



PRESS RELEASE NO. 20/2021

UIC, the worldwide railway organisation, brings its members together for its 99th General Assembly

(Paris, 10 December 2021) On the eve of its centenary, UIC, the worldwide railway organisation, brought its members together online on 8 and 9 December for its Executive Board and 99th General Assembly. The meetings were chaired by UIC Chairman Krzysztof Mamiński, CEO of PKP (Polskie Koleje Państwowe, Polish State Railways).

Mr Mamiński said: “Next year we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of UIC, of which Polish State Railways was also a founding member. This will coincide with the completion of the UIC work programme for 2020-2022, with five strategic areas that fully align with my strategy and which I would like to continue to support until the end of 2022 and beyond:

- Promoting rail transport at international level,
- Consolidating the image of UIC as a technical platform and reference for the sector,
- Highlighting the added value of UIC through the innovative projects it carries out,
- Promoting sustainable transport with a low carbon footprint,
- Ethical management and effective leadership of the organisation for the benefit of the members.

The global development of railways is important to me because it is vital to the societies in which we live and, above all, to our planet. Railways can help and are key players in economic and sustainable development, with the specific aims of the Sustainable Development Goals widely recognised by the international community. UIC's participation in the European Year of Rail events and the symposium held earlier this month prove that railways are attracting more attention and support from international partners. This could not have been achieved without the regular activities, research and events we organised in 2021 with other organisations such as UITP, ITF, UN Regional Commissions and Conventions, Asian Development Bank, CER, ERA, OSJD and CCTT. I have mentioned only a few organisations, and please forgive me if I do not mention all of them because we already have 100 MoUs (cooperative agreements) in place.

The rail sector offers, among other things, many opportunities for technical innovation and real progress. As the most efficient and environmentally friendly mode of transport, it also faces many challenges: new fuels for rail such as hydrogen are opening up new areas for research and offer possibilities for concrete achievements in addressing the climate challenge.

On the other hand, UIC is a reference in the field of digitalisation and innovation, always striving to achieve a high level of safety, making railways play a more significant role in our society. 2021 is also a key year for other technologies developed by UIC, such as FRMCS and OSDM.”

Mr Mamiński added: “As Chairman of UIC, I intend to promote cooperation between UIC and our members in Europe and beyond to ensure that railways play an important role in achieving specific climate and environmental objectives on a global scale. On all these continents, as in the European Union, there is great determination to develop and invest in railways. This is very encouraging! UIC as an organisation is also determined, through its involvement in interregional projects in cooperation with its members, to provide instruments for the interoperability and technical development of the rail sector.

Finally, my wish is that by drawing up UIC's future work programme for 2023-2025 and the Railway Vision 2030, we can show that we can respond to environmental challenges and climate change and properly strengthen the position of the railways in the global transport and logistics chain.”

A keynote speech was given by Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the African Union Commission (AUC). In particular, Dr Abou-Zeid emphasised collaboration and the need to strengthen links between the AUC and UIC. “In terms of objectives and concerning the sustainable development aspect, we are on the same line; the African Union contributes to the emergence of sustainable cities and it is true that rail is much more efficient than road in large cities in particular; this is also true for freight. Rail emits 75% less than other modes, especially road. The development of infrastructure projects is one of our major objectives. The integration of the continent is promoted by the African Union. The railways cannot go it alone. That is why interoperability specifications have been adopted to develop interoperability. A great change is underway: the AU is very ambitious in its objectives and we consider that the railways will be able to benefit from this movement of digitalisation, linked to the imperatives of sustainable development.” Finally, Dr Abou-Zeid reiterated the desire to improve infrastructure as one of Africa's major development objectives.

Report from the UIC Director General

UIC Director General François Davenne said that UIC will continue to implement its strategy with three key focus areas: **accountability**, **focus on UIC's added value** and the **development of interregional activities**.

Accountability

Based on the successful implementation of the 2020 contingency plan, UIC has been able to balance its 2021 budget. The UIC Activity Booklet, which includes details of working groups, clearly explains for the first time how UIC works.

Focus on UIC's added value

Mr Davenne emphasised the importance of being able to explain what UIC does. Advocating for rail with a compelling narrative, “Design a better future”, is one such aspect of its added value and was presented at COP26. Mr Davenne explained that COP26 has provided greater visibility for UIC. Its involvement has been a success, with participation in the Marrakech partnership event on 9 November in partnership with ETF and the Transport Day on 10 November.

