONCF) for Africa, Mr Satoshi Seino, Chairman of East Japan Railway Company (EJRC) for Asia-Pacific, Michele Elia, CEO of Italian State Railways (FS Italiane), for Europe, and Mr Mohammed Khalid Al Suwaiket, President of Saudi Railway Organisation (SRO) for the Middle-East.

Financial issues, appointment

Concerning UIC Finances, General Assembly members took note of the expected results of 2014 and unanimously approved the overall budget for 2015. The Chairman congratulated UIC’s financial teams for the transparency and quality of the management of the financial issues.

The General Assembly also approved nominations at the head of UIC's cooperation bodies: Mr Luc Lallemand, CEO of Infrabel, Belgium, as the new Chairman of the UIC Rail System Platform, Mr Peter Kleinschuster, ÖBB, renewed in his mandate as Chairman of the Safety Platform, Mr Stefano Guidi, renewed as Chairman of the Standardisation Platform, Mr Rütger Fenkes, DB, as Chairman of the Commercial and Distribution Forum, Mr Krishan Chaudary, (Rail Protection Force of Indian Railways) as Chairman of the Security Platform. It also approved the composition of the UIC Budget and Audit Committee for 2015-2016.

UIC Governance: the mandates of Vladimir Yakunin, Michele Elia and Jean-Pierre Loubinoux were unanimously renewed

At the end of the 85th General Assembly, the UIC Chairman introduced the discussion on the governance of UIC for the 2015 – 2016 term.

Following the proposal of the UIC Executive Board, which was strongly supported by all UIC Regions, President Vladimir Yakunin from Russian Railways was unanimously re-elected as the Chairman of the worldwide railway association. The Assembly unanimously renewed the mandate of Mr Michele Elia, as UIC Vice Chairman.

With regard to the quality of the work achieved and the sustainable progress in the development and management of the global railway association, the mandate of Mr Jean-Pierre Loubinoux was renewed until the end of 2017.

In his conclusions, after thanking the General Assembly for the trust and confidence, Chairman Vladimir Yakunin said *"I shall continue to make every effort to implement the priorities of UIC's work, giving the highest attention to promoting UIC on the international stage as a competent, professional and representative organisation which brings together the interests of the majority of the world's railway companies, and increasing our contribution to the effective development of the business of all UIC member companies and developing regional railway systems"*.

The 86th General Assembly of UIC will be held in July 2015 Tokyo at the kind invitation of the Chairman of East Japan Railway Company Mr Satoshi Seino, in connection with the 9th World Congress on High Speed Rail, UIC HIGH SPEED 2015, to be held from 7 – 10 July 2015 in Japan.

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