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UIC congratulates the Swiss government on the final cut-through to complete the Gotthard Base Tunnel and the Swiss railways on their commitment to sustainable development

(Paris, 18 October). At the invitation of the Swiss Ambassador to France, Ulrich Lehner, UIC Director-General Jean-Pierre Loubinoux attended the live broadcast of the final cut-through completing the Gotthard Base Tunnel last Friday (15 October). UIC, the worldwide professional railway organisation, takes this opportunity to offer the Swiss government its warmest congratulations on the technical achievements represented by the boring of the new tunnel – at 57 kilometres, the world's longest – and for the faith it has thereby placed in the future of rail transport as the mode best able to meet mobility needs within the constraints of sustainable development.

The 57-kilometre base tunnel, set to open for timetabled operations in 2017, represents one of the cornerstones of the Rotterdam – Genoa freight corridor, along with the Ceneri tunnel (to open in 2019). Together they will constitute an ultra-modern rail line with a maximum altitude of 550 m (rather than 1150 at present). The route traversing Switzerland from north to south will be flatter, 40 kilometres shorter and therefore swifter. It will accommodate longer freight trains up to two times heavier than at present (4000 tonnes) and twice as fast. Passenger trains will operate at up to 250 km/h. Milan – Zurich will henceforth be a mere 2 hours 50 minutes by train (instead of over 4 hours at present).

This is also an opportunity to congratulate once again the Swiss rail sector, in particular the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB), for their ongoing commitment to environmental and sustainable development concerns in large-scale Swiss infrastructure projects. The Swiss railways are also heavily involved in cooperative railway ventures within UIC. It is worth recalling that last June, SBB were awarded 1st prize in the UIC Sustainability Awards 2010 for their work in meeting sustainable mobility goals. Their project, run under the slogan “taking the next steps”, aims to systematically integrate sustainable mobility goals across all aspects of the company's strategic and organisational development.

CONTACTS:

Liesbeth de Jong
UIC Media Relations
Tel.: + 33 1 44 49 20 53
Email: dejong@uic.org