



PRESS RELEASE Nr. 25 /2013

‘NEXT STATION’, the 4th international conference on Railway Stations organised by UIC and RZD in Moscow met all objectives and successfully addressed all strategic issues related to the development of railway stations.

The 5th ‘NEXT STATION’ edition to be held in 2015 in Marrakech at the invitation of Moroccan Railways ONCF

(Paris, 24 October 2013) On 17 and 18 October, the International Union of Railways (UIC) together with JSC Russian Railways (RZD) successfully organised ‘NEXT STATION’, the 4th international conference on Railway Stations, with the objective to focus more particularly on the link between stations and society (“Railway Stations – Linking Railways and Society”). It followed the previous editions held successively from 2005 in Rome, Paris and Brussels. For the first time, the international conference was held directly at a railway station – Moscow’s Kazansky Station – the centre of one of the largest transport hubs in Moscow. The UIC/RZD conference was organised under the high patronage of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and with the support of a large number of partners.

This conference provided a unique opportunity to bring together all the players and stakeholders involved in the planning, development or operations of railway stations: governments, international organisations; financial institutions, investors, representatives from the transport world, railway undertakings, as well as station managers, local authorities, service providers, manufacturers, architects, urban developers, research institutes, etc.,

The ‘NEXT STATION’ conference was opened on 17 October with welcome addresses given by Mr Vladimir Yakunin, President of JSC Russian Railways (RZD), UIC Chairman, and Mr Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director-General.

During his speech UIC Chairman Vladimir Yakunin emphasised: *“Today train stations are evolving into major intermodal transportation hubs, centres of gravity and redistribution of passenger flows. Thus it is equally important to seek answers to a whole range of questions regarding their efficiency and commercial attractiveness of passenger station operations and achieving maximum performance efficiency. So the task of today’s conference is not to reinvent the wheel but to incrementally and effectively continue the current dialogue with consideration for the latest dynamic changes in this field, while seeking new points of contact in our multilateral cooperation. Specifically the venue provides the opportunity to exchange opinions with representatives of governments, other modes of transport and interested businesses”.*

Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director-General, underlined: *“board, lodging, or other everyday services. Stations have become an interface between all the various modes of mobility. They have thus become the mediators of railway mobility”.* *The content of Next Station reflects the diversity and complexity of the station’s role starting from the function of the nodes like the beating hearts of the railway network, that sustain it by injecting and managing the movement of all travellers who are, let us not forget, the railways’ “raison d’être”, ... railway stations have gradually become organised, transformed and developed to host all those passing through – whether travellers or not – and to offer board, lodging or every day services. Stations have become an interface between all the various modes of mobility. They have thus become the mediators of railway mobility”*

'NEXT STATION' included a high-level round table with the participation of the United Nations' UNECE and EIB focused on the conference theme "The Station of the future: How to link Railways and Society?" and a series of sessions dedicated to all strategic issues of railway station planning, development, financing and operations. Parallel sessions dealt in particular with the following issues:

- Governance and financing – a new approach
- Innovations
- Businesses and services
- Station design around the world
- Stations: intermodality centres
- Integrated protection for railway stations
- Sustainable stations
- Connecting stations with the city

Conclusions of the 'NEXT STATION' conference

On 18 October UIC Director-General Jean-Pierre Loubinoux drew the first conclusions after the rich and intensive exchanges of the two-day programme of "NEXT STATION". Of course it is not possible to summarise the content of presentations and contributions of so many prominent speakers from around the world. The intention is just to focus on some of the main considerations.

A first consideration was that the previous editions of 'NEXT STATION' essentially focused on the role of the railway station to welcome travellers and develop a large number of additional services, including commercial activities, for and around the passengers. The main goal was to optimise the time spent by the traveller in a station as a mobility centre.

According to the exchanges that took place in Moscow, the Railway Station has definitively become a strategic issue. A strategic issue for the railways, as well as a strategic issue for stakeholders, investors and business partners, city authorities and urban planners, ...

The railway station is increasingly a link for seamless communication between trains and between transport modes (serving a multimodal transportation system), between travellers and non-travellers (city inhabitants), between activities (working activities, trade, leisure, culture), between the mobility world and the urban environment.

The 'NEXT STATION' conference provided an opportunity for worldwide exchange on best practice on how to improve the effectiveness of the railway stations in the following aspects:

- Operational aspects, including the station design to optimise multimodality and synergies between the various functions, safety and security, a large variety of services to customers and citizens, sustainability of the station,
- Economic and financial aspects: 'NEXT STATION' gave to leading organisations such as the United Nations' UNECE (represented by Mrs Eva Molnar) and the European Investment Bank (EIB), patron of the conference (represented by Mr Henry Marty-Gauquié) an opportunity to present various financial instruments that can create synergies with other investors and boost new rail projects including railway stations. Mrs Molnar addressed possible financing by institutions such as the World Bank and Mr Marty-Gauquié described the range of financial mechanisms proposed by the EIB to federate investments. One of the essential criteria by the evaluation is the project contribution to sustainable development.

Further presentations addressed possibilities to finance new stations or station renovations by PPPs and further joint ventures with investors,

- Societal aspects: the role of railway stations is less and less limited to the area of transport. The railway station (new or renovated) is an essential part of the city urban environment. It often combines optimisation of its new functions with preservation of the city architectural and historic heritage. It is also becoming a place of cultural activity.

A permanent “Think tank” and the next conference in 2015

In drawing conclusions from the conference, Jean-Pierre Loubinoux launched a new idea to maintain the intensity of reflexion and exchanges between stakeholders at international on all the strategic aspects of the Railway Station planning and development. These exchanges could take place under the umbrella of the UIC’s SMGG (Station Managers Global Group) and involve a dedicated “Think tank” high-level partners for regular cooperation and exchanges, such as architects, urban planners, city authorities, leaders of financial institutions,...together with senior executives of railway companies.

In closing the ‘NEXT STATION’ 2013 conference, UIC Director-General addressed the issue of the next conference. He revealed that several options had been envisaged for the next Host country of ‘NEXT STATION’ as this UIC event has definitively become a reference for professionals at world level. He was very pleased to announce that the proposal of Director-General of Moroccan Railways ONCF, Mr Mohammed Rabie Khlie, to invite the 5th “NEXT STATION” conference to Morocco, in Marrakech, had been accepted. Mrs Rokia Belkebir, Commercial Director for Passenger Activities at ONCF, invited participants on behalf of her railway for 2015, a time that should coincide with inauguration of high speed rail operations in Morocco –and in Africa.

In closing the 4th ‘NEXT STATION’ conference in Moscow, Mr Jean-Pierre Loubinoux warmly thanked President Vladimir Yakunin for hosting this important conference and the excellent organisation by all Russian railways’ teams involved, as well as Mr Sergei Abramov, Head of RZD’s Directorate for Railway Stations, Mrs Ekaterina Kozyreva from the RZD Directorate for Railway Stations who was the Project Manager on the Russian side, the UIC organising team and the Grusti Niet conference organiser. He conveyed sincere thanks to all patronage and sponsoring partners, speakers and session chairmen, exhibitors and all partners involved in Russia.

In the lead-up to “NEXT STATION”, UIC offers you an informative and interactive tour through these places of convergence, connections, departures and returns – ultimately the symbol of our mobility:

<http://www.uic.org/com/uic-vslider/railway-stations/>

The journey will take you round the stations of Brussels, Copenhagen, Paris, Stuttgart, Rome, Tokyo, Amsterdam, Madrid, Zurich, Moscow and Seoul in “Railway Station Renovations”, and will show you how these stations have managed to evolve and adapt to new demands.

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