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## **9th UIC HIGHSPEED 2015 World Congress opens in Tokyo: All actors meet at the symbolic birth place of High Speed Rail 50 years ago**

*Theme of this Congress: "Celebrate the past – Design the future"*

(Tokyo / Paris, 7 July 2015) The 9th UIC HIGHSPEED World Congress, jointly organised by the International Union of Railways (UIC) and East Japan Railway Company (EJRC), opens today in Tokyo, at the Tokyo International Forum in the presence of 1 200 participants representing 40 countries and with the participation of 20 sponsors, 40 exhibitors, 12 press partners.

High Speed Rail was born 50 years ago in Japan with the operation of the first Shinkansen "bullet trains". In the following period this type of transport was introduced and marked by a rapid expansion in Europe, Asia, Middle-East, with projects or planned implementations in America, North Africa, Asia and several regions of the world.

Mr Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, underlined that after a period of decline in railway legacy, the Shinkansen brought hopes and dreams to the Japanese people. From 30 million customers travelling on the Shinkansen at the start, this figure has now reached 250 million passengers. The Shinkansen strongly supported the growth of Japanese economy. Without the Shinkansen the country could not develop itself in such sustainable and efficient way as today. The High Speed Rail Congress in Tokyo can strongly contribute to spreading experiences across the world between Japan and the Shinkansen and other countries operating High Speed Rail.

In his welcome address, Japan's Minister of Land Infrastructure, Transportation and Tourism, Mr Akihiro Ohta, underlined that the Shinkansen represents a wonderful mode of transport in terms of safety, comfort, speed, punctuality and population is extremely proud of this system. Research work is being carried out to optimise the High Speed Rail system concerning earthquakes, vibrations, noise, etc. High Speed Rail brings a significant contribution to advancing the economy.

After an introduction and warm thanks to the Japanese hosts by Mr Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General and moderator of the Opening Session, Mr Vladimir Yakunin, UIC Chairman, President of Russian Railways (RZD), stressed that *"High Speed Rail development is not only a technical issue. Furthermore it concerns the future of our children and great grandchildren. High Speed Rail is one of the most human-oriented modes of transport. Due to its advantages in terms of environment, safety, comfort and reliability, High Speed Rail is of enormous socio-economic importance considering opportunities for investment and job creation"*. Concerning Russia he mentioned the possibility to extend the project of the Moscow-Kazan high speed line to Ekaterinburg and further afield to Kazakhstan and possibly China.

For UIC Vice-Chairman Mr Michele Mario Elia, CEO of Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane (FSI), this Congress *"provides a unique opportunity for those who already operate High Speed to demonstrate the advantages of this system to boost the economy. This technology is fully competitive, but it is essential to continue to invest in innovation and in research and development. The objective of interoperability is essential in matters of rolling stock, infrastructure, signalling, certification methods, in order to create an integrated high speed rail network"*.

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Mr Tetsuro Tomita, President and CEO of East Japan Railway Company (EJRC), host of this World Congress in Tokyo, underlined that the preparation of this worldwide event was ensured in the frame of an excellent cooperation between East Japan Rail, UIC, all railways in Japan and many other partners. *“The bullet train in Japan was not created in one day. Considering the state-of-the-art of technology it had to be transformed into a High Speed Rail system. It is interesting to learn lessons from other countries around the world and in this matter UIC can strongly contribute, through a Congress such as this, to spread experiences and best practices”.*

On behalf of Europe, Mr Michael Cramer, Member of the European Parliament, Chairman of the Commission on Transport and Tourism of the Parliament, delivered a video message and insisted on the fact that High Speed rail offers a number of appreciated advantages to customers, but the main issue to consider – particularly in this Congress – is the improvement of connections between High Speed Rail services and conventional rail, and better use of High Speed infrastructure for other types of rail transport, for example freight.

### **A review of High Speed Rail implementations across the globe**

Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General, and Inaki Barron, Director of High Speed and Passengers at UIC, presented a journey across the world illustrating High Speed Rail implementations, starting from the West and finishing with Japan in the East. The current status of High Speed projects and implementations was presented successively by Mr Pablo Vazquez-Vega, President of Renfe Operadora, Mr Guillaume Pepy, President of SNCF, Mr Michele Mario Elia, CEO of Italian Railways FSI, Mr Ömer Yildiz, President of Turkish Railways TCDD, Mr Zhao Guotang, Deputy Chief Engineer, CRC China, Mr Zheng Jian, Deputy Administrator, NRA China, Mr Jeng James, CEO of THSRC, Taiwan, Mrs Choi Yeon Hye, CEO of KORAIL, Korea, Mr Norimichi Kumagai, President of RTRI, Japan.

The final part of the Opening Session was dedicated to the presentation of the programme of the Congress that was designed this year with the objective to be paperless and extremely interactive, in particular through exchanges between speakers and the floor with digital devices. This presentation was made by Mr Masaki Ogata, Vice Chairman of East Japan Railway Company (EJRC) and Mr Michel Leboeuf, UIC, Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the UIC World Congress on High Speed Rail.

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