International Forum

# Investment and Financing Solutions for Africa’s Railway Future

14-15 October 2026, Rabat, Morocco

Marriott Hotel

## CONCEPT NOTE

## BACKGROUND

While significant projects and advancements have been undertaken in recent years, Africa has yet to fully realize the strategic potential of its railway infrastructure. Building an integrated and efficient railway system is crucial for linking key production zones, landlocked countries, and strategic ports—unlocking the full benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and accelerating progress toward Agenda 2063.

Despite this urgency, railway infrastructure across Africa remains underdeveloped, poorly maintained, and disconnected across borders. Fragmented networks, outdated infrastructure, and limited interoperability continue to hinder regional integration, economic transformation, and sustainable development. Many projects stall before implementation due to weak coordination, inadequate planning, and challenges in attracting and sustaining long-term financing.

At the same time, climate finance presents a significant and largely untapped opportunity to accelerate rail development across Africa. Rail projects can play a central role in delivering low-emission transport transitions through modal shift from road and air to rail, electrification, and improved energy efficiency. There is growing potential to leverage climate finance instruments and emerging carbon market mechanisms under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement to enhance project bankability and reduce financing costs. Exploring how rail investments can access and structure climate-aligned financing solutions will therefore be critical to unlocking additional capital and ensuring long-term sustainability. In this context, the Forum could be the stepping stone towards the establishment of a coalition for climate finance for rail, bringing together railways and public transport operators, governments, development partners, financial institutions, and industry stakeholders to coordinate efforts and scale impact.

As the continent moves from planning to execution of the African Integrated Railway Network (AIRN), now is the time to engage on the critical question of financing bankable, integrated, and cross-border railway projects. Developing Africa's transport system requires establishing network specifications, ensuring technical governance across major rail corridors, mobilizing adequate financing and catalyzing sustainable finance.

Morocco is also a part of the development of the two railway corridors of AIRN and the 2063 Masterplan.[1]

The Al Boraq line, which currently runs between Tangier and Kenitra, was inaugurated in 2018 and was the first high-speed rail service in Africa. Its extension is set to solidify the country's leadership in rail infrastructure on the continent.

It is with this in mind that the International Union of Railways (UIC) and the National Railway Office (ONCF) are convening an International Forum on Financing Rail Projects in Africa, aligned with the continent's railway renaissance and sustainable development goal, to be hosted in 2026, in Morocco.

## OBJECTIVES

The 2nd International Forum will be held from 14 to 15 October 2026 to mobilize key public and private actors in accelerating the strategic revival and sustainable expansion of rail systems across Africa.

This forum aims to:

- **Promote country-led rail development strategies**, aligned with national priorities, regional integration objectives, and climate commitments
- **Convene and mobilize decision-makers and partners**, including ministers and government agencies, rail companies, industry representatives, technical bodies, experts, economists, private investors, financing partners and regional organisations
- **Identify and structure priority investment strategies,** facilitating dialogue on bankable projects, innovative financing mechanisms, blended finance solutions, and risk mitigation instruments
- **Strengthen coordination between national and cross-border initiatives**, supporting interoperable networks and regional corridors

[1] 1. North - South direction: West-Coast: Casablanca (Morocco)- Nouakchott (Mauritania) - Dakar (Senegal) - Bangui (Gambia) - Conakry (Guinea) - Monrovia (Liberia) – Abidjan (Ivory Coast) - Accra (Ghana) - Lagos (Nigeria) - Doula (Cameroun). 2. East - West direction: North upper: Alexandria (Egypt) – Tripoli (Libya) - Tunis (Tunisia) - Algiers (Algeria) - Casablanca (Morocco) - Dakar (Senegal).

## EXPECTED RESULTS

The main results expected from this forum are:

- A strengthened pipeline of priority rail projects, with clearer identification of bankable initiatives and potential financing pathways;
- Enhanced mobilization of public and private finance, including strengthened dialogue with development finance institutions, private investors, and blended finance partners;
- Reinforced technical cooperation and capacity-building efforts, including training initiatives and structured knowledge exchange mechanisms;
- Expanded partnerships and institutional coordination, fostering sustained collaboration among governments, regional organisations, industry actors, and financing institutions

UIC, in conjunction with regional organisations, will capitalize on the results of the forum to make it a regular meeting point for the African rail sector. One of the outcomes of this forum should be the pre-announcement of the next edition, setting the stage for continued engagement and momentum.

## CALL FOR ACTION

Joint communiqué reaffirming the commitment to finance and deliver integrated, bankable railway infrastructure. This pledge will support the objectives of the AfCFTA and Agenda 2063.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Sponsorships with investors.

## PROGRAM & WEBSITE

The Forum program can be downloaded from the dedicated webpage on the UIC website

https://uic.org/events/investment-and-financing-solutions-for-africa-s-railway-future

## PARTICIPANTS

This high-level session will convene African ministers of transport, finance, and planning—alongside regional institutions, development finance partners and railway operators —to explore strategies for unlocking sustainable and scalable investment in transformative railway infrastructure.

- 150-200 participants are expected, including:
  - African ministers in charge of railroads
  - African Ministers of Transport and Technology
  - AUC - African Union Commission
  - African Rail Operators & Infrastructure Managers
  - UAC - African Union of Railways
  - UIC - International Union of Railways
  - Experts from the Regional Economic Communities
  - AfDB - The African Development Bank
  - IsDB – Islamic Development Bank
  - EU- European Union
  - ERA - European Union Railways Agency
  - FRA - Federal Railroad Administration
  - GCC - Gulf Cooperation Council
  - EIB - European Investment Bank
  - FDA - French Development Agency
  - GIZ - German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH
  - OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
  - UN ECA - The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
  - WB - World Bank
  - IFC - International Finance Corporation
  - Port & maritime companies
  - Rail industry representatives
  - Investors (private, technical and financial partners)
  - African economists
  - African railway experts
  - Media & Guest rail media

## PLACE & DATE

The Forum will be held in Rabat from 14 to 15 October 2026.
Venue: Marriott Hotel

## CONTACT

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