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19th UIC Regional Assembly for the Middle East (RAME) successfully held in Tehran in conjunction with a Regional Seminar on activities of the UIC Rail System Forum (RSF)

(Paris, 9 May 2017) The 19th Meeting of the UIC Regional Assembly for the Middle East (RAME) was held on 2 May at RAI Headquarters in Tehran at the kind invitation of Dr Saed Mohammadzadeh, Vice Minister for Transport and Urban Development, President of the Board of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran (RAI), First Vice Chairman of the UIC Middle-East Region.

The Meeting was chaired by Mr Isa Apaydin, President of the Board and Director General of Turkish State Railways (TCDD), Chairman of UIC Middle-East (RAME) and UIC Vice Chairman, with the participation of Mr Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General, and Mr Paul Véron, Director, UIC Coordinator for the Middle-East, Mr Abbas Nazari, Director General International Affairs at RAI, Director of the UIC Regional Office in Tehran, as well as the representatives of the Railways of Iraq (IRR), Chief Eng. Ali Addulhussein, Deputy Director General, Jordan (Aqaba Railway Coporation ARC), Eng. Abdullah Alhumede, Director General Office Director, and Syria (Al Hejaz Railway Syria CFH) , Mr Hassanin Mohammed Ali, President, and Eng. Fayez Briche, Assistant of the General Manager of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), etc.

In his opening address UIC Director General warmly thanked Dr Saed Mohammadzadeh and Iranian Railways (RAI) for hosting this meeting and the following seminar, as well as Mr. Isa Apaydin and Turkish State Railways (TCDD) for their continuous support for the activities of the UIC Middle-East Region: *"We all are aware that the TCDD chairmanship and leadership has contributed since the creation of RAME 10 years ago (an anniversary), to create a space of neutrality and friendship which definitively serves the development of a fruitful cooperation between all railway professionals in the region".*

He added: *"The impressive number of projects and achievements in the rail sector make the Middle-East one of the most active and promising regions for rail transportation... In addition, the UIC, thanks to its neutrality and expertise, can effectively contribute to support railways in the Middle-East through a number of actions:*

- promoting the *"Vision and Strategic Action Plan 2016-2020 for the Middle-East Railways"*, presenting a coherent Framework for the implementation of competitive, integrated, rail and multi-modal transportation system,
- ensuring harmonisation, standardisation, interoperability of the international rail transport system, in particular along international corridors such as the *"New Rail Silk Roads"* that are becoming a reality,
- promoting exchanges of know-how and best practices on all new technological and operational developments (including signalling, digitalisation...).".

Mr Abbas Nazari, Director of the UIC Regional Office for the Middle-East in Tehran reported on recent achievements by the Office.

It is particularly worth mentioning the publication of the document entitled *"Current Outlook to the Middle East Railways - Moving forward on the right track"*. This document presents the situation, the current achievements and the rail development plans for 12 railways from the Middle-East (RAME) Region. It is being finalised in close cooperation between the Regional Office and the respective members.

Mr Paul Véron, Director, UIC Coordinator for the Middle-East, submitted for discussion the updated version 2017-2018 of the Action Plan for the Middle-East Region.

One of the highlights will be the 10th UIC World Congress on High Speed Rail jointly organised by UIC and TCDD (with CMS Project) due to take place in Ankara, Turkey, on 8-11 May 2018.

Another event dedicated to contacts with potential partners and investors, the International Business Forum, should be held in Istanbul in Turkey in the last quarter of 2018.

A number of activities will be also developed in connection with the implementation of the *"New Rail Silk Roads"* (the assembly was informed about the study currently carried out by the Roland Berger consulting group in liaison with the UIC Freight department on potential synergies between European freight corridors and New Rail Silk Roads, from the market and customers' viewpoint).

Mr Francis Bedel, Chief Digital Officer at UIC, gave an overview of activities of the UIC Digital Platform created in 2015.

Under the topic *"Report on projects and achievements by railways' Presidents and Directors General"*, the impressive rail development plans and current achievements by Iranian Railways (RAI) and Turkish State Railways (TCDD) were presented to the Regional Assembly members.

Finally, the RAME Regional Assembly welcomed a new member: the Ma'an Development Company from Jordan, a company led by Eng. Hussein Krishan, CEO.

UIC RAME Regional Seminar on projects and activities of the UIC Rail System Forum (RSF)

The 19th Regional Assembly Meeting was followed by a Regional Seminar centered on activities and projects of the UIC Rail System Forum (RSF). This seminar held on 2 and 3 May had been jointly prepared by UIC Rail System Department and Iranian Railways (RAI) and more than 300 representatives of RAI (from 17 Regions) as well as delegates from universities, railway institutes or some other railways from the Region, took part in the lectures and intensive discussions.

After opening addresses by Dr Saed Mohammadzadeh, Vice Minister for Transport and Urban Development, President of RAI, Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, Director General of UIC, and a video message by Mr Francisco Cardoso dos Reis, Infraestruturas de Portugal (IP), Chairman of UIC Rail System Forum, the technical seminar was carried out with contributions and presentations by Mr Mazyar Yazdani, Vice President of RAI for Infrastructure and Technical Issues, Dr Marc Antoni, Director of UIC Rail System Department, Mr Teodor Gradinariu, Senior Advisor, Operations and Asset Management, UIC Rail System Department, Mr Francis Bedel, Chief Digital Officer at UIC.

Presentations as well as Q &A sessions were focused on the following main sections:

- Standardisation in an international railway context
- Asset Management
- Track and Structure
- Signalling including ETCS, SATLOC...
- Opportunities connected with digitalisation of railway operations.

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