



INTERNATIONAL UNION  
OF RAILWAYS

**Speech given by Jean-Pierre Loubinoux**  
UIC Director General

**Opening of the 11th Meeting of UIC Regional Assembly for the Middle-East**

**Esfahan, Iran, 6 May 2013**

*The spoken word alone prevails*

Esteemed Participants,  
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is an honour and a personal pleasure to address today all participants at the 11th Meeting of the UIC Regional Assembly Middle-East in this beautiful, historic city of Esfahan in Iran.

In my own name and on behalf of all participating UIC Members, I am particularly happy that we can hold a RAME Meeting in Esfahan for the second time and I would particularly like to thank Vice Minister and President of RAI, Abdol Ali Saheb-Mohammadi, for having invited our Assembly to Esfahan. Also on behalf of the UIC railways I would like to express our most sincere thanks to our colleagues and friends from the Regional Office in Tehran who committed themselves to making this meeting possible in Esfahan rather than at their Tehran headquarters, and for preparing this event perfectly.

Meeting again in Esfahan for this 11th RAME Meeting has a strong symbolic importance. It provides an opportunity to look back at our action and achievements since the first RAME Meeting was held here in 2007 in this city (following a founding meeting in December 2006 in Paris), and, more important, to highlight our priorities for the benefit of the Middle-Eastern railway community for the years to come. At this stage I also wish to extend sincere thanks to the Chairman of our UIC Middle-East region, Mr Süleyman Karaman, President and CEO of Turkish State Railways (TCDD), who has been chairing and steering the activities of this Regional Assembly since its creation.

A lot has happened since UIC and Member railways presented the first Work Programme and Action Plan in Esfahan. Allow me to review some of these achievements and to link this presentation with the objectives and ambitions that we should develop together during the next period.

One of our very concrete and visible actions was the setting up of a UIC Regional Office for the Middle-East in Tehran. Actually, this UIC office was officially registered in Iran, staffed with our colleagues from RAI under the leadership of Abbas Nazari, Director General of International Affairs at RAI, and remains open to further colleagues from other railways from the Middle-East. The Office has become a reality; its coordinating role between member railways from the region has been demonstrated. The Regional Office was particularly active in ensuring the liaison and coordination for the RAME meetings, organising seminars and workshops, identifying railway experts from various domains, attracting new members to UIC. I personally wish to congratulate Mr Nazari as well as Mr Jamali, Mrs Kordbacheh and the entire team for this so very effective and friendly support and action towards members.

For the future, I feel that RAME Member railways could make stronger and better use of the Regional Office as a permanent communications and cooperation link between RAME members and with UIC headquarters in Paris, UIC technical experts and Middle-Eastern railways. The Regional Office has the task of collecting proposals from members, organising surveys or studies, and proposing new activities for the UIC RAME Action Plan.

We also have the idea of a new, important, mission for the Regional Office, connected to the Regional Vision for the Middle-East. I'll come to this issue later on.

Since the 1st Esfahan Meeting in 2007, the UIC community of Middle-Eastern railways has continuously extended, thanks to the permanent efforts of the Regional Office and Mr Nazari to whom I would like to express special thanks. With members from Turkey, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and United Arab Emirates, UIC Middle-East is now very representative of the main railways and transport authorities in the Region. We welcome the fact that RAME has become a genuine professional and human community, marked by a strong cooperation spirit, despite the current uncertainties and tensions in the Region in the political, economic and social fields.

We are also very happy that new companies from Oman, Iran... have announced their interest to join UIC and UIC RAME. Once our Regional Assembly covers the whole region, we will be able to express our views with enhanced credibility to all stakeholders, international organisations and financial institutions for the benefit of the entire rail sector.

Another remarkable achievement of the UIC RAME community is related to the objective of expertise development and training for future generations of railway staff.

Following the first educational workshops on Railway Safety and Desert Operations (Iran), on Infrastructure Maintenance and Asset Management (Jordan), a programme of training activities targeted at Middle-Eastern railways was defined in coordination between UIC and TCDD Rail Training Centre in Eskisehir. After an initial session in October 2012, dedicated to International Railway Business and High-Speed, new training opportunities will be proposed to all RAME railways, in particular in connection with Rail Safety.

A highlight in 2012 was the organisation of the RAME high-level conference on "Rail Vision, Projects and Perspectives for the Middle-East", held in Amman in cooperation with Jordanian railways under the Patronage of the Minister of Energy, as well as Minister of Transport of Jordan, Mr Alaa A. Batayneh. This important conference provided a unique opportunity to present all current railway projects existing in the region, as well as the action of a series of partners such as the European Union, Euromed, etc.

A next priority from my point of view is an effective follow-up of this high-level conference. The next step should be the preparation of a short document on the Rail Vision for the Middle-East, setting the general frame and objectives for the development of railways in the Region. This Vision document would represent an important tool for our communications and lobbying towards stakeholders and all political, economic and financial decision-makers. This vision should present in a coherent manner the objectives, the national railway projects and their regional coherence, the multimodal dimension (cooperation with ports, terminals, etc.), etc. This task should be in my view a core activity for the Regional Office during the next period. Some elements from the previous Vision document approved in 2008 in Amman could still be valid, but the objective is to produce a short, attractive, document, similar to what was recently published for Europe (“Challenge 2050”) (you will receive a copy today).

My last point is an appeal to all Member railways belonging to UIC Middle-East. The Regional Assembly, according to the 2009 Statutes, was set up to develop strategies and activities, organise technical studies and projects, organise workshops, seminars and training actions responding to the needs of members. I feel that RAME members should play an even stronger role and take a stronger lead to announce their needs, propose priorities and more directly influence the activities of our Action Plan. Also the RAME activities, workshops and seminars, which have so far been held for the most part in Turkey, Iran and Jordan, should be distributed all over the region to definitively illustrate the reality of this regional community.