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107th General Assembly: anticipating change, delivering value for global rail

(Warsaw, 11 December 2025) The 107th General Assembly of the International Union of Railways (UIC) was held in Warsaw on Thursday 11 December 2025. Hosted by PKP Polish Railways, members representing all UIC regions attended. Members reviewed achievements, assessed performance, and charted strategic directions for the association's next 2026-2028 work programme. Dr Alain Beroud chaired the assembly, and was congratulated for his highly efficient and dedicated leadership of UIC since 2024. This assembly marked the end of PKP's four-and-a-half-year chairing mandate, and laid the foundations for UIC's next transformative phase, at a time when rail faces unprecedented global challenges.

Mr Wojciech Bartelski, CEO of Warsaw Tramway and Vice-President of UITP, opened the session. He underscored UIC and UITP's shared commitment to promoting public transport and rail as essential pillars of effective climate action, sustainable regional development, and sustainable mobility systems. He signalled the need for a paradigm shift, consistent investment, and greater political visibility for these transport modes. He concluded his keynote with an invitation to all UIC members to attend the first World Public Transport Day in 2026. UIC and UITP join forces to make more visible the efficiency of public transport on the occasion of the first World Public Transport Day on 17 April 2026.

Railways at a crossroads: challenges and opportunities

Rail transport continues to evolve. Climate imperatives, rapid urbanisation, technological disruption, and changing passenger expectations are reshaping mobility worldwide. Governments and operators face increasing pressure to decarbonise, improve resilience, and provide services that are efficient, integrated, and sustainable. In this context, UIC's role exceeds technical coordination: it is the key to providing collective responses to global challenges, anticipating trends, and delivering solutions that benefit members, cities, and society at large.

Dr Beroud's farewell address

In his final address as UIC Chair, Dr Alain Beroud expressed his gratitude, and reflected on the organisation's future. He emphasised the symbolic timing of the Assembly, which coincided with the completion of the 2023-2025 Work Programme and the beginning of a new strategic cycle. He highlighted the rail community's resilience in the face of post-COVID recovery, wars affecting several member countries, and intensifying ecological and climate emergencies.

Dr Beroud spoke of strong development in each of the six UIC regions, and praised their ability to adapt UIC global strategy to local contexts. Namely, renewed strategic programmes in North America; the launch of 6 new regional projects a year in Asia Pacific, spanning infrastructure resilience to digital transformation; rapid market growth in the Middle East, and this region's recent accession to the GCC Rail Authority. He also mentioned progress in Africa on advancing both carbon financing and capacity building; and Latin America's Vision 2050 focused on sustainability and innovative financing mechanisms. Finally, he highlighted Europe's continued leadership in digitalization and interoperability, before underscoring how a new regional office in Beijing for Asia-Pacific and innovation hub in the Middle East, will reinforce proximity, responsiveness, and visibility in the sector.

Dr Beroud then underscored progress in standardisation. This includes migration and modernisation of International Railway Solutions (IRS); increasing involvement of technical experts from all regions, to ensure that UIC standards remain relevant, interoperable and globally applicable. He acknowledged the valuable UIC expertise contributing to flagship projects such as FRMCS (Future Railway Mobile Communication System), OSDM (Open Sales and Distribution Model), digital twins

and shared digital platforms. This work cemented UIC's role as a global centre for specialist railway services.

Dr Beroud congratulated the organisation's sound finances, characterised by a significant expansion in funded project activity and reinforced advocacy work, in global climate forums in particular.

After thanking all members, experts, regional chairs and UIC staff for their support and dedication, he concluded by reiterating his confidence in the organisation's ability to address challenges, buoyed by the new 2026-2028 Work Programme.

Director General's review: 2025 performance

UIC Director General François Davenne reported that all operational and management targets were met in 2025. Member satisfaction remained stable at 81%, with perceived dynamism reaching 85%. 2025 demonstrated the railway sector's proactiveness. The UIC World Congress on High-Speed Rail in Beijing demonstrated global collaboration, while technical progress in the MORANE 2 (MOBILE radio for RAILway Networks in Europe) FRMCS test programme and the inclusion of OSDM into EU regulation validated the sector's capacity for innovation and regulatory development. The coalition-led success of OSDM, through coordinated sector influence at EU level also confirmed the value for the railways of speaking with one voice.

