



RABAT CALL FOR ACTION, 29 APRIL 2021

**African railway green deal
for sustainable mobility**



INTERNATIONAL UNION
OF RAILWAYS



Green Talks, a year of consultation

Africa is undergoing dramatic change, there is a growing need for sustainable mobility, the global economy has been thrown into disarray by the impact of Covid-19 and climate change is more than ever giving rise to unprecedented challenges: against this backdrop, the International Union of Railways (UIC) – African Region launched a series of virtual meetings called 'African Railway Thursdays' in March 2020 to facilitate serious reflection and discussion with a group of international and regional partners (decision makers, institutions, infrastructure managers, operators, manufacturers, investors, experts, researchers, etc.).

These meetings have culminated in the '**African railway green deal for sustainable mobility**', produced during the meeting on 29 April 2021. Over 5,600 participants have unanimously and urgently noted the extent to which national policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change need to be part of action to radically transform transport systems by integrating the dictates of sustainable development, particularly for developing countries and especially in Africa.

Speaking on behalf of the African railway community, the participants are united and committed in their desire to present this '**CALL FOR ACTION**' to the negotiators at COP 26 in order to bolster the development of African railways and support eco-mobility in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).



For a genuine sustainable transition in transport

With a view to contributing to sustainable transition, regional development and responsible transport, the discussions underlined the fact that it is now vital for sustainable mobility within Africa, a rapidly expanding continent, to be positioned as a new challenge for 'the green economy', and to **prepare for tomorrow today**.

Essentially, although it is insufficiently perceived as such, the transport sector is of key importance for climate change and "**developing, transforming and adapting regions without simultaneously considering the flow of goods and people nullifies a significant portion of the climate commitments**".

Considering that:

- The commitments made at COP 21 in Paris, including the definition of the action plan, were the subject of COP 22 hosted on African soil in Marrakesh and their negotiations have continued during the subsequent conferences;
- The critical challenge of limiting global warming to less than 2°C between now and the end of the century requires both the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adaptation, by means of urgent measures, to the consequences of this upheaval;
- The transport sector produces 23 to 30% of the CO₂ emissions released by burning fossil fuels;
- The need for mobility is essential for human development, particularly in Africa, in light of demographic changes, urbanisation and migration;

Given that:

- Africa continues to register a consistent level of development, which should give rise to inclusive, resilient and sustainable growth in line with the SDGs and the goals of Agenda 2063;
- The continent occupies a central place in today's major issues and is seen as the engine for global growth in the future;
- The challenge of upgrading the social sectors in particular is still daunting, as is the subsequent attainment of the SDGs set for 2030;
- The need for mobility, both for people and goods, is becoming ever more important when it comes to the continent's potential: a young population and a demographic in full transition, plentiful natural resources, increasing urbanisation, and a changing economy;
- The infrastructure sector as a whole is a vital supply channel for the economy and for social action, and has a pivotal role to play in the continent's take-off;

Convinced that:

- The railways represent a strategic vector for development and economic integration in Africa which has seen the design of major master plans for its development on a continental and regional as well as national level;
- Rail enjoys unquestionable advantages which are today increasingly sought after by society and which are crucial for establishing an efficient, consistent, integrated and more environmentally friendly transport system;

- Rail possesses all the necessary qualities to effectively play its part when it comes to the development of trade between African countries and the ambitious integrated African high-speed train project, selected by African Heads of State as a priority flagship project;
- Extensive efforts remain to be made to revitalise rail at the continental level and transform it into a tool that can concretely support the growing requirements in terms of eco-mobility and subsequently contribute to achieving the SDGs

With these considerations in mind, the participants call on all stakeholders to unify efforts and increase initiatives to accelerate the development of African rail (which is clearly lagging behind in a number of areas: territorial coverage, traffic volume, modernisation of production facilities, etc.) as a viable vector for stimulus and sustainable mobility with multi-dimensional beneficial implications, reconciling economic and environmental considerations: green logistics, mass transport, safety, respect for the environment, etc.



