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## **UIC General Assembly 2024: Leading rail into the future through innovation, sustainability, regional cooperation and standardisation**

(Paris, 13 December 2024) The International Union of Railways (UIC) hosted its 105<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Paris, bringing together railway leaders from across the globe. The assembly focused on shaping the future of rail transport, emphasising innovation, regional development, and sustainability as critical pillars for advancing the sector in a rapidly changing world.

UIC Director General François Davenne captured the essence of the discussions, saying, *“The rail sector stands at a crossroads, uniquely positioned to deliver transformative solutions to combat climate change, improve connectivity, and enhance economic growth. Through cooperation, innovation, and leadership, we are building the future of sustainable mobility.”*

### **Africa: a driving force for rail development**

A standout moment of the Assembly was the keynote speech delivered by H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure, Energy, and Digitalisation. Her address highlighted Africa’s progress in rail development and the transformative potential of the African Integrated High-Speed Rail Network (AIHSRN), a flagship initiative under the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

*“Harmonised and integrated railway networks are essential for unlocking Africa’s trade, connectivity, and socio-economic potential,”* Dr Abou-Zeid stated. *“Through partnerships between the African Union and UIC, we are paving the way for resilient and inclusive transport systems that support sustainable development across the continent.”*

She emphasised the challenges Africa faces, such as high transport costs and fragmented infrastructure, but also highlighted the enormous opportunities that rail offers in overcoming these barriers. The AIHSRN aims to create an interoperable, climate-resilient network that enhances trade, reduces costs, and connects communities across the continent.

UIC Chair Dr Alan Beroud praised Africa’s ambitious vision, noting, *“Africa’s potential in rail is unmatched, and its transformative projects inspire the global rail community. Our work with the African Union demonstrates how partnerships can deliver real change for people and economies.”*

### **Innovation: FRMCS and the digital future of rail**

At the heart of the discussions was the Future Railway Mobile Communication System (FRMCS), a next-generation digital communication platform designed to modernise and enhance railway operations globally. FRMCS will replace outdated systems with a flexible and scalable solution that supports automated train operations, real-time monitoring, and enhanced passenger services.

*“FRMCS is not just a technical upgrade; it is the foundation of rail’s digital transformation,”* said Davenne. *“It will enable safer, more efficient, and seamless cross-border rail operations, empowering the sector to meet the modern transport needs.”*

The assembly also focused on the Open Sales and Distribution Model (OSDM), which simplifies multimodal ticketing systems. This initiative aligns with UIC’s commitment to passenger-centric solutions, making rail more accessible and attractive as a sustainable transport option.

## **Climate advocacy**

The General Assembly underscored UIC's leadership in sustainability efforts around the world, building on its advocacy at COP29. UIC presented its [Nationally Determined Contribution \(NDC\) Template](#) for rail, which guides governments in integrating ambitious rail targets into their climate change strategies. The templates received strong support from members, who expressed their enthusiasm for continuing this collective effort.

Particular emphasis was placed on the successful approval of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which establishes trusted and transparent carbon markets for cross-border cooperation. This mechanism is expected to reduce the cost of implementing national climate plans (NDCs) by up to \$250 billion per year, enhancing the global transition to sustainable practices. These achievements were complemented by the publication of the [UIC Resilient Rail](#) and [UIC Carbon Markets and Rail](#) white papers, as part of the negotiation outcomes.

Furthermore, the outlook is promising for COP30 in Brazil, with opportunities to strengthen partnerships and deepen global cooperation. François Davenne emphasised the importance of robust communication, to highlight Article 6's framework and its implications for the sector. He noted, "*The adoption of Article 6 represents a transformative shift in carbon market mechanisms, positioning rail as a key solution for global climate goals.*"

## **Regional and interregional partnerships**

Regional development remains a cornerstone of UIC's strategy, as Africa's AIHRN flagship initiative shows, demonstrating the power of regional support in driving trade and connectivity. In the Asia-Pacific region, new projects focus on innovation and sustainable transport, while Europe continues to prioritise digital transformation, high-speed rail, and seamless ticketing. Moreover, the Middle East and Latin America regions are deepening their participation in UIC Opt-in projects, fostering innovation and knowledge-sharing across regions.

*"Regional initiatives are the building blocks of UIC's global mission,"* said Dr Beroud. *"By empowering our regions and fostering interregional cooperation, we are ensuring that rail remains a unifying force for sustainable transport worldwide."*

Interregional cooperation was highlighted as a key facilitator for sharing expertise and addressing global challenges. Leaders stressed the importance of building bridges between regions to accelerate progress and maximise the impact of regional innovation.

## **Standardisation: a global framework for connectivity**

The assembly highlighted the UIC's Standardisation Strategy 2030, which aims to modernise technical documentation and support interoperability. The strategy is essential for aligning rail systems worldwide, ensuring seamless operations across borders and fostering innovation.

*"Standardisation is about creating a shared language for rail,"* François Davenne noted. *"It ensures that systems can work together, delivering efficiency, safety, and innovation for a connected future."*

Progress on the migration of UIC's technical leaflets to International Railway Standards (IRSSs) was shared, with a focus on enhancing the usability and adoption of these standards to meet different needs within the industry.

## **Looking ahead: a vision for 2025**

The assembly set clear objectives for 2025, focusing on the implementation of FRMCS, the expansion of multimodal solutions such as OSDM, and the deepening of regional coordination through flagship projects such as the AIHRN. These priorities align with UIC's broader mission to drive sustainability, innovation, and connectivity across the global rail sector.

Preparations for the 12<sup>th</sup> UIC World Congress on High-Speed Rail, to be held in Beijing in July 2025, are progressing well. The congress will provide a platform for rail leaders and innovators to share ideas, showcase developments, and explore solutions to modern transport challenges.

*"Our regions inspire our global vision, and the congress in Beijing will celebrate rail's ability to connect people, economies, and ideas,"* François Davenne concluded.

## **Conclusion**

As the General Assembly drew to a close, Dr Beroud reflected on the collective achievements and future ambitions of the rail community.

*“Today, we have reaffirmed our commitment to cooperation, innovation, and sustainability,” he said. “Together, we are shaping a rail sector that is resilient, inclusive, and visionary, ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow.”*

## **CONTACT**

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## **ABOUT**

### **UIC**

UIC is the worldwide organisation for the promotion of rail transport at a global level and for the collaborative development of the railway system. It brings together more than 200 members across all 5 continents, and includes rail operators, infrastructure managers, railway service providers, and more. UIC maintains close links with all stakeholders in the rail transport sector around the world, including manufacturers, railway associations, and public authorities, as well as with other domains and sectors whose experiences may be beneficial to rail development. UIC's main missions include understanding the business needs of the rail community, developing innovative programmes to identify solutions to these needs, and preparing and publishing documents such as reports, specifications and guidelines that facilitate the implementation of innovative railway solutions. [www.uic.org](http://www.uic.org)