Advocacy initiatives, particularly at COP30, reinforced rail's contribution to global decarbonisation. Projects such as digital twins, and the Open Multi-Modal Toolkit (OMMT) meanwhile, helped members stay ahead of mobility trends. Project-based activities reached €14 million, reflecting a strategic shift toward service-oriented initiatives that generate measurable impact.

Leadership for an evolving sector

Members elected Mr. Yuji Fukasawa, Chairman of JR East (Japan), as UIC Chair, and Mr Stefano Antonio Donnarumma, CEO of FS Italiane (Italy), as Vice Chair for 2026-2027. Their mandate comes at a pivotal moment: rail must adapt to technological disruption, environmental imperatives, and changing passenger demands.

In accepting his appointment, Mr. Fukasawa expressed his gratitude to UIC members and his support for the organisation's strategic direction. His election comes as UIC prepares to implement its 2026-2028 Work Programme, structured around six strategic pillars. He affirmed his commitment to ensuring a smooth transition, stable governance, and rapid deployment of the Work Programme. He said his priority was to engage with the Management Board and support UIC flagship initiatives, particularly those linked to the Standardisation Strategy 2030.

"The standardisation strategy is ambitious and essential to UIC's future. Its success relies on the active participation of members across all regions. Building a stronger and more effective UIC is our shared responsibility."

Mr Fukasawa's experience in leadership, innovation, international cooperation, and strong commitment to sustainability, means he will bring a clear and ambitious vision to UIC, and aligns with UIC's ongoing mission to connect continents, shape standards, and advance railway innovation.

The Assembly warmly thanked Dr Beroud and Mr Khlie for their insightful leadership and their major contributions to UIC's global reach.

A strengthened Work Programme for 2026-2028

UIC's 2023-2025 Work Programme concludes at the end of this year, with most objectives achieved across its five strategic goals.

The new Work Programme for 2026-2028 builds on these achievements and introduces a more operationally oriented roadmap designed to increase UIC's outreach and impact without raising membership fees.

UIC has planned its work around three-year programmes since 2020. This approach has enabled the formulation of more coherent, coordinated and ambitious goals across regional networks.

For 2026-2028, UIC will focus on technical work, expanding service-oriented activities, strengthening international advocacy, and improving internal efficiency.

UIC will also reinforce staff engagement, internal communication, diversity and cross-departmental coordination, ensuring that the strategic priorities are fully embedded across the organisation.

The new Work Programme has six major strategic goals. These reinforce rail advocacy to promote modal shift as a climate solution, seek to demonstrate the strong investment case for rail including through climate finance mechanisms, and aim to consolidate the sector's capacity to act collectively, particularly through coalition-building and "speaking with one voice".

The programme expands regional development and international projects by strengthening cooperation, increasing participation in EU-funded initiatives and deepening partnerships with international financial institutions.

It is designed to spur development of global standards for railways, recognising the importance of standardisation for safety, interoperability, cost reduction and accelerated innovation. It also drives operational developments by providing harmonised solutions to emerging technologies, deepening cooperation with academic research and building a global innovation network through Regional Competence Hubs.

The Work Programme strengthens UIC's role as a service hub, by enhancing the UIC Rail Academy, rolling out digital tools and platforms, and directly addressing member needs. Lastly, it reinforces engagement, efficiency, and accountability, within UIC's internal structures. This includes process optimisation, strengthened communication and improved financial reporting.

The Assembly emphasised that the new programme reflects a shared commitment to delivering more value to members while maintaining financial stability. The 51% growth in funded project activity over 2021–2025 is understood to be exceptional. Therefore, UIC's aim is to achieve long-term stability underpinned by operational efficiency.

Success in financial strategy: sustainable growth

UIC is reducing dependence on membership fees and expanding its services and project-based funding. In 2025, fees represented 37% of total resources, down from 50% in 2020. Specialist services will become operational from 1 January 2026, supported by monitoring and reporting tools for strategic decision-making. This includes investment in IRS migration. Partnerships with international financial institutions such as AfDB (African Development Bank), CAF (Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean) and ISDB (Islamic Development Bank) will extend project reach beyond Europe. Despite a 51% increase in project work since 2021, support service costs remained stable, demonstrating efficient and sustainable growth.

Looking ahead

The 107th General Assembly confirmed UIC's strong performance in 2025 and set a clear path for 2026-2028, balancing operational excellence, innovation, advocacy, and global cooperation.

The next General Assembly will take place on 3 July 2026 in Paris in a hybrid format, offering an opportunity to review progress, strengthen member engagement, and consolidate UIC's role as the global reference for railway development in a world of profound transformation.

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