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UIC holds its 106th General Assembly in Beijing, ahead of the 12th World Congress on High-Speed Rail

(Beijing, 7 July 2025) On 7 July 2025, the International Union of Railways (UIC) convened its 106th General Assembly in Beijing, hosted by China State Railway Group Co., Ltd. (CR). Held on the eve of the 12th UIC World Congress on High-Speed Rail, the assembly not only served as a key moment for governance discussions and strategic reflection, but also as a call to collective action.

A pivotal year for governance and leadership

UIC Chair Dr Alan Beroud opened the assembly by emphasising that rail stands at a crossroads, facing both unprecedented challenges, but also presented with historic opportunities to transform global mobility. He underscored that the future of rail depends on the sector's collective ability to build bridges – not only across borders, but also between modes of transport, technical disciplines, and different stakeholders. Collaboration and innovation are no longer optional: they are essential to seize these opportunities.

The assembly reaffirmed that achieving a large-scale modal shift towards rail requires seamless integration with other modes of transport. Dr Beroud emphasised that creating smooth interfaces and driving widespread standardisation are critical drivers for reducing costs and accelerating implementation worldwide. Given the complexity of this task, it calls for active engagement from all UIC members and their networks, especially those influencing infrastructure investments and transport policies.

Recognising the growing importance of regional initiatives, the assembly highlighted UIC's transformation into a global platform, one that embraces innovative ideas from all continents. By leveraging regional hubs, bilateral projects, and dynamic partnerships, the organisation is strengthening its capacity to effectively address different local needs while fostering global cooperation.

Mid-year review and growing global impact

UIC Director General François Davenne presented a detailed mid-year report, drawing attention to UIC's expanding project portfolio, stronger partnerships, and enhanced global visibility. He stated that UIC has strengthened its role as both a pioneer and operational platform thanks to robust data and technical expertise.

Project activity has accelerated considerably over recent years, supported by new tools that improve financial transparency, simplify member participation, and enhance project management efficiency. These developments have increased member engagement and value creation across the network.

UIC continues to play a key role in Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking (EU-Rail), contributing to system architecture, operational rules, 5G development, and the innovation roadmap. The Future Railway Mobile Communication System (FRMCS) framework has been established as the next-generation radio communication standard, with the MORANE 2 programme underway to validate deployment options. A contingency plan coordinated with the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) aims to deliver a version 3 pre-test specification by the end of 2026.

In addition, the Open Sales and Distribution Model (OSDM) has been formally recognised within the European regulatory framework. The OpenRail Foundation now offers a neutral, open-source environment to accelerate software innovation.

UIC has also finalised monitoring systems for technical document usage and mapped standardisation migration pathways, further consolidating its position as a trusted global standard-setting body.

Strategic priorities for 2026–2028

In order to anchor UIC development in a broad consultation process, the six strategic pillars for the upcoming UIC Work Programme 2026-2028 were presented to the GA six months prior to its final adoption at the December 2025 session. These focus areas: digital transformation, system performance, sustainability, technical standardisation, innovation, and global interoperability will be discussed until then, to ensure alignment and shared responsibility.

Moreover, UIC is committed to reducing its reliance on membership fees by enhancing productivity, offering a wider range of services and encouraging participation in co-financed projects. Therefore, a new methodology will be introduced to assess a project's value from a member perspective, alongside the development of a business plan to strengthen UIC's role as a service provider based on its technical expertise.

Strengthening cooperation with institutional stakeholders was also reaffirmed as vital for positively influencing infrastructure investment and transport policy globally.

Advocacy as a core mission

Advocacy has been firmly established as a central mission for UIC. Since early 2025, the newly created transversal Advocacy Unit has been actively involved in key global processes, including the UN climate agenda, preparations for COP30, and multilateral infrastructure financing. Joint positions with partners such as the International Association of Public Transport (UITP), advocate for increased rail investment through climate finance mechanisms.

This advocacy initiative aims to secure rail's central role in public transport policies, also extending to strategic domains such as military mobility.

The narrative promotes a paradigm shift towards a large-scale modal shift to rail and public transport, emphasising the need to channel funding into rail infrastructure, reduce costs through standardisation, and highlight railways as leaders in innovation, particularly in high-speed rail, 5G, digital tools, and resilience.

Operational roadmap and innovation

UIC reaffirmed its commitment to delivering interoperable solutions across the rail sector, focusing on key areas such as the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), 5G deployment, digital automatic coupling, multimodality, and cybersecurity.

Furthermore, the UIC Rail Academy continues to expand its training portfolio to build capacity among members.

Regional projects are being strengthened with new cooperative models, including bilateral initiatives with undertakings like Saudi Arabia Railways (SAR) and the Moroccan National Railways (ONCF). Efforts to enhance regional hubs, technical assistance programmes, and member interfaces aim to improve accessibility, transparency, and support worldwide.

While Europe remains UIC's historical base, the organisation's strength lies in its openness and inclusivity, embracing innovation from all regions to ensure that the railways remain a cornerstone of sustainable mobility and a beacon of innovation and cooperation.

Institutional continuity and financial outlook

The members approved the 2024 accounts and confirmed a positive financial outlook for the remainder of the year. Stefano Pierini, Italian State Railways (FS) Group, was reappointed as Chair of the UIC Finance Platform for a new two-year term, ensuring strategic continuity ahead of the leadership transitions scheduled for December 2025.

Welcoming new members and looking ahead

The General Assembly welcomed four new members: the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL), Siyuan Survey and Design Group Co., Ltd from China, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Railways Authority from Saudi Arabia, and ALTO from Canada, operator of the High Frequency Rail project. It also approved the reinstatement of Libyan Railways as an active member.

The next UIC General Assembly will take place on 11 December 2025 in Poland, where the 2026–2028 Work Programme and project portfolio will be formally adopted, marking a decisive step for sustainable rail mobility worldwide.

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