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UIC Executive Board and 86th General Assembly held in Tokyo in connection with the 9th UIC HIGHSPEED World Congress

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon addressed UIC General Assembly Members with an important message on the vital role of railways to build a low carbon future

Main focuses of General Assembly were: UIC positioning vis-à-vis United Nations and sustainable development commitments in view of COP21, progress on global railway standardisation, creation of platforms on heavy haul and on digitalisation

(Tokyo/Paris, 7 July 2015) UIC, the worldwide railway association with 240 members across the globe, held its Executive Board and 86th General Assembly on 6 July in Tokyo at the kind invitation of JR East, East Japan Railway Company, in connection with the 9th UIC HIGHSPEED World Congress. Both meetings were chaired by Mr Vladimir YAKUNIN, President of Russian Railways, UIC Chairman, vice-chaired by Mr Michele ELIA, CEO of Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane FSI, UIC Vice-Chairman, together with Mr Jean-Pierre LOUBINOUX, Director General of UIC.

As the host of the UIC meetings and World High Speed Congress, Mr Satoshi SEINO, Chairman of East Japan Railway Company (EJRC) and Chairman of the UIC Asia-Pacific Region (APRA), warmly welcomed all participants to Japan and highlighted the importance and vitality of railways in Japan and their contribution to the economy and social life of the country.

Address of United Nations Secretary General to UIC General Assembly

The 86th UIC General Assembly started with an address from UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, who addressed the railway community with the following words: *“Your industry can contribute on these interlinked fronts by helping to make transport systems cleaner, safer and more sustainable”*. And furthermore: *“I applaud the contribution of your Members during the Climate Summit I convened at the United Nations last year. The UIC’s Summit pledge provided a clear and bold vision of actions needed to combat climate change, including your pledge to cut by half energy consumption and carbon emissions by 2030, and to increase by 50% rail’s share of passenger transportation by the same target year. Your path-breaking leadership is vital for building a low carbon future”*. [...] And finally: *“I challenge all railways, especially the major ones to commit to reporting your progress in an open transparent manner. The UIC’s systems are ideally placed to take this step toward creating a better future”*.

UIC’s global positioning reinforced

After thanking Mr Satoshi SEINO and East Japan Railway for their hospitality and excellent organisation of UIC events in Japan, Chairman Vladimir YAKUNIN reported in his introduction on the main achievements and challenges for UIC in the current period. He first mentioned the growing positioning of UIC vis-à-vis United Nations and various bodies.

An important development is the role ensured through the presence of the UIC General Director at the High Level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport to the Secretary General to represent the voice of the railways.

Recently UIC also gained the recognition of a higher consultative status allowing a closer cooperation with UN institutions in particular ECOSOC. UIC Chairman welcomed the achievements of UIC Headquarters in coordinating the preparation of a global campaign “Train to Paris” in view of the United Nations COP21 Climate Change Conference to be held in December in France.

Further important achievements were related to the work on International Transport Corridors for which the concept was developed under the umbrella of the Global Team of Experts in cooperation with all competent international organisations and institutions such as UNECE, UNESCAP, OSJD, OTIF, CCTT.

An important Conference on Human Factors on fighting Terrorism including cyber-criminality was successfully organised by UIC and RZD and formed a good example for effective international cooperation.

He mentioned as further priorities for UIC in the period to come the work on the Long and Heavy Trains and proposed to the Assembly the creation of a cross-sector Platform for Heavy Haul Traffic gathering operators, partners, infrastructure managers, rolling stock suppliers and owners, in liaison with the Heavy Haul Association.

Furthermore UIC has to be a focal point for issues of the transport of dangerous good in liaison with all relevant organisations.

Michele ELIA, UIC Vice Chairman, CEO of FSI, thanked UIC Headquarters for its efforts to cope with the challenges of international cooperation and interoperability with the objective of increasing modal share, facilitating cross border operations and increasing competitiveness of passenger and freight transport. In addition of Technical Specifications for Interoperability in Europe, International Railway Standards developed within UIC have to gain recognition by enhancing the quality of the outcome and attracting more experts to UIC Groups.

