

7th webinar 'African Railway Thursdays'

ON FREIGHT AND LOGISTICS AND THE CHALLENGES OF ITS REPOSITIONING

Conclusions

CHOICES AND INITIATIVES IDENTIFIED TO ACCELERATE, FEDERATE AND INNOVATE

On February 23, 2022, UIC Africa organized the 7th webinar within the framework "African Railway Thursdays" which focused on The resilience of rail freight and logistics and the new challenges of its repositioning.

Mr. Mohamed Rabie Khlie, Chairman of UIC Africa and UIC Vice Chairman, stressed that the choice of this theme was dictated by the profound changes and adaptations of the transport chain, which continue to mark our environment, particularly in the face of the impacts of the pandemic. It is a topical subject that deserves to be amply documented to better guide our choices, capitalizing on the feedback of multiple experiences shared by a panel of experts and operators from various backgrounds

The webinar was joined by nearly 100 managers and about twenty rail networks and port operators. The programme included rich and structured interventions, offering an opportunity to comprehend the magnitude of global challenges related to rail freight and logistics.

Significant elements and recommendations identified by the speakers to give a new impetus to this activity and strengthen its position in a sector marked by tough competition included:

- It is unanimously recognized and admitted that rail freight transport is a major lever, contributing to the dynamics of our economies, the development of territories and the acceleration of the ecological transition.
- The desire expressed by stakeholders around the world to develop rail freight and logistics as a less noisy, less polluting and less dangerous mode, through the launch of ambitious strategies. In Europe, for example, and in France in particular, the objective is to double the modal share by 2030 from 9% (2019) to 18%, with the ambition of increasing it to 25% by 2050.
- In case of Africa, a call was made for the revitalization of rail freight and logistics within the continent, as a strategic lever to adequately support mobility needs with clear positive spillover effects on the FTAA.

In addition, the presentations and discussions highlighted challenges to be met with the support and strong involvement of public authorities. This is the importance of working in the direction of being able to:

- Ensure the viability and sustainability of the economic model of rail freight operators;
- Further improve the quality of service provided and optimize costs and the value chain to improve competitiveness;
- Strengthen the performance of the infrastructure allowing the development of rail freight;
- Develop coordination and synergy with the port in particular;
- Establish state steering bodies, appropriate mechanisms for the promotion of modal shift and complementarity as well as the adoption of regulatory and fiscal incentives;

-

- Develop the decarbonization of our activities: decarbonization, greening, energy transition, conversion of the fleet ... In other words, we must make it a reality and the top priority. To do this, there are three watchwords: accelerate, federate and innovate.

- Rethinking the process to ensure a sustainable, structured, viable, reliable and competitive rail freight and logistics activity and guaranteeing a better repositioning, while reconciling the economic and ecological aspects.

These were the key messages of this webinar on the topical subject of repositioning rail freight and logistics as a strategic low-carbon means.

Finally, the participants agreed to meet for the next cycle of 'African Rail Thursdays' scheduled in April, which will focus on the theme of railway stations in order to discuss the successful experiences already implemented to make the most of it and raise them to the rank of a strategic business area (SBA) to diversify our activities and make the rail model more viable and sustainable.