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UIC responds to unilateral termination of exchangeability of UIC/EUR and EPAL pallets

(Paris, 6 March 2017) In 2014, Rail Cargo Austria AG (RCA), acting on behalf of the community of UIC members, and the European Pallet Association e.V. (EPAL) signed an agreement on the continued existence of the European Pallet Pool. The agreement essentially covered the unrestricted exchangeability of UIC/EUR and EPAL pallets. On 28 February 2017, EPAL announced the termination of this agreement, which will take effect on 30 April 2017.

For the International Union of Railways (UIC), which represents the rail sector worldwide, EPAL's unilateral decision to terminate the agreement on the European Pallet Pool is incomprehensible.

UIC protests in the strongest terms against the grounds given for terminating the agreement, which cite shortcomings in quality assurance and the approach taken on trademark infringements by the responsible UIC railway undertakings.

Quality failings have no place in the UIC network: for us, the safety and quality of our pallets have top priority. Both the UIC member railways individually and RCA AG, as the owner of the EUR brand, take a range of measures to comply with the requirements of UIC Leaflet 435-2.

In order to ensure that our EUR pallets meet the requisite quality standards for our customers and partners, the UIC member railways use independent testing agencies such as SGS Germany GmbH. With over 40 years of experience in this field, SGS is a world leader in testing, checking and certifying pallets.

Fake EUR pallets are a major risk to the safety of users and goods in transit. The UIC member railways take a proactive approach on counterfeiting, and take all appropriate measures to stop fakes, inter alia in collaboration with national authorities - all the more so since they are not only the licence-issuers of EUR pallets but also use them for transshipment and in their own freight services.

The argument that UIC pallets are counterfeited is divorced from reality: trademark infringements are, regrettably, a fact of life for all pallet manufacturers. UIC takes a tough line on all forms of fraud.

EPAL's decision to terminate the agreement will jeopardise the pallet pool as an enduring, open solution which is advantageous in price terms compared to other systems such as pallet hire. Repealing the agreement will create uncertainty amongst users.

UIC and its member railways will continue to consider both pallet brands as equivalent and exchange them in future, since we still believe in and will stand up for a borderless, barrier-free pallet pool.

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