Decision time: contributing to the mitigation of climate change

Taking into consideration the issues outlined above and convinced of the strategic importance of promoting rail as a clean, very low-carbon and energy-friendly mode of mass transport that creates value and offers a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, together with very competitive costs, the heads of the UIC African Region member networks:

With the aim of:

- Reducing their environmental footprint through low-carbon activities with, as far as possible, minimal impact on the environment, thus boosting their contribution to UIC's "**Low Carbon Rail Transport Challenge**", presented at the UN Climate Summit: reduction of GHGs, protection of biodiversity, circular economy and eco-design for projects, etc.;
- Improving the efficiency, viability, sustainability and low-carbon mobility of railway transport across the continent, both for passengers and freight;
- Ensuring a high degree of safety and security on African railway lines, taking into account increased traffic and the multiplication of climate risks, covering in particular employees, customers, partners, road users, trackside residents and production facilities;
- Reinforcing their regional engagement as a key actor for the economic and social development of regions, by maintaining constant dialogue with Transport Organising Authorities and local officials, contributing to the development of 'SMART' cities through the redevelopment and/or construction of stations as social hubs, and relocating industrial activity to areas outside city centres;
- Promoting the network of stakeholders in order to contribute to the public good of the continent: reinforcing good practices and compliance with standards, developing and structuring dialogue with stakeholders, improving quality of life in the workplace, and relying on responsible procurement to support the economy, the environment and society as a whole;

Pledge to:

- Deliver innovative solutions to increase energy efficiency by prioritising renewable energy sources (wind, hydraulic, solar, etc.), making use of recoverable energy, and developing eco-driving;
- Take initiatives, via UIC's international commitment, that target the carbon neutrality of African rail by 2050;
- Assume the role of a mobility platform supporting local requirements and ecological and sustainable transition, by offering passengers and economic operators solutions that consider economic, social and environmental issues;
- Develop an appropriate strategy regarding a circular economy to help combat resource depletion and the impacts of material and waste production on the environment and biodiversity: recycling and reusing end-of-life products in all processes associated with railway activity;
- Integrate an eco-design approach during the study, design and development project phases to improve environmental performance.
- Innovate towards sustainable mobility in processes, services, customer information and reactivity, to transform it into an accessible, smooth and effective experience;
- Accelerate the digital transformation of different elements of the value-chain for rail transport, to improve efficiency and the customer experience and subsequently reduce its carbon footprint;

- Develop innovative, digitalised solutions for maintaining production facilities and optimising costs;
- Adopt pro-active charging policies to make rail more accessible, whilst combining the limitations of purchasing power, environmental requirements and the need for flexibility;
- Engineer, maintain, develop and improve social performance in terms of well-being, occupational health and safety, training, quality of life, and diversity;

Call for action to:

- Accelerate the implementation of railway investment projects agreed upon as part of continental, regional and local plans in order to promote sustainable mobility and meet the challenge of achieving regional integration, thus allowing rail to fully play its part as the backbone of a more viable and more efficient system across the continent;
- Support the development of rail by allocating it a share of climate funding for sustainable mobility and ensuring that it benefits from appropriate and innovative financing structures taking into consideration its socio-economic profitability and its intangible benefits, with the objective of re-imagining the African rail space;
- Implement policy measures and tax incentives to ensure that efficient, safe and green mobility is accessible to all citizens on the African continent;
- Promote standardisation as an indispensable technical condition for re-imagining the African railway space, in order to guarantee the compatibility, convergence and harmonisation of the railway system which would enable continental cross-border passenger and freight services, and consequently ensure society can benefit from the advantages that set rail apart, including respect for the environment;
- Take the necessary measures to ensure genuine modal shift towards rail, highlighting the undeniable benefits for society: safety and security, mass transport, energy and space savings, respect for the environment, road decongestion and fewer accidents, and improved local air quality;
- Promote multi-modal complementarity to enable users and economic operators to benefit from modal advantages in terms of convenience, speed, cost, reliability, etc. and to do this by improving coordination between stakeholders and providing a transport system that more carefully considers the roles played by the various links in the transport chain;
- Internalize externalities so that each transport mode pays what it actually costs to society: the 'polluter pays' principle.

Finally, and as a continuation of the railway climate commitment declared by UIC in 2019 and by means of this '**African railway green deal for sustainable mobility**', the heads of the UIC African Region member networks, supported by the group of international and regional partners, call on the COP 26 congress to make sustainable mobility, via the best equipped transport modes such as rail, one of the priorities:

- For debate as a vector for mitigating and adapting to global warming as it establishes itself, in the wake of the paradigm shifts imposed by the pandemic and its impact on the new normal, as a significant issue to be handled in a structural manner as part of global climate conventions from now on;
- For eligible investments in existing and future green funds, with this type of infrastructure and innovation within transport being seen as an integral part of climate finance mechanisms.

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