



Press Release nr 309

## **5th Meeting of 'UIC Africa' held on 26 October in Tunis at the invitation of SNCFT**

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(Paris, 27 October 2008). The 5th meeting of the UIC Regional Assembly 'Africa' was held in Tunis on 26 October alongside four workshops held on 25 October and the Union of African Railways (UAR) General Assembly on 27 October. The meetings were hosted by Mr. *Abdelaziz Chaabane*, President and CEO of the Tunisian Railways (SNCFT).

Thanks to the leadership of Mr. *Siyabonga Gama*, Chairman of 'UIC Africa' and Chairman of the UAR, the meetings were attended by 30 UIC members and led to the establishment of a regional work plan for Africa – based on four clear paths of action - and in line with the objectives laid out in the '*UIC Vision 2025 for Africa*'. UIC / UAR workshops took place on 25 October in order to finalise the terms of reference for the group of experts in connection with the Action Plan. Mr. *Vipin Sharma*, UIC Deputy Chief Executive responsible for the Global dimension moderated the workshops.

### **The four workshops focused on the following topics:**

- *Infrastructure and rolling stock* (chaired by SNCFT) focusing on issues of common interest related to rolling stock and infrastructure to improve African railways' efficiency through better interconnectivity and interoperability, in line with the Brazzaville Declaration of 2006.
- *Human resources* (chaired by CFCO and the UIC Centre of Competence for Human Factors represented by Mrs *Meryem Belhaj*). The group worked specifically on critical factors related to railway administration, such as identifying the strengths and weaknesses of Human Resource Departments, developing HR policies in areas that require collective effort such as skills safeguarding, training, skills sharing and advocacy for equal employment opportunities (gender equality, discrimination and identifying training institutions and their areas of expertise).
- *Operation and Information / Communication Technologies* (chaired by Transnet Rail Freight). Mr *Stanley Mkoko*, UIC representative for the Africa Unit, made a presentation on behalf of the chairman of the group about the Transnet coal line. The objective was to draw on the experience of successful models that had been implemented and that covered all operational activities or elements.
- Group members also finalised their terms of reference, developed strategies and drafted an action plan for projects that will bring efficiency to operations.
- Marketing and communications. Mrs *Cleopatra Shiceka*, Transnet Freight Rail, and Mr *Stanley Mkoko* presented this new group. The goal was to find a solution to improve communication about UAR in the railway world. Mr *Vipin Sharma* reminded the audience that the UIC had presented a similar project on "mass media communication" for the railway community in order to promote railway development through an effective communications strategy at global level.

Members from the African region actively participated in discussions about all four topics and based on the work done defined their needs and expectations.

The resulting Action plan included various sets of activities designed to improve infrastructure and operational performance through extensive utilisation of global best practices and contribution of know how from the relevant UIC competence centres and expert groups.

Members were unanimous about the importance of human resource development in the region and welcomed the UIC's efforts especially in engaging the ITF (International Transport Workers Federation) to systematically address the impact of HIV / TB and Malaria on the work force and the working environment. Dr. *Siyed Asif Choudhary* representing the ITF spoke about the HIV tool kit project co-developed with the IRU (International Road Transport Union) and the work in progress with UIC for the development of a similar kit for railways which also took into account needs stemming from TB and Malaria.

### **UIC Regional Assembly for Africa meeting**

Mr. *Siyabonga Gama*, Chief Executive of Transnet Freight Rail, South Africa chaired the 'UIC Regional Assembly for 'Africa' held on 26 October. During this meeting, UIC Provisional Administrator Me *Béatrice Dunogué-Gaffié* presented the findings of the audits. Members of 'UIC Africa' took note of the audit findings and expressed their hope that the UIC would soon return to business as usual. Their views were drafted together into a resolution on the subject which was subsequently adopted.

The Regional Assembly 'Africa' approved the budget for 2009 for the implementation of an Action plan in response to needs identified in the work carried out by the groups of experts, to ensure that the UIC Africa Vision 2025 was presented at all appropriate forums and to organise various workshops and seminars in the region i.e. SIAFI Africa, Seminar on the security and safety of high speed rail transport, improving the training facilities and to optimise use of regional facilities along with overall improvements in the working of Meter Gauge networks in the region through the work of Meter Gauge Centres of Competence.

The Regional Assembly also applauded the UIC Africa Regional Unit successful work to establish an effective work plan and UIC HQ's support in this task. Members were requested to participate in this initiative via the participation of nominated experts.

The UIC Regional Assembly 'Africa' unanimously re-elected Mr. *Siyabonga Gama* as the Chairman of 'UIC Africa' for the period 2009-2010 together with the other Board members i.e. Mr. *Yobo Gosse* (President SIPF), Mr. *Jean François Coutin* (Deputy CEO Setrag), and Mr. *Abdelaziz Chaabane* (President and CEO SNCFT) as the representatives for UIC Africa and Maghreb respectively. Their names would be submitted at the next meeting of the Executive Board on 5 December 2008.

The next 'UIC Africa' meeting would be held in Cape Town, South Africa, in April 2009 in connection with the AFRICA RAIL event.

### **Mr Abdelaziz Chaabane succeeded Mr Siyabonga Gama as UAR Chairman**

The 36th Assembly of the Union of African Railways (UAR) and the UAR Executive Board meeting took place on 26 and 27 October. Mr. *Abdelaziz Chaabane*, President and CEO of the Tunisian Railways (SNCFT) was elected unanimously on this occasion as the new Chairman of UAR succeeding Mr. *Siyabonga Gama*. Mr. *El Ghul Naffati* would retain his position of Secretary General until the appointment of a new Secretary (the position of Secretary General of UAR is currently open to applicants).

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