



PRESS RELEASE n° 5/2026

The UIC 108th General Assembly charts the future of global rail cooperation

(Paris, 6 July 2026) The International Union of Railways (UIC) has held its 108th General Assembly both at its headquarters in Paris and online, gathering CEOs and senior rail representatives around the world.

While the session took place at a time marked by geopolitical uncertainty, digital transformation, and the pressure to decarbonise transport systems, the assembly reaffirmed the importance of international railway cooperation as a stabilising force and to drive interoperability, innovation, and sustainable development.

The assembly renewed the mandate of Director General François Davenne until 31 December 2030, ensuring continuity in the execution of the organisation's long-term goals while also reinforcing institutional stability during a period of worldwide transition for the sector.

UIC stable in a changing global environment

Opening the assembly, UIC Chair Yuji Fukasawa, CEO of the Japan East Railway Company (JR East), underlined that UIC remains vital as a neutral and trusted platform for dialogue between railway stakeholders worldwide. He stressed that, in a fragmented geopolitical landscape, rail must continue to rely on shared technical foundations, common standards, and coordinated approaches to ensure seamless cross-border operations.

He also highlighted that interoperability, digital continuity, and regulatory alignment are strategically necessary for ensuring the competitiveness of rail as a global mode of transport. He also emphasised UIC's role in fostering trust between members and in supporting collective responses to a range of challenges such as supply chain disruptions, climate adaptation, and cybersecurity risks. Finally, Fukasawa stated his awareness that the organisation is eager to better distribute its activities across the different regions, whether for project development or innovation.

A strong drive for transformation and delivery

UIC Director General François Davenne presented a comprehensive mid-year review of UIC activities, highlighting its continued organisational transformation and growing alignment between member expectations and UIC's strategic deliverables.

With UIC now being delivery oriented, its credibility is increasingly defined by its ability to make strategic priorities concrete through deliverables, services, and measurable results for members. This development is supported by a growing project-based model (+47% since 2021) and the increasing role of project managers driving high-quality delivery.

UIC's role as a global hub of expertise is strengthening, supporting both mature and emerging railway markets in accelerating their modernisation efforts. This is accompanied by a stronger regional component, with the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Regional Office complementing the existing Middle East Office and contributing to an improved balance between the UIC Headquarters and regional activities. It reflects UIC's ambition to bring its expertise closer to members and ensure that regional priorities increasingly shape the organisation's global agenda.

The General Assembly recognised this effort within UIC's core activities, including:

- The acceleration of the UIC Standardisation Strategy 2030: the transition to IRSs will be achieved by the end of 2028, one year before its target, reinforcing UIC's role within international standardisation bodies, including stronger engagement with European and global standardisation organisations and the development of common approaches for digital modelling across the railway sector.
- The development of long-term strategic roadmaps for the Future Railway Mobile Communication System (FRMCS), Open Sales and Distribution Model (OSDM), international freight corridors, railway ontologies, and artificial intelligence, providing members with greater visibility on future services, implementation milestones, and digital transformation pathways.
- The continued development of UIC services through its commercial subsidiary ETF, supporting members with applied expertise, technical assistance, and training via the UIC Rail Academy.
- The development of new knowledge programmes on railway financing and climate funding, so that members can diversify funding sources through innovative financial models, including emerging carbon finance mechanisms.
- Implementation of financial key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor UIC performance, such as its impact on the sector – i.e. resources that UIC mobilises through its project activity – with strong growth (+185%) to 84 M€ in 2025 (compared to 30 M€ in 2024) being reported, showing the change in nature of UIC-managed projects.

Looking ahead, the next phase of UIC's transformation will focus on consolidating organisational capacity through project managers, which will be made easier with an ISO 9001 certification being achieved in October 2026, stronger partnerships with international financial institutions, tighter management control, continued productivity gains, and the progressive integration of artificial intelligence to improve the efficiency of UIC core activities.

Strengthening rail and public transport's role in climate finance: an international coalition

A major highlight of the assembly was the presentation of the **Coalition for Rail and Public Transport in Carbon Markets**, “MoveCredits”, which responds to the sectors’ underrepresentation in accessing carbon market compared to other sectors. By bringing together railway undertakings, public transport operators, multilateral development banks, financial institutions, manufacturers and other international partners, the coalition aims to develop and update methodologies for quantifying avoided emissions and enabling rail-based projects to generate carbon credit that can be traded in carbon markets.

This is vital, as carbon markets could support the implementation of national climate plans with up to 250 billion USD annually by 2030. As highlighted by Philip Turner, UITP, provided that projects can credibly demonstrate emissions savings, rail and public transport could benefit from this previously untapped market.

Beyond technical work, the coalition will also be a platform for joint advocacy to insert rail and public transport into the global carbon market agenda, as this is currently not the case. Together, partners of the coalition can build the case for the development of more rail and public transport methodologies and projects and for these to be compensated for the CO₂ benefits they deliver.

Members welcomed the initiative as a concrete step towards bridging the gap between climate ambition and investment flows, particularly in regions where financing constraints remain a barrier to rail development.

The official launch will take place in Rabat on the 14 October, during the “Investment and Financing Solutions for Africa’s Railway Future Forum”. Registration for the event is open [here](#).

A more interactive and forward-looking format

For the first time, the General Assembly introduced two dedicated topical information sessions alongside its statutory decision-making agenda. This new format was designed to encourage deeper engagement and open discussion, as well as strengthen the link between strategic orientation and operational implementation.

The first session focused on the implementation of the UIC Standardisation Strategy 2030, with particular attention being paid to governance mechanisms, member engagement, and coordination with railway safety and regulatory authorities.

The second session examined the newly launched Coalition on Carbon Finance for Rail, alongside the broader implications of UIC expanding its regional presence.

This more interactive format was widely welcomed by members as a meaningful change in governance practice, allowing for more dynamic discussions and reinforcing UIC’s role as a collaborative platform rather than solely a statutory decision-making body.

A shared vision for a resilient and sustainable rail system

In his closing speech, the UIC Chair Fukasawa reiterated that UIC must continue to act as “a pillar of stability, continuity, and dialogue” for the global railway community, particularly at a time when transport systems are undergoing wide-reaching structural change.

He emphasised that the UIC’s strength lies in its ability to bring together stakeholders from different backgrounds around shared technical foundations and a joint vision for rail as the backbone of sustainable mobility.

The 108th General Assembly ultimately reaffirmed the organisation’s commitment to supporting its members through strengthened international cooperation, harmonised global standards, innovation-driven transformation, and a sustained commitment to climate and mobility policies.

In doing so, it set a clear course for the next phase of UIC’s strategic development.

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