



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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### **The 11th UIC World Congress on High-Speed opens at the Palais des Congrès in Marrakech, Morocco**

***During the 3 days, the participants will question and debate on “High-speed rail: the right speed for our planet”***

(Marrakech, 8 March 2023) The 11th edition of the UIC World Congress on High-Speed Rail opened yesterday at the Palais des Congrès in Marrakech, Morocco under the auspices of the International Union of Railways (UIC) and the Moroccan Railways (ONCF). This major global event, which brings together the world’s key players in high-speed rail, is organised under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohamed VI.

The Congress is organised in Africa, in Morocco – the country which is indeed the spearhead of the railway dynamic that can be observed throughout the continent. New transport infrastructures in Morocco testify to this vitality, desired and accompanied by the African Union in its vision 2063, for "an increasingly integrated and united continent". One of the flagship projects of this vision is indeed the development of an integrated high-speed network. It aims to connect all African capitals and commercial centres through an African high-speed rail network, thus facilitating the movement of goods, factor services and people. Increased rail connectivity also aims to reduce transport costs and ease congestion on existing and future systems. UIC fully supports this vision.

Adopting “High-speed rail: the right speed for our planet” as its slogan, the congress will emphasise rail’s contribution to addressing climate change and its role in territorial development.

Attended by 1,500 participants coming from 48 countries, 25 CEOs gathered for the first time, Ministers and Ambassadors coming from all the continents, 25 sponsors and with an exhibition area of 1,000 m<sup>2</sup>, the event includes a number of high-level keynote speakers, representatives and railway CEOs from regions across the world, as well as political decision-makers, transport authorities, railway companies and key players in intermodality, infrastructure managers, the

supply industry, financial institutions, customers, study and research institutes, universities, etc., all of whom are invited to take part in the event's working sessions, trade show and technical visits.

**Mr Krzysztof Mamiński**, UIC Chairman and CEO of PKP Polish Railways, gave a warm welcome to the congress, saying:

*"As Chairman of the UIC, I am personally very happy to be here with you today. High-speed rail is developing very dynamically: the pandemic did not prevent the expansion of high-speed railways with their total length going from 44,000km in 2020 to approximately 59,000km in 2022, an increase of over 1/3. Moreover, the number of countries making use of high-speed railways is only increasing, as additional countries are in the process of developing projects. The plans of Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, Middle East as well as of my country, Poland, show that this is a growing trend, which is absolutely the right direction."*

*"The challenges facing us today are global: new sustainable mobility systems, decarbonisation of economy at the national, local and supranational level; a new economic situation and political challenges that requires new activities and transport solutions against climate change. It is possible to deal with them positively and effectively. Many of us develop proposals and ideas to solve them. Despite the fact that HSR may be considered remote for some countries, HSR is beginning to respond to many global challenges. By working together, we can achieve more and faster."*

**Mr Mohamed Rabie Khlie**, UIC Vice-Chairman and ONCF Director General, said:

*"There is no doubt that in the light of the aspirations that we all have for the local, regional and continental development of the high-speed system and the overcoming of psychological barriers in certain cases, we are firmly convinced that our 11th edition of this Congress worldwide, will not fail to guide us, thanks to our imminent delegates, on the best indicated dosages correlating, as harmoniously and rationally as possible, between multiple criteria and basic constraints. These are environmental, historical-geographical, territorial, socio-economic, technological, capacity, sociological and commercial".*

*"Moreover, this is an imperative necessity, especially with the new paradigms of travel, the increased need for financial resources and the paramount importance that the preservation of the environment now takes on. In a nutshell, it is the wisest path to take to avoid a narrow vision of the potential of rail and to reinforce the place of choice of the high-speed system, as one of the most appropriate solutions for establishing an eco-mobility more concerned with the issues and challenges of travel on our planet".*

**Mr François Davenne**, UIC Director General, said:

*"This congress should help us answer the question of the right place for high speed. This place must be central, since the challenge before us is to bring about a transport system in which rail can be the backbone. Indeed, for the foreseeable future, these next ten years in which we must drastically reduce emissions, the railway is, by far, the least emitting mode and the one around which a massive modal shift must be organised, in close link with all forms of public transport, but also the development of active mobility (walking, cycling, etc.) which are currently hampered by unsuitable urban spaces."*

*A massive modal shift will therefore be accompanied by strong investment in fast train networks, the centrality of which will become increasingly evident. I do not want to anticipate the debates, but the definition of this "good speed" according to local and regional contexts will be one of the major challenges for our sector."*

**Mr Mohammed Abdeljalil**, Moroccan Minister of Transport and Logistics, said:

*“Of course, joining the club of countries with high-speed rail lines is not a luxury that our country seeks to afford, but rather an absolute necessity. It denotes the sense of realism of the public authorities, providing a structural response to a level of mobility in sustained growth, combined with the imperatives of sustainable development and regional planning. As you will have the opportunity to understand more fully, the remarkable performance recorded by 'Al Boraq' confirms the relevance of the strategic choice of our country in terms of the development of the national railway system. They truly affirm the benefits, material and immaterial denoted in several registers. To be considered, since the new era, only the competitiveness and the constant attractiveness of the use of the train in the daily journeys of citizens, thus constituting a reference model in terms of improving public services. Such an impetus encourages us to pursue, with determination, the ambition of deploying by 2030, the second stage of this master plan, to extend our high-speed network to Agadir, which embodies the centrality of modern Morocco. This step, which requires the mobilization of nearly 10 billion euros, will result in denser coverage of the Atlantic Axis by the high-speed network taking it to more than 800 km. In addition to the intrinsic effects of this system, such a development is likely to reposition rail, the low-carbon mode par excellence, as the backbone of sustainable mobility within our country, while benefiting from the capacities freed up for a network of local regional rail transport”.*

The Congress is particularly pleased to welcome its four Platinum Sponsors: **KNR South Korea, Huawei, Alstom and Siemens.**

It will run from 7 to 10 March and will review and look at the current development of global high-speed rail systems, exhibit the latest state-of-the-art high-speed technologies and form a vision on the future of high-speed.

The programme is organised around three main blocks: round tables and parallel sessions, where participants may have in-depth discussions and exchanges on the latest technologies and achievements of HSR planning, construction, technology & equipment, operation management and safety, etc. One entire day will be devoted to technical visits.

The event will also provide a platform for dialogues and exchanges of HSR countries and set the direction for future HSR research and development, which will exert a profound influence on its future.

Do not hesitate to watch the opening film of the Congress: <https://youtu.be/dGn8B8pXMxo>

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