UIC's Director General Report

In his report, UIC Director General Jean-Pierre LOUBINOX developed more in depth the perspectives opened by closer cooperation with UN bodies in the framework of the High Level Advisory Group to the Secretary General on Sustainable transport as well as the cooperation with ECOSOC and bodies dedicated to sustainable development such as UNEP and UNFCCC.

Jean-Pierre LOUBINOX reminded the assembly that the “Train to Paris” global campaign closely coordinated with United Nations, NGOs and UIC Members would represent a climax in the promotion of rail transport as a clean and sustainable mode. In this perspective, UIC Director General invited all Railway Presidents and CEOs to actively participate in the “Train to Paris” event that will include the welcome in Paris of a dozen of international trains bringing international guests and an International Round Table at UIC associating prominent speakers from the political and transport world. This synchronised event will take place on 28 November 2015 prior to the COP21 Conference.

UIC Director General reviewed all the progress achieved at UIC to improve efficiency and productivity. Special efforts were dedicated to IT systems with the objective to meet the new challenges of the digitalised world, for example school labs, crowd funding, hackathon, ... A main proposal on this respect was the creation of a new transversal platform dedicated to digitalisation, working as a think tank to anticipate future evolutions in collaboration with all railway fields, railway operation, security, infrastructure management, etc. Members unanimously agreed on the creation of this new platform.

In the technical field, the UIC Director General mentioned the progress on the development of International Railway Standards (IRS) based on updating and further developments of UIC leaflets. Five IRS were approved, 10 are in an advanced stage of development and 10 envisaged to start soon.

As another symbol of the efforts for quality and effectiveness is the progress of Quality Management System (QMS) which is rapidly progressing in close cooperation with Member representatives.

Technical issues

Marc ANTONI, Director of UIC Rail System Department, gave more insight on the standardisation activities developed under the umbrella of the Standardisation Platform. The work focused on developing new IRS and specialised clusters (for example High Speed). It is worth mentioning the agreement signed between UIC and IEC in June 2014 in Geneva and strengthening cooperation with ISO.

A joint working group comprising UIC and OSJD will be in charge of preparing common standards for the 1520 mm gauge.

In the field of railway research, Boris LAPIDUS, Chairman of the International Railway Research Board (IRRB) presented the 2nd IRRB Strategy document (2014-2016) and action plan with a focus on the Global Vision for Railway Developments aiming to present what railways look like in the future and which was approved by the General Assembly.

Jerzy WISNIEWSKI, Director of the UIC Fundamental Values Department, reported to the General Assembly on the issue of the Global Executive Rail MBA for which an appeal is launched to Members, in order to increasingly involve high potential staff in this educational programme.

He also reported more in depth on environmental and sustainability issues. The General Assembly approved the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with UNEP and UNFCCC to support the COP21 Campaign. Members were also invited to sign the Railway Climate Responsibility Pledge which is an updated commitment of the rail sector.

Finance, Appointments, Membership

Thierry BERA, UIC Finance Director, reported on UIC financial issues, including the approval of the accounts 2014, information on the current budgetary situation and preliminary elements for the 2016 budget. The accounts were unanimously approved. It is worth mentioning that the General Assembly also approved the creation of an Innovation and Development Fund to provide initial funding for answering tenders.

Mr Reinhard BAMBERGER, from Railway Cargo Austria (RCA) was appointed Chairman of UIC Freight Forum, succeeding Ferdinand SCHMIDT (ÖBB) who resigned.

Mr Rajiva Ranjan VERMA, new Director General of the Rail Protection Force of Indian Railways, was appointed to continue the mandate of his predecessor from Indian Railways as Chairman of the UIC Security Platform.

UIC General Assembly welcomed new Members to the International Railway Association:

For Asia-Pacific:

- ETRI Rail Research Institute, Korea
- Ministry of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia, Rail Authority
- MIIT, Moscow State University of Railway Engineering, Russian Federation
- TINSW, Transport for new South East Australia

For Europe:
-UBIMET, Research Centre from Austria

For Middle-East:
-Oman Rail.

The 87th UIC General Assembly will be held on 1 December 2015 in Paris, during the COP21 UN Conference.

CONTACTS

Paul Véron, Director of Communications at UIC: veron@uic.org

Marie Plaud, Deputy Director of Communications at UIC: plaud@uic.org