

Message from the Rail Sector to the COP 15

- From Kyoto to Copenhagen -

Signed by the participants of the UIC Asia Environment Conference in Kyoto on
5th November 2009

Transport brings enormous benefits and development to society; however it has also adverse effects, including its impact on climate change.

The transport sector accounts for 23% of total CO₂-emissions and it is the sector with the fastest growing trends. Today the sector depends 95% on fossil fuel and is responsible for 60% of the global oil consumption. Transport energy use is predicted to be about 80% higher in 2030 than current levels.

The transport sector has a special responsibility to reduce its emissions worldwide. UIC encourages stakeholders dialogue and actions in order to create sustainable transport systems!

Rail offers a resource efficient low carbon mass public transportation system and takes its responsibility as part of the solution.

On average rail emits three times less CO₂ emissions than a car and five times less than an airplane per transport unit. Now that establishing a society with low carbon emission and energy conservation has become one of the very high priorities for every country around the world, a transportation policy with railways as its core mode of transportation is actively being developed worldwide. The creation of smart sustainable transport systems can be seen as the way ahead through two measures, one being the voluntary change of customer behaviour toward the choice of railways as the preferred mode of transportation, even when they have other choices available, and the other being the clear technological improvement to sustain the environmental advantage of rail. In order to further influence a change in modal choice, toward less CO₂ intensive transport modes, affirmative action from railways will be required in addition to strong policy and economic measures. In addition to their environmental advantage, railways must demonstrate higher level of safety, reliability, cleanliness and customer satisfaction.

Positioning railways as the preferred mode of choice of our society is the main approach to reduce CO₂ emissions of the transport sector.

The rail sector is continuously aiming at even higher performance.

The base of railways is technology, and the growth of railways has been brought about by technological innovation. Further strengthening railways' environmental advantage is the rail sector's responsibility to society as a whole, and the only way to realise it is technological development. A continuous and persevering technological development will further increase railways' environmental advantage. Furthermore, many railways all over the world have voluntarily agreed to emission reduction targets. Many of the UIC Asian and European Member railways, for example, have committed to a reduction target of 30% specific emissions between 1990 and 2020. UIC, as the global platform for rail technology, is supporting its members in this approach by facilitating international cooperation and best practice exchange. UIC has developed the necessary tools that enable the rail sector to monitor and manage its emissions efficiently under the motto "if you can't measure, you can't manage". What's more, in order to actually raise the effectiveness of these actions and to mutually enlighten each other, UIC will hold a Global Environment & Sustainability Conference once every two years. The UIC Asia Environment Conference in Kyoto, which is one of the birthplaces of the awareness of the issue of global environment, marks a milestone in this respect.

UIC will give full support to its members to raise the level of customer satisfaction, with safe, reliable, dependable, and punctual transportation as the fundamental base, while making maximum use of their various experiences and know-how to raise the level of the railways' environmental advantage..

A paradigm shift towards low carbon transport is required with solutions scaled to the size of the challenge.

A steep downward trajectory in total global Green House Gas emissions by 2050 will be needed to avoid adverse climate change impacts. Unprecedented efforts from all sectors will be required to attain these levels. Transport needs to be focussed upon in the new climate change regime, as the Kyoto protocol excluded international aviation and shipping in the CO₂ reductions targets. Explicitly including transport within the shared vision of long-term co-operative action of the UNFCCC Parties negotiations at the COP 15 in Copenhagen is vital for the development of sustainable transport systems, with rail playing a fundamental role. Financial schemes for infrastructure as well as for technology transfer and capacity building should be enabled through a new agreement.

The next generation climate regime needs to support the development of smart sustainable transport systems, with the rail sector playing a fundamental role.

The UIC is strongly committed to conveying the important role of rail in tackling climate change. The global rail community sends this message to COP15, to encourage to 'Keep Kyoto on Track' and 'Seal the Deal' in Copenhagen.