



*The spoken word alone prevails*

Speech given by Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General  
on **this occasion of the General Assembly in Portoroz, Slovenia**

**26 June 2014**

Dear colleagues and friends,

Our presence today and tomorrow in Portoroz for our 84<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has a very symbolic value for the global railway family cooperating at UIC.

In 1921, 93 years ago, the first action leading to the creation of a “United International Community of Railways” was taken in this very location on the Adriatic.

Following World War I, and its destructions and divisions, in the wave of the Peace treaties, an intergovernmental conference was called in May 1921 in Portorosa, with the objective to create a system for international railway operations, in order to meet the urgent needs of social and economic recovery.

UIC was born and officialised in Paris in 1922 with the mission to set new bridges between nations and economic system through Railways.

Indeed, from its foundation, UIC appeared as a bridge linking railways across the globe.

From 46 Members in 29 countries, including Europe, Maghreb, Middle-East, Japan, China and Russia, UIC has continuously grown to become this “global railway family” counting today 240 members and 100 partnerships in 95 countries.

This is one of the major successes I would like to emphasise in the first place.

UIC is today the home of 7 million railway men and women serving the mobility of 7 billion people on Earth, bringing together different historical, cultural, political and economic traditions as well as different levels of development.

This mission of connecting railways and railway people has survived the crisis, the divisions that marked the 20<sup>th</sup> century and unfortunately still mark the world today.

This cooperative and friendly spirit led our members in 2009 to unanimously adopt the 3 core values guiding our daily actions: Unity – Solidarity – Universality

We all know that the initial mission of UIC to “harmonise the conditions for construction and operation of railways” has produced so many leaflets, studies and guidelines, constituting today a unique reference and expertise worldwide for member railways, standard bodies and suppliers.

Today standardisation is a strategic issue of UIC with the aims of improving our positions as operators as well as developing intercontinental and intermodal interoperability on corridors between regions or continents.

The recent publication of coherent “Strategic Visions” for the 6 UIC Regions represents another sign of consolidation of the worldwide railway family within UIC.

One of you recently compared UIC to a “worldwide Innovation Agency for railways”. And indeed in the past decades, my predecessors, among whom I wish to pay special tribute to Louis Armand, opened the ways of the future.

Let us remember in the 60s and 70s the promotion of electrification or high speed, introduction of information technology in traffic management systems.

This role is ensured today through a large number of projects, conferences and workshops addressing the essential challenges and fundamental values of railways in modern societies.

UIC is offering here a bridge between Past, Present and Future.

A further success for UIC credibility is our links and recognition with leading international organisations, United Nations and its bodies ECOSOC, UNFCCC, UNEP, UNECE, UNESCAP, as well as the Union of Africa, World Bank, ADB and other regional organisations.

In this regard UIC also acts as a bridge between transport, economy and society.

But the need to set up links and bridges is not limited to technology or operations. A historical responsibility for UIC in the future is the transmission of technical skills and managerial know-how to the younger generations who will replace us tomorrow.

In this case, we are building a bridge between generations and trying all together to contradict what Issac Newton said cynically one day about Mankind “spending more time erecting walls than building bridges”.

UIC members can be proud of 92 years of achievements and aspirations. On behalf of all of us who are preparing UIC today for tomorrow, I wish to pay tribute to all of them who gave us this chance.

Special thanks also to the authorities and Railways of Slovenia for their invitation to this exceptional place and time for us, which shows the world that UIC stays stronger than whatever tried, tries or will try to divide us externally or internally in our mission and our vision to unify the world with Railways.

Allow me to express and share with you tonight this deep feeling inside with the language of symbolic poetry, which I wrote for this special occasion:

### *The World is my country*

*Since its birth in Slovenia (as presently known)  
In nineteen twenty-two, UIC has grown  
And left Portoroz's Mediterranean shores  
Tasked with making railways a noble cause*

*So many journeys, to lands far and wide  
Promoting the railways, the lines of our lives  
Meetings, discussions, projects to plan  
With so many people, while we still can...*

*From China to Brazil, Turkey to India  
From Central Europe to the steppes of Mongolia  
From France to Morocco, Russia to Kazakhstan  
From the Middle-Eastern states to Japan and Iran*

*The corridors built to serve these nations  
Teach us the history of local populations  
Their future and fate, though regional at first  
Created a web reaching all around the earth*

*We learn of culture and dance, and music besides  
Bringing people together across all divides  
Beyond all boundaries, splits and divisions  
Caused by conflict, crises and political decisions*

*As we're swept away by the song of humankind  
We leave our roots and identity behind  
To form another, of value second to none  
In the shape of a World where all hearts beat as one*