



The Ordinary General Meeting (AGO) of the Union Internationale des sociétés de transport combiné Rail-Route (UIRR) was held in Portorož (Slovenia) on 5th June 2008, at the invitation of Mr J. Sušnik and R. Svetek (respectively President and DG of Adria Kombi). The matters dealt with included the balanced annual accounts, the development of traffic and the UIRR's strategy, along with various other subjects discussed at the Interunit General Committee meeting held on the same day. These meetings ended on 6th June with a Congress on the subject of greener mobility thanks to CT in South-Eastern Europe.

Development of traffic

The total traffic of all UIRR companies recorded a 9% increase in 2007. International unaccompanied CT was 10% up on 2006, especially thanks to traffic across the Alps, the development of East-West services and the rise in maritime container traffic. Domestic unaccompanied CT consolidated the upturn it had begun in 2006 with 9% growth in consignments. Accompanied transport recorded a 2% growth. The progress of rail liberalisation, a better awareness among transport professionals of the many advantages of CT for long distance traffic (> 400-500km), the professionalism of the operators and the rise in diesel prices are among the factors which lie behind these good results. The UIRR companies are handling more than 2/3 of the CT which has gone over to the railways in Europe.

UIRR strategy

The AGO offered an opportunity to discuss the UIRR's strategy for the next few years, in order to target the most suitable activities and resources with the aim of achieving optimum efficiency.

Interunit

At the same time as the UIRR AGO, Interunit, the association of railway undertakings (RUs) which are members of the CTG/UIC and UIRR operators, also held its General Committee meeting. The discussions essentially dealt with strengthening collaboration between these two professional organizations. The state of progress of the Quality Label project and the presentation of the final report on the DIOMIS project, along with the strategy for its implementation, were discussed. It also offered an opportunity to review the major concerns in the face of risky attempts at liberalising the weights and dimensions of road vehicles.

2007 UIRR Report

To mark this same occasion, the UIRR published its 2007 Report. The thread running through it is CT as the future of rail freight, with France and South-Eastern Europe as illustrative geographical examples. This report also talks about the work carried out by the UIRR Liaison Office which opened in Brussels

20 years ago. Since then it has been highly effective in terms of fulfilling its dual remit: firstly to uphold the interests of its member companies and secondly to act as an adviser "in the field" to the authorities, helping them to set out the most appropriate framework conditions for Combined Transport. Two brochures listing detailed UIRR statistics for 2007 and relating to the SEEIS project were also published. These publications are available on the site at www.uirr.com; the Annual Report is available in French, English and German, and a printed version can be obtained either from the Brussels Office or from the member companies.

UIRR Congress

The Congress coordinated by Mr R. Colle on the subject of "Achieving greener mobility in South-Eastern Europe" attracted almost 250 participants from right across the sector. The President of the Republic of Slovenia, Dr D. Türk, graced this event by his presence. In his opening address, he offered a reminder of the major role played by the UIRR member companies in working towards sustainable mobility. The panel of speakers also included Mr R. Žerjav, the Slovenian Minister of Transport, who emphasised the role of transport as an activity supporting the economy in general, and the mobility of goods in particular. Mr J. Sušnik, Chairman of Adria Kombi, offered a reminder of how the development of goods traffic from road to the railways took place in this region and underlined the need for investment in rail infrastructures. After him, M. E. Muzio, Chairman of the UIRR Board, illustrated the numerous initiatives of member companies to develop services towards East and South-Eastern Europe. Mr E. Grillo-Pasquarelli, Director at the DG TREN, presented a number of future initiatives aiming to regenerate rail freight. These include greater monitoring of the performance of the railways, the creation of incentives in order to ensure effective infrastructure development and/or replacement, the project of rail network giving priority to freight and the revision of the Eurovignette directive. Mr T. Schara, MD of the Slovenian Railways, mentioned the growing importance of intermodal transport for his company. Dr H-J Bertschi (Chairman, Bertschi-AG) underlined the importance of rail liberalisation for better quality of service and the constructive role played by the UIRR in this respect. Mr G. Poschalko, Chairman of RCA, also emphasised the key role played by UIRR operators in European logistics and to lobby for appropriate framework conditions. Finally, Mr R. Casar, Chairman of the port of Koper, talked about the impressive development of this essential interface between sea and land-based transport.

Documentation about the Congress is available on the site at www.uirr.com.