UIC has also established a partnership with UITP to develop a common declaration in favour of modal shift to public transport. Furthermore, UIC's vision for 2030 has been well received and will help UIC to better position the sector at COP27.

In terms of digitalisation, Mr Davenne highlighted various points relating to the Digital Platform: the first phase of DIGIM II (connected level crossings) has been completed successfully.

Entering the second phase, potential cooperation with a car manufacturer is being examined, the aim being to develop the system and possibly test the product in a live environment.

The successful completion of OSDM (Open Sales and Distribution Model) development by UIC, directed by the PSG (Passenger Service Group), has given a strong impetus to integration of ticketing with local transport. “We have a practical tool for implementing multimodality everywhere in the world”, Mr Davenne said.

Regarding the system dimension, he highlighted that a new steering structure has been set up with prominent CTOs and participation in the Europe’s Rail system pillar. UIC is preparing its involvement in the innovation pillar on key topics: 5G, modelling, and operations. Mr Davenne also noted the development of structural projects: artificial intelligence, telecoms, modelling, digital automatic coupling (DAC), etc.

Mr Davenne noted that developments similar to those mentioned by Dr Amani Abou-Zeid were being developed around the world. In this context, “we need to link not only our networks in Africa, but all over the world. To do this, we need to provide international solutions to link all these networks, to create a common network”.

Development of interregional projects

Based on the work of the Covid-19 taskforce led by UIC and developed with the help of Roland Berger Consulting, the ‘new normal’ study provides a clear view on the strategy to be implemented internationally. The results have been widely publicised since mid-2021 and have contributed to UIC outreach. Specific developments in the Asia-Pacific region are also mentioned. Extensive work has been done to ensure that key UIC developments such as FRMCS can be used internationally.

On 30 November and 1 December, UIC held a [symposium](#) to define a technical roadmap for the sector over the next five, ten and fifteen years involving all UIC regions. This will culminate in a manifesto based on the [UIC Vision 2030: Design a Better Future](#) prepared by the Sustainability Taskforce for UIC’s participation in COP26.

“This event will help to give a consistent technical vision for our next work programme 2023-2025: this is particularly crucial as 2022 will be the centenary of our association. We are delivering key tools for networks to safely perform. We can collectively be proud of what has been achieved”, said Mr Davenne.

With UIC celebrating its centenary in 2022, the association will have the opportunity to increase communication and prepare powerful messages for rail in Europe and worldwide, as well as at COP27.

Cooperation with third parties

One of UIC’s strengths is its ability to develop partnerships with recognised bodies in their fields of competence and expertise, expanding opportunities to promote railways worldwide as the most environmentally friendly mode of transport in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Several agreements and Memoranda of Understanding were signed during the General Assembly:

- Cooperation agreement with the European Union Agency for Railways on the Railway Interchange Coding System (RICS)
- General framework for cooperation with the European Union Agency for Railways

- Memorandum of Understanding with UN-Habitat (United Nations Human Settlement Programme)
- Memorandum of Understanding with the US High Speed Rail Association (USHSR), USA
- Memorandum of Understanding with Almaty University of Power Engineering and Telecommunications (AUET), Kazakhstan
- Memorandum of Understanding with CETIM (Technical Centre for Mechanical Industries), France
- Memorandum of Understanding with EMUHDR (Railway Engineers Association), Turkey

These agreements add to the almost 100 agreements already signed by UIC.

UIC post-Covid-19 'new normal': White Paper on the resumption of business after the Covid-19 pandemic – recommendations for the railway sector

The Covid-19 pandemic hit the rail sector hard in 2020, affecting both the passenger and freight sectors, and is continuing to have a major impact. It is difficult to have a mid- to long-term view of when the crisis will end, with the world now having to face new variants and with vaccination campaigns far from over. UIC and Roland Berger Strategy Consultants have developed a study on the 'new normal' post-Covid-19 and business recovery.

To read the document, please visit <https://lnkd.in/eQAsY3HP>

Finance

The UIC General Assembly noted the expected results for 2021 and approved the 2022 budget.

New members

The General Assembly approved the applications of the following members:

European region:

- Région Grand Est, Regional Transport Authority (France) as affiliate member

Middle East region:

- ARC, future infrastructure and freight operator (Jordan) as affiliate member
- TGA, Saudi Transport General Authority (Saudi Arabia) as affiliate member
- KAFRIZ, Iranian research centre as affiliate member

The date for the next Executive Board and 100th General Assembly will be communicated at a later stage.

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