



Speech given by Jean-Pierre Loubinoux

UIC Director General

At the Automobile Club de France

During the UIC 90th anniversary ceremony

Paris, 11 December 2012

The spoken word alone prevails

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and dear friends,

Everyone must be by now very impatient to enjoy the reception and networking so I promise to be as short as possible. Four years ago we were in this same super venue of France's Automobile Club.

As a challenge for our association to face after a period of troubled times. Four years during which we have worked a lot. Of course I won't go into every detail of what we have done but just allow me to quote a few figures to illustrate our activity, and I really mean our activity, as everything that has been done has been done for you and with you, our members and partners. During these past four years, 17 new leaflets have been produced, 270 projects have been studied representing a budget of around 60 million euros. 23 of these projects have been funded by the European Commission, which means an added value of four times your direct investment. During these past four years 30 memoranda of understanding have been signed with economic, financial, academic, political and technical institutions at world level representing more than 100 dedicated workshops with UIC. 200 congresses, forums, workshops, training sessions and platforms have been organised bringing together more than 50,000 people in 25 countries. 3000 articles have been published in 200 UIC eNews letters read weekly by more than 4000 subscribers. In these past four years more than 90 applications to join UIC have been received. The clearance of unpaid fees has been reduced by two.

And the fees of the members have been reduced by 1.5 million euros whereas at the same time the funds of our association have been restored from zero in 2009 to approximately one million today which is the acceptable level for development. Of course I do not just want to thank you, our members and partners, but also all those among the UIC staff who have accompanied me in these efforts of reconstruction and development with their work and intelligence, with their motivation and sincerity.

And a special word and token of appreciation for Marie-Eve Lim and Jean-Pierre Lehman, who after many years of dedication to UIC are going to retire in a few days. But more importantly, beyond the work we have also developed and introduced values, as a symbol for our association we have unity, universality and solidarity, and as guidelines for our daily efforts we have transparency, efficiency and visibility. This work and these sets of values have restored members' confidence in UIC, and friendship between members within UIC, which has as a consequence enabled UIC's credibility to grow worldwide, but which is also as a consequence creating today more and new expectations for UIC as a technical platform, for projects, research and standardisation and I can see five of them: more information on our actions, more cooperation with other institutions and associations, more innovation through in particular the UIC awards that we've just launched, more training for the younger generation of railway men and women and more promotion of the social and economic added value of rail.

Anniversaries are times when you look back on the past with nostalgia and you look at the present with lucidity. And I believe that we can be proud of our past and of our present. But we must be proud with humility as we are just simple links in a long chain of transmission. Transmission between chairmen as this will be a point on the agenda of our general assembly and I think it's very important today to have with us Mr Ishida, Mr Seino, Mr Yakunin, and a dear friend who has joined us tonight for our reception Mr Adam Wielandek.

And also between CEOs and I'm happy to see a few CEOs also on the occasion of this reception which symbolises the transmission for the better of UIC. Anniversaries are also times when you look to the future with hope, and if railways have survived so long – 185 years since the first link in England or in France, 175-year anniversaries as several of them celebrated in 2012, or the 90th jubilee anniversary of UIC as we are celebrating tonight. It is probably because railways are a hope for societies and economies, creating networks of mobility, exchange, added value and peace.

Many of you know by now that I spend my sleepless nights when travelling writing poetry. And I would like to conclude and illustrate the spirit and culture of our association UIC with one of them. Of course they are all written in French and published in French but this one has been beautifully translated into English and this is therefore for you, for us, trains for life.

Trains de vie

*Dix mille chevaux de feu, parfaitement domptés,
Qui tirent jour et nuit de longs serpents d'acier,
Tels les dragons antiques naviguant dans le ciel,
Sont les mythes modernes de l'ère industrielle.
Dix millions de personnes travaillent dans le monde
Pour faire circuler ces machines qui grondent,
Convoyant marchandises, transportant voyageurs,
Embarqués dans ces trains, en confiance et sans peur.
Dix milliards d'hommes et femmes, et mille milliards de tonnes,
Ont voyagé ainsi, et nul ne s'en étonne ...
Sécurité, puissance, fiabilité, confort,
Vitesse, repos, silence et des sourires à bord.
Depuis leur origine, que de progrès techniques,
D'aventures humaines ou débats politiques,
Et tant de voies nouvelles ont créé un réseau,
Ouvrant et bâtissant un monde fier et nouveau.
Prendre un train quelque part, un billet pour partir,
Aller vers nulle part, envie de revenir,
Voyages vers demain, rêves ou cauchemars,
Ces longs rails parallèles sont une voie d'espoir.*

Par Jean-Pierre Loubinoux



Train of life

*Fiery steeds, ten thousand strong
Haul snakes of steel, all day and night long
Such are the myths of industrial times
Across the world work ten million souls
So that these rumbling machines can roll
People or cargo, all are conveyed
Securely aboard, all fears allayed
That billions of people, tonnes of merchandise
Have travelled this way comes as no surprise
Powering on, in comfort, at speed
In silence, safety, satisfied need
What technical strides, and not just of late
What means of adventure and source of debate
As line after line a network was formed
A proud world came forth, a new world dawned
Hop on a train, a ticket to roam
Destination nowhere, or just to come home
Two rails stretch out, to joy or to sorrow
A journey of hope, a journey to tomorrow.*

Translation of a poem by Jean-Pierre Loubinoux