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Chinese Railways enter a new «High-speed era» with the start of the operation of Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway on 1st August

10,000 km of dedicated high speed lines are now in operation across the world - High speed rail transport will expand in all parts of the world – UIC congratulates Chinese Railways (CR) for this achievement.

(Beijing / Paris, 31st July 2008). The Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway scheduled to start commercial operation on 1st August, will officially mark the beginning of the "High speed era" for Chinese Railways (CR). This high speed railway uses the 120 km high speed line linking the Chinese capital Beijing to Tianjin and serves four stations: Beijing South, Yizhuang, Wuqing and Tianjin, with Yongle Railway Station reserved for future use. The high speed system is designed for a highest speed of 350 km/h. A large number of self-developed CRH2 and CRH3 high speed train sets all dubbed "Hexie" –meaning Harmony- will be put into operation and the travel time of through trains will be less than 30 minutes with a minimum headway of 3 minutes.

The construction of the high speed railway lasted from 4th July 2005 to 16th December 2007. Since March of this year, systematic test and commissioning started on the whole line, involving track, traction, communication and signalling, power supply, rolling stock, etc. This line offers many innovations; it is the first railway line in China that uses on a large scale ballastless track, field welding technology for 500 m long rails, continuous welded rails across sections and high-performance concrete for the main structure. The home made train sets CRH2 and CRH3 adopt advanced, mature and reliable technologies in such aspects as traction, braking system, high speed bogies, car body aerodynamics. On 24th June a Chinese "Hexie" CRH3 train set had recorded a highest speed of 394,3 km/h during a test run.

The railway featured with large capacity, high density and "bus-mode" transportation, will reduce the travel time between the two cities and play an important role in speeding up the integration process of the area and promoting the economic and personnel exchanges within the Pan Bohai zone. As an auxiliary project to Beijing Olympic Games, it will also provide good transportation for the event, thereby becoming a strong support to the success of Beijing Olympics.

This first step into the new "High speed era" for China will be followed by other completions: in the next three or five years, construction of a large number of passenger dedicated lines such as Beijing-Harbin, Beijing-Guangzhou, Beijing-Shanghaï, Lianyungang-Lanzhou, Harbin-Dalian and those along the south-east coast will be finished. Chinese authorities have planned a 10,000 km high performance network dedicated to passenger trains offering speeds of 250 or 300 km/h for completion within next 15 years.

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With the start of operation on this high speed line on 1st August in China, the worldwide network of dedicated high speed lines exceeds for the first time 10,000 km of lines, operated by around 1,750 high speed train sets. Commercial business with high speed train operation has developed particularly successfully in Asia (Japan since 1964, Korea) and Europe since the early 80ies. This kind of transport offers an optimal solution to meet current challenges of mobility demand for passengers and sustainable development issues (including protection of the environment and economic aspects of the oil price crisis). Therefore important projects aiming to the introduction of high speed rail systems currently exist on all continents.

UIC as the international organisation grouping the worldwide railway community, warmly congratulate Chinese Railways (CR) as one of its prominent members, for making this important step towards the realisation of a large-scale , high performance, rail passenger network coping successfully with mobility challenges of the future.

Contributing to successful development of high speed rail across the world is one of UIC's important missions in the field of international cooperation. Considering the importance of high speed rail transport in addressing the key issues related to energy security and environment protection along with efficient land uses and de urbanisation process; UIC has set up High Speed Department as one of its competence centre to serve the needs of the global membership. Role of this competence centre is to assist existing high speed operators to bench mark their key performance indicators and to prepare the members for developing high speed rail transport systems. This is currently being done through specific training sessions, organisation of regional workshops and through specific studies. Further, the activities of this centre provides support to the member railways in all projects related to the introduction of high speed rail systems through a series of activities: data bases, statistics and traffic forecasts, web site and communications activities, etc.

One of the highlights for exchange and benchmark on all high speed issues is the UIC HIGHSPEED world congress on high speed rail. Following the Amsterdam edition in March 2008, the 7th UIC HIGHSPEED world congress will be held in Beijing –in relation with the start of the "High speed era" in China- on 7-9 December 2010. Organisers will be UIC in close cooperation with the Ministry of Railways (MoR) of China.

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