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Global Rail Freight Conference jointly organised by UIC and the Russian Railways opens today in St Petersburg, focusing on management, products, and international corridors

(St Petersburg / Paris, 06.07.2010) Around 300 participants from over 30 different countries are attending the second edition of the UIC Global Rail Freight Conference (GRFC) which opened today in Saint Petersburg, jointly organised by the International Union of Railways (UIC) and Russian Railways (RZD).

The conference is organised under the patronage of the United Nations (UNECE) and the Russian Minister of Transport, and in cooperation with a large number of international organisations*. It addresses all strategic issues of freight development and aims to develop and promote exchanges and partnerships between all major stakeholders involved such as top executives and decision makers, rail and logistics professionals, customers, influential politicians and regulators, and institutions from across the globe.

The conference was opened by *Jean-Pierre Loubinoux*, UIC Director General, *Vadim Morozov*, First Vice-President of JSC Russian Railways, *Sergey A. Aristov*, Deputy Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation, *Zoltán Kazatsay* Deputy Director General DG Move (European Commission), and *Yoshio Ishida*, UIC Chairman.

Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General, welcomed all participants to this second UIC GRFC. He stressed the role of UIC as an international platform, encouraging global as well as regional activities, and underlined that one of its main tasks is to develop interoperability on both technical and administrative levels. He added that *"this global rail freight conference is the place to be for leaders to exchange ideas and look together to the future"*.

Vadim Morozov, First Vice-President of Russian Railways, on behalf of President Vladimir Yakunin, explained that this second edition of the GRFC follows on from the 2007 edition in New Delhi and gives the opportunity to develop the constructive dialogue started at that time and nurture effective cooperation with business partners, in particular in international rail freight to serve sustainable development, interoperability, and to improve and harmonise international transport law.

Sergey A. Aristov, Deputy Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation, presented the ambitious federal programme to develop the railway until 2030, backed by President Putin. The aim is to increase rail freight capacity by 33% and rail cargo turnover by 70%. In this context, intercontinental rail corridors play a key role and the harmonisation of the legislative framework and international transport law is necessary. As a positive example, he described the emergence of a Euro-Asian CIM-SMGS law and the transit bill to facilitate cross-border operations.

Zoltán Kazatsay, Deputy Director General DG Move (European Commission), stated that 50% of European rail freight is international and this figure will increase in the forthcoming years. Besides rail freight has a worldwide role to play to ensure sustainable mobility and decarbonise the transport sector. In Europe, rail freight still suffers from a lack of interoperability, national disparities and geographical fragmentation and administrative burden, in particular for border crossing. The action of the EU consists in promoting rail freight development, with a focus on three points: the opening the market structure, the promotion of innovation and interoperability – in particular by fostering the ERTMS implementation, and rail infrastructure in the review of TEN-T priority projects. Rail projects will have a high percentage and high level of funding for rail.

Yoshio Ishida, UIC Chairman, reminded participants that developing freight corridors is one of the five major themes for UIC activities at global level together with environment, safety/security, signalling and standardisation.

Beyond the work carried out for sustainability and security, important efforts should be put into the improvement of logistics and railway operations to reinforce the confidence of customers in railway and make rail an attractive option for all users.

He emphasised the importance of international cooperation and underlined the role of RZD as a hub in the Euro-Asian transport system, which reinforces the relevance of holding this second edition in St Petersburg.

The two co-directors of the GRFC took the floor to describe the main challenges of this conference. *Alexey Averin*, Head of International Department of RZD, reminded participants of the work achieved since RZD joined UIC in 2006 and listed the main issues to be addressed for rail freight development: international corridors, interoperability, harmonisation of transport law, coding and IT, tracking and positioning, improving security and safety and reducing damage to the environment.

Following his presentation on, the characteristics and framework conditions for rail freight developments, *Oliver Sellnick* explained that GRFC encourages greater exchange among stakeholders at global level. He addressed the impact of the economic crisis in 2009 on rail freight and the signs of recovery in 2010 even if it will take years to come back to transport volumes of 2008.

The grand opening session was moderated by the First Vice President of RZD *Vadim Morozov* who highlighted that “*UIC is a strategic instrument for the development of rail transport at global level*” and described in detail the “strategy for development of rail transport for the federation of Russia until 2030”.

The grand opening session included presentations by *Pierre Blayau*, CEO SNCF Geodis, *Dr Karl-Friedrich Rausch*, Member of the Board at Deutsche Bahn, *Alberto Mazzola* for FS Trenitalia on behalf of Vincenzo Soprano, CEO, *Salman Babayev*, Director General of Freight at One Railway, Russia, *Lance Hockridge*, CEO and Managing Director of Queensland Rail (Australia); *Dr Sebastian Jürgens*, Member of the Board of HHLA (Harbour of Hamburg).

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