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From commitments to capital: UIC advocates for policy and finance for rail development at COP30

As global leaders gather at COP30 in Belém, Brazil, to accelerate climate action, the International Union of Railways (UIC) is proud to represent the rail sector – a sector that is too often overlooked when it comes to climate finance and policy, despite its proven environmental, economic and social benefits.

Transport is responsible for nearly 24% of global CO₂ emissions and remains the fastest-growing source of emissions worldwide. To meet the 1.5°C target, transport emissions must fall by 59% by 2050. However, current investment trends are moving in the wrong direction: rail and public transport receive only 23% of transport climate finance, while more polluting modes continue to dominate infrastructure spending.

This funding gap is not just a missed opportunity – it's a risk. Without a modal shift to rail, countries will struggle to meet their climate targets, as both passenger and freight transport will remain locked into high-emission modes, underutilising the most efficient, low-carbon solution and perpetuating car and truck dependency in the face of rising emissions and declining investment in sustainable transport.

UIC's presence at COP30 is therefore not symbolic – it is strategic and essential. For the first time, COP will feature a dedicated Transport Pavilion, and UIC is proud to be a sponsor and active contributor. This will ensure that rail is visibly and meaningfully represented in global climate discussions – and that its potential is recognised by policymakers, financiers and development partners.

At COP30, UIC will spotlight three strategic areas of work:

Rail in NDC 3.0: Tracking progress, driving change

UIC's latest analysis of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) shows that 9 out of 19 countries now include modal shift to rail in their climate plans, with 58% of rail-related NDCs referencing freight.

Countries such as Chile have committed to evaluating public-private cooperation mechanisms by 2028 to improve multimodal infrastructure, technology and railway capabilities – all aimed at increasing the modal share of rail transport.

Article 6.4 and carbon credits: Unlocking climate finance

Together with UITP, UIC has released a joint position paper highlighting how Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement can help unlock climate finance for rail and public transport, particularly in LMICs, by translating NDCs into bankable, low-carbon projects. UIC also explores broader carbon market opportunities – including Article 6.2, national and subnational offset schemes, and voluntary markets – to reward rail's environmental performance and generate debt-free revenue that can strengthen project financing. Recent studies carried out by UIC show that expanding rail in LMICs to match top-performing peers could avoid up to 1.8 Gt of CO₂ by 2050, potentially generating \$27–72 billion in carbon finance at \$15–40 per tonne CO₂eq.

Rail Resilience (RERA): Future-proofing transport systems

UIC's Resilient Railways (RERA) provides technical guidance to help railways adapt to climate extremes. This includes:

- Climate risk mapping and vulnerability assessments
- Resilience KPIs to track progress
- Nature-based solutions and cross-sector collaboration

As climate impacts intensify, building resilience into transport systems is not optional – it's essential.

The goal of UIC's engagement at COP is not only to highlight the environmental performance of rail, but also to advocate for integrated, multimodal systems that move away from the predominant high-intensity road transport, as highlighted in the First Global Stocktake to the Paris Agreement.

UIC representatives Joo Hyun Ha and Lucie Anderton are attending COP30, alongside UIC members, including ANP Trilhos and Kenya Railways, to share insights, build partnerships and advance the case for rail in climate policy.

 **Follow our updates at www.uic.org and on our LinkedIn page.**

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