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UIC celebrates the introduction of high speed in Turkey

First stage in the development of a competitive rail network at the intersection between Europe, Asia and the Middle East

(Paris, UIC, 19 March 2009). The International Union of Railways (UIC) wishes to congratulate the Turkish State Railways (TCDD) and its Chief Executive *Mr Süleyman Karaman* on the opening of the first section of the high speed line between Ankara, the administrative capital, and Eskisehir on the Ankara-Istanbul line. The section that was officially opened on Friday 13 March includes a 197 km of new track between Eskisehir and Esenkent, on which trains can run at 250 kph, and 39 km of existing track between Esenkent and Ankara which will be used until the new line is completed. Construction work on this 533 km-long high speed line, which will connect the two main cities of Turkey, Istanbul and Ankara, began in 2004.

The official opening of the Ankara-Eskisehir section was held on 13 March in the presence of the Prime Minister of Turkey, *Mr Recep Tayyip Erdogan*, the Transport Minister *Mr Binali Yildirim* and many other Turkish public personalities, including *Mr Karaman* and the TCDD management, as well as a delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran, led by the Minister for Roads and Transport *Mr Hamid Behbahani* and the Vice-Minister *Dr Hassan Ziari*, who is also the President of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI). Among the guests present was the Director General of Syrian Railways *Mr Georges Mokabari*, UIC Provisional Administrator *Ms Béatrice Dunogué-Gaffié* and high level representatives of the governments or railways of Spain, Germany, Serbia, Azerbaijan and Saudi Arabia.

The Turkish high speed train (**YHT**), manufactured in Spain, runs at a commercial speed of 250 kph. The journey time between Ankara and Eskisehir is of 1h 27min. Once the Eskisehir-Istanbul section is completed, in 30 months' time, the journey time between Ankara and Istanbul will be reduced to 3 hours. In Istanbul this project will join up with the construction of a rail tunnel under the Bosphorus, which will make a seamless transport connection possible.

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Putting in place a competitive high speed network is one of the main areas of focus in the development of railways in Turkey. Other projects worth mentioning in this context are the Ankara (Polath)-Konya line (212 km), on which construction work began in 2006 and is due to end in 2011, as well as the beginning of construction work (on 13 March) on the Ankara-Sivas high speed line (460 km).

Thanks to these ambitious projects on several fronts, a high quality passenger transport network will come to life in this region which constitutes the intersection between Europe, Asia and the Middle East. By adapting the successful high speed models of Japan and Europe to this region, we can expect “YHT” to enable TCDD to gain significant volumes of traffic on the axes involved, in particular against air transport, thus contributing to the development of an efficient, cost-effective and environmentally friendly transport network.

Turkey constitutes a reference point for other Middle-Eastern countries also wishing to develop high speed connections in the near future (for example Iran and Saudi Arabia). Discussions on this subject are currently taking place within the UIC Regional Assembly for the Middle East, chaired by *Mr Süleyman Karaman*, Chief Executive of TCDD. TCDD is also a member of the UIC Regional Assembly for Europe.

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