1st UIC African Rail Digital Summit

From vision to implementation

(Cape Town, 27 February 2019) In the framework of its Digital Platform actions, UIC, the worldwide railway organisation, has organised the 1st African Rail Digital Summit in Cape Town from 25 – 27 February 2019. This event, co-organised with UIC, African Union and NEPAD and co-sponsored by 4Tel and Huawei, has been attended by over 100 participants from over 20 African countries as well as representatives of China, Indonesia, Europe and Australia.

This Summit, focusing on the various aspects and the importance of the Digital Transformation of Railways, is the first ever event in Africa, and has been organised with the aim to:

- develop Africa Digital Railways for the future for the continent;
- bring together for the first time, railway sector stakeholders, politicians, representatives of industry, railway experts, economists, universities, the supply industry and digital ecosystems;
- identify the major projects to be launched;
- support the coordination of the activities developed under the 2040 vision for railways aligned with the aspirations of AU Agenda 2063 with respect to the railway sector;
- encourage the design and development of a real African digital rail strategy.

The opening was delivered by UIC Director General Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, followed by Dr Hisham Arafat, Minister of Transport of Egypt, whose presence underlined importance of the Summit in the view of Egypt taking over the presidency of African Union in February 2019. Further opening speeches were made by Adama Deen, NEPAD, and Rokia Belkebir, ONCF, representing Mohamed Rabie Khlie, Director General of Moroccan Railways ONCF and Chairman of the UIC African Region.

A statement was made by Mr Karidio, Minister of Transport of Niger, the landmark country of the summit.
Further presentations were made by the World Bank, the African Union, then Tunisian Railways SNCF, the current President of the Union of African Railways, the supply industry and African start-ups.

Four workshops were held within the summit:
- Digital chart for African Rail vision 2040
- Identification of major digital railway projects to be launched
- Set up of profitable synergies between rail, industry and African digital ecosystem
- As Africa already launched mobile communication services, what is the prospect for a “leap frog” approach for a digital rail in Africa?

François Davenne, UIC Deputy Director General, presented the main outputs of the workshops and drafts of the proposed strategic outcomes for a digital rail in Africa.

Among these:

- the strategic need to align the deployment of fibre optic cable for a high-speed telecom network with the realisation of the rail network;

- the creation of a digital platform dedicated to exchanges and sharing for the African Rail companies with UIC Africa Region and Union of African Railways;

- Africa shall endeavour to implement new digital services based on real-time interactions with customers (e.g. real time localisation of trains implemented by ONCF);

- mutation/transition to support continuous digital changes with a view to scalable implementation;

- management of the interfaces to ensure interoperability and inter-modality on the African continent.

Jean-Pierre Loubinoux underlined the four reasons why this event had been decided and why in Cape Town:

- The UIC Digital Platform is leading its actions around three well-known principles: “Share - Open - Connect”. South Africa and especially Cape Town reflect these key principles.

- UIC believes in rail as a backbone of mobility for our new societies

- UIC believes in inputs of the Digital Revolution to improve rail’s rapidity, reactivity and connectivity
- And finally, UIC believes in Africa and its young generations to create rail of the future to answer new through pan-African web and network

With our partners, African Union, NEPAD and African Rail Companies, this initiative has been a success full of promises.

The key moments of this summit will shortly be available on our UIC YouTube channel and the next UIC Digital Progress Paper (version 7 to be issued in June) will aggregate these major outputs.

Special thanks to the host country, South Africa, to our partners, African Union, NEPAD and to the sponsors of the event, 4Tel and HUAWEI and to the UIC Africa Coordination, Thierry Bera, Maria Lafont and Francis Bédel.

To watch the video Share-open-connect, the motto of the UIC digital platform please click here: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=sDsj7Ek5DFo

To consult the UIC Africa 2040 brochure please click here: https://uic.org/com/IMG/pdf/strategic_vision_africa.pdf

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