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NEXTSTATION 2015, the 5th International Conference on Railway Stations, opens in Marrakech in the presence of 350 participants from all over the world:

Main theme is “Rethinking Stations for Future Intermobility”

(Marrakech, 21 October 2015) The 5th International Conference on Railway Stations NEXTSTATION 2015 opened today in Marrakech attended by 350 participants representing 30 countries all over the world in the presence of many high level representatives from the political and economic world, including several African Ministers.

NEXTSTATION 2015, jointly organised by the International Union of Railways (UIC) and Moroccan State Railways (ONCF) under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, is a unique global event entirely dedicated to the planning, development and management of Railway Stations. The main theme of this 5th edition of NEXTSTATION is “*Rethinking Stations for Future Intermobility*”.

During the opening ceremony moderated by Mrs Farida Moha from Morocco, Mr Abdel Aziz Rabbah, Minister of Equipment and Transport of Morocco, underlined: “*Making the railways a strong lever for society’s mobility and development is a large challenge for all countries and in particular for developing countries. It is a complex sector which can link countries to create a strong dynamic thanks to infrastructure, railways and ports. This requires significant investment for infrastructure – currently Morocco needs 3 – 4 billion euros and 20 billion dollars within the next 20 years to develop this sector.*” The Minister emphasised in particular the main challenges of safety and human resources, notably training.

Mr Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General, thanked Moroccan Railways and their President Mr Khlie for hosting this important conference dedicated to Railway Stations, a strategic issue for all Member Railways across the world. He summarised the five main challenges for railway stations in the current period: “*Taking into account as far in advance as possible customer needs, the arrival of new and many operators, the search for greater modal and intermodal complementarity, mass urbanisation which will see two billion people move to increasingly larger urban areas, requiring a new approach to urban and inter-urban mobility*”. He added: “*In view of these future developments, stations are becoming meeting places and hubs for managing all intra and intermodal interfaces, as well as interfaces with the surrounding public space, the city, and its activity and economic and social fabric. Stations are increasingly characterised by their multidisciplinary nature, combining challenges and issues of all kinds, which are more and more restrictive.*”

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Mr Mohammed Rabie Khlie, President and Director General of Moroccan Railways ONCF and Chairman of UIC Africa warmly welcomed all delegates participating in this leading event in Marrakech. He summarised the challenges for this conference referring to the main theme *“Rethinking Stations for Future Intermobility”*: *“What are the issues that dictate the development of a new generation of railway stations? In what ways and how can these buildings meet the needs of sustainable development? How can we make stations into real hubs which change mobility in cities? What models can be used to best optimise these spaces? Is it still relevant to adapt their management to the constantly changing flows, notably in terms of accessibility, reception area and functional arrangements for example? In view of the importance and the scale of these station projects, what role can the private sector play in their construction and/or operation and according to what models?”* Describing the challenges for the Kingdom of Morocco, he added: *“The efforts to accelerate the rhythm of investment in the railway sector (multiplied by 8 in 15 years) reflect an exceptionally dynamic performance. Stations constitute a vital component in this rail development programme in Morocco, about which you will no doubt have the chance to learn more during the presentation delivered at this conference.”*

UIC Acting Chairman Mr Michele Mario Elia, CEO of Italian Railways FSi, addressed participants with a video message. He insisted on the challenges of improving physical and digital links between railways and with other modes, with other activities, service providers, etc ... He insisted on the need to create an adequate political and legal framework for the development of international multimodal intermobility. One of the important challenges is ensuring a high level of security in the framework of rail security strategy, in the railway transport system which is an open system. According to Mr Elia, *“UIC is the right organisation to help the progress towards international intermobility in creating global interoperable and harmonised systems in favour of developing business”*.

Mr Jean-Daniel Tordjman, French Ambassador, President of the “Club of Ambassadors” in France, explained why Railway Stations have a great future. He outlined the ever-changing world in which railways and stations in particular must develop: demographic changes, economic context regarding growth across different continents, sociological and societal changes, globalisation of trade, tourism and above all the major issue which represents the extremely rapid development of the digital economy. *“Stations are integrated, complex systems, generating large costs as well as being profit centres. The railways and stations should fully integrate into smart cities of the future, whilst continuing to promote their cultural and heritage assets.”*

The opening session was followed by the first Round Table on *“Opportunities for International Cooperation in Station field”* moderated by Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General, with the participation of Mr Carlos Ventura, ADIF, Chairman of UIC Station Managers Global Group (SMGG), Mr Patrick Ropert, Director General Gares & Connexions SNCF, Mr Vitaliy Votolevsky, Director General of Passenger Stations Directorate, Russian Railways RZD, Mr Paolo Gallo, CEO Grandi Stazioni, FS, Italy.

A second Round Table on Day two will be dedicated to the theme *“Trends and challenges of Intermobility”*. More specialised issues are dealt with in the framework of parallel sessions.

CONTACTS

UIC Communications Department: veron@uic.org, Marie Plaud: plaud@uic.org