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UIC, the worldwide railway organisation, brought its Members together virtually for its General Assembly

Among the key topics:

Covid-19 Task Force, standardisation progress, 5G Strategy for Rail, UIC Sustainability Declaration Pledge

(Paris, 1 July 2020) UIC, the worldwide railway organisation, brought its Members together virtually on 30 June for its Executive Board and the 96th General Assembly. The meetings were chaired by UIC Chairman Mr Gianluigi Castelli, Chairman of Ferroviedello Stato Italiane (FS).

Report from the UIC Chairman

Mr Castelli introduced Jan Grauls, Commissioner general of EUROPALIA (International Arts Festival which will organise in 2021 a dedicated edition on trains) who gave a keynote speech and presented the event to UIC Members. The Festival will take place end of 2021, during the European Year of Rail. Mr Castelli said: *"We as UIC are eager to contribute to EUROPALIA TRAINS 2021 with specific initiatives and activities, so as to raise our international standing and of course the attention of the main international institutions on the added value we can offer, on our needs and main priorities. EUROPALIA will be a prominent partner in addressing the recovery challenges for our sector"*.

Speaking about the Covid-19 crisis, he thanked François Davenne and Marc Guigon, who led the UIC Covid-19 Task Force, for the excellent and massive coordination in this challenging field. *"The UIC Covid-19 Task Force and the Contingency Plan – which I proposed right after the outbreak of the coronavirus disease - are the most visible expression of our readiness to summon forces, work together, tackle global safety and operational emergencies and to respond promptly with a well-defined global recovery strategy"*.

Despite Covid-19 crisis, UIC continued to promote activities, its work programme 2020-2022 and its strategic focus areas. He mentioned particularly the progress on Research, Innovation, Digital transformation, Standardisation – *"This year is crucial for our standardisation progress"* - Sustainable development.

Concerning his role as UIC Chairman, he added: *I am actively doing everything in my power to promote UIC as an institution that can tackle risks and challenges, guarantee rail competitiveness, ensure technological excellence and – ultimately - select the best safety and operational practices and make them available to all of our associates. This is made possible by our commitment to make the UIC both a resilient and inclusive organisation, being aware that mutual cooperation and participation will be decisive to tackle this crucial phase and reach an evolutionary leap that will long outlast the immediate crisis"*.

Mid-term year report of the UIC Director General

François Davenne, UIC Director General, informed Members that UIC stayed active and that no major projects nor key activities was delayed during the Covid-19 crisis. He thanked all the Members for their valuable contributions to the UIC Covid-19 Task force work and underlined the spirit of solidarity and the empathy between Members during this period.

As technical platform to address Members' needs, he insisted on the fact that UIC has to set up structuring projects with innovative financing, combining greater recognition and better financing. Among them: FRMCS (the Future Railway Mobile Communication System) demonstrator financed by H2020 with the participation of the manufacturing community, OSDM (Open Sales and

Distribution Model) creation allowing to foster open ticketing, working on a digital freight platform with the strong implication of Shift2Rail in particular for DAC (Digital Automatic Coupling), financing, Blockchain project.

In terms of research, he specified the role of UIC in Shift2Rail 2. UIC welcoming the recent recognition of the need of establishing a system pillar, he mentioned that UIC strategic objectives are aligned with the objectives of Shift2Rail. He added that UIC would be the relevant place for consistency of railway architecture, thanks to its global vision.

François Davenne also informed Members that inter-regional cooperation will be improved, thanks to more regular meetings with Regional chairs and more virtual “UIC days” organised with Members in order to strengthen the accuracy of the UIC work programme. Finally, he gave an update on the work done to promote sustainable free carbon transport, one of the key UIC objectives.

UIC Covid-19 Task Force: the concept of RAILsilience

Marc Guigon, Passenger Director at UIC presented to UIC Members the progress of the work done by the UIC Covid-19 Task Force that he has led since the beginning of March. This task force groups together UIC Members and international organisations. The work is carried out by a UIC multidisciplinary team which successfully regularly produces guidance documents, based on best practices shared between members and partners. The focus is made on the management of the crisis and the recovery phase. “RAILsilience” is a newly born concept which emerged during this period in order to express the capacity of Railways to manage the crisis, adapt their organisation, meet the new challenges of the “new normal”. The UIC Members thanked UIC very much for the work of this task force, which concretely demonstrates the added value that UIC can bring to the whole community by federating its Members. A dedicated webpage contains all useful information on this subject. <https://uic.org/covid-19/>

Standardisation progress

With European subjects growing in number, Mr François Davenne has determined that it is important to have the EU subjects focused on full time at director level. Therefore, UIC Members were informed that Mr Simon Fletcher handed over responsibility of standardisation to Ms Célia Levy who is now the new Chief Standardisation Officer (CSO). Mr Fletcher will continue to be engaged in European standardisation matters in partnership with Ms Levy. Célia Levy is now part of the UIC Management Committee. She will also lead UIC subsidiary ETF (Editions Techniques Ferroviaires – Railway Technical Publications) and she will work closely with UIC Rail System Department in order to boost the UIC Leaflets migration. UIC Members were informed that since the beginning of the year, 24 IRS (International Railway Solutions) have been already released. International Railway Solution are a structured framework of documents prepared and published by UIC for use within the railway sector. They blend together a range of voluntary solutions to support the design, construction, operation and maintenance of the railway system and the services that the sector provides.

5G Strategy for Rail

An update of the programme advancement was given during the meeting, highlighting at the same time the potential of innovation this new 5G technology will unleash for the whole railway industry. François Davenne said: *“We are the centre of expertise for 5G in Rail. FRMCS will become a world standard, embedded in 3GPP (3rd Generation Private-Public Partnership) specifications in order to be used all over the world.”*

UIC Sustainable Declaration pledge

UIC members were invited to sign the 2019 Railway Climate Declaration, a pledge to commit to further action for climate change abatement.

By signing this Pledge, these Members supported this initiative and renewed their commitment to a greener Railway sector. On this occasion, UIC expressed its deep appreciation and announced that a communication campaign by the end of this year will encourage potential other members to get involved in this process.

New Members

During this General Assembly, 8 new Members were welcomed by UIC.

In Asia-Pacific: National High-Speed Rail Corporation Ltd (NHSRCL), India as affiliate member, CRECC (Chinese Rail Research Centre), DRT (Railway Regulator Thailand), CRDC (Chinese design and consulting company)

In Europe: Srbija Kargo (Serbian freight operator), ZPCG (passenger operator, Montenegro), Norske Tog (Rolling Stock Leasing Company, Norway), Rail Baltica.

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