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The worldwide railway organisation UIC and Iranian Railways RAI have successfully organised the 7th UIC nextstation Conference in Tehran under the theme *Railway Stations Boosting the City*

More than 400 participants from 20 nationalities

(Paris, 12 November 2019) From 11 – 13 November 2019, Iranian Railways, RAI, together with UIC, the worldwide railway organisation, are hosting in Tehran the 7th edition of the UIC nextstation Conference, the global reference for leaders and decision-makers to share their latest experiences and best practice regarding the design, financing and operation of railway stations.

Between two nextstation conferences, UIC capitalises its approach by completing the vision of railway station development by a complementary aspect of the issue at each conference. Having discussed the issue of station financing in Moscow in 2013, rethinking Stations for Future Intermobility in Marrakech in 2015 and Smart Stations in Smart Cities in Madrid in 2017, this year the delegates are discussing “Railway stations boosting the city”. Beyond these conferences, a UIC dedicated working body, the Station Manager Global Group (SMGG), catalyses these developments and gives the opportunity to participants to continue to work together on the subject.

Marc Guigon, UIC Passenger Director, moderated the opening ceremony: *“The Iranian Railways have many plans for station development. Iranian Railways have proposed to be the host of nextstation 2019 to make the most of the opportunity to exchange experiences of station specialists around the world in their development plans. I hope that this plan will be implemented in the most appropriate way for Iranian Railways.”*

The organisation of this event in Tehran on this issue was indeed the right place at the right time, as Iran is currently preparing a programme involving around 30 railway stations, which is based on the Transit oriented development (TOD).

Among the personalities who launched the conference, Mr Mohammad Eslami, Minister of Roads and Urban Development of I.R Iran, said that happiness and trains are linked. The big family of Railways creates the opportunity to travel safely around the world and within cities. Iran has a long history of railways. In previous years, we have focused to extend the network around the country. We have invested a lot in

order to develop passenger transport. This shows the strong determination of the Islamic Republic of Iran to extend the network.

He said: *“It is crucial in the agenda to implement the rail-based city model. This new model intends to shift policies and programmes in order to increase the opportunities for travellers to use railways within as well as between cities, including subways, in a sustainable way. Iran is focused on reducing the costs and time consumption, to resolve congestion and make cities more efficient, more liveable. In this context stations should also be beautiful, since beauty is also key to successful architecture both outside and inside stations.”*

Mr Saeid Rasouli, Vice Minister for Roads and Urban Development, and President of Iranian Railways said: *“The Islamic Republic of Iran has been considered as one of the first countries in the region concerning railway and railway construction. In Iran the idea of constructing the railway has emerged since the second half of the nineteenth century during which railway and its function was defined with the aim of boosting economic, social, cultural and political ties with the rest of the world.*

For vast countries such as Iran, rail transportation is one of the best practices to meet the needs of passenger and freight transportation. In today’s world Iran could be considered as one of the key players in the field of rail transportation in the region; moreover regarding its extensive railway network, it links north Europe to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean and it is also located on the Silk Road.

During this event the experience and ideas of the experts in the field of rail transportation and urban development will be exchanged and discussed focusing on sustainable development based on rail transportation in various fields such as the design and operation of railway stations, station governance, development of multi-purpose stations, promotion of the station location in cities and defining efficient links between railway stations and intracity transport networks, improving the services offered to the passengers at and around stations.

Expansion of applying modern technologies and methods in offering services is one of the achievements expected at this event.”

Mr François Davenne, UIC Director General, particularly insisted on: *“Railways being the backbone of mobility – it’s not only about capacity but also about stations. Stations are both a living part of our cities and also a crucial part of the rail system. The 7th UIC nextstation conference is covering the station as an integral part of cities and its role in defining the urban setting while emphasising the approaches to leverage the potential of stations to boost the growth of the city.”* He added: *“The digital revolution is here. We need to be able to model digitally the complex station ecosystem for designing the stations of the future.”* And then: *“Accommodating the rapidly growing urbanisation will require a major modal shift to railway and public transport. There are high expectations. Stations are in the middle of the urban and transport ecosystem to meet with these expectations. This conference will bring concrete solutions for building TOD (Transit oriented development). Stations are interfaces with cities, and with other modes. They are both a place and a node, and it is our responsibility to make them flexible, adapted and an integrated part of the city.”*

An initial round table dealt with “Rail based city” and the second one will be focused on “Generating added value for cities: main challenges”. Four parallel sessions are also organised on:

- Station design and the urbanistic approach
- Sustainability, Smart solutions for stations and the impact of digital
- Services & commercial activities
- Station management & financing

Mr Pirooz Hanachi, Mayor of Tehran, insisted on the need to develop a multi-centred city around the railway backbone. Targeted investment and savvy use of resources are key success factors. In this framework, Tehran is implementing an urban toll, in order to decrease the presence of cars. The town planning should also be amended in order to liberate space for the citizens for a friendly and sustainable city. He also highlighted the need to develop satellite towns linked to megacities, such as Tehran, to face the congestion. In this model, transport links are essential.

More content on these subjects will follow.

On 13 November, a technical visit will give the possibility to the participants to discover the railway station of Isfahan.

Publication of a new Handbook on Railway stations

On the occasion of this conference, UIC has prepared a handbook on “Boosting the city” available here:

https://uic.org/IMG/pdf/2019_nextstation_railway_stations_boosting_the_city.pdf

UIC warmly thanks the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran (RAI) for the perfect organisation of the event.

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