

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### African Union Commissioner Highlights Africa's Railway Development Endeavours at UIC General Assembly



The International Union of Railways (UIC) hosted its 105<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Paris, France, bringing together railway leaders from across the globe. The assembly focused on shaping the future of rail transport, with discussions on innovation, regional development, and sustainability as critical pillars for advancing the sector in a rapidly evolving world.

A highlight of the Assembly was the keynote speeches delivered by H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure, Energy, and Digitalisation. Addressing both the African Regional Assembly and the General Assembly, Commissioner Abou-Zeid shared insights on Africa's rail development and the transformative potential of the African Integrated Rail Network (AIRN), a flagship initiative under the [African Union's Agenda 2063](#). She emphasised that harmonised and integrated railway networks are key to unlocking Africa's trade, connectivity, and socio-economic potential. "Through partnerships between the African Union and UIC, we are paving the way for resilient and inclusive transport systems that support sustainable development across the continent," Commissioner Abou-Zeid stated.

She also highlighted the pressing challenges facing the African rail sector, including high transport costs and fragmented infrastructure, but pointed to the enormous opportunities rail offers in overcoming these barriers. The AIHSRN aims to create an interoperable, climate-resilient network that not only enhances trade but also reduces transport costs and connects communities across Africa.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid further underlined the importance of establishing common standards and technical specifications for the African rail network to ensure interoperability and safety. She stressed the need for a robust legal, regulatory, and institutional framework, coupled with efforts to digitise the sector, to foster greater competition and support the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

UIC Director General François Davenne and UIC Chair Dr. Alan Beroud both praised Africa's ambitious vision, with Davenne highlighting the rail sector's unique position to deliver transformative solutions to climate change, improve connectivity, and enhance economic growth. Dr Beroud remarked, "Africa's potential in rail is unmatched, and its transformative projects inspire the global rail community. Our work with the African Union demonstrates how partnerships can deliver real change for people and economies."

Commissioner Abou-Zeid concluded her address with a call for continued collaboration to unlock the full potential of Africa's railway sector, which holds the key to sustainable development and regional integration. "The task ahead is huge and

challenging, but I'm optimistic that we can achieve it through innovation, cooperation, and leadership," she said.

**For further information, please contact:**

1. **Ms. Esther Azaa Tankou** | Head, Media and Information Division, Communication Adviser, Permanent Observer Mission to the UN | Information and Communications Directorate | E-mail: [yamboue@africa-union.org](mailto:yamboue@africa-union.org) , Tel: +251911361185 / +1 3478127195 (WhatsApp)
2. **Ms. Bezayit Eyoel** | Department of Infrastructure and Energy| African Union Commission| E-mail: [bezayite@africa-union.org](mailto:bezayite@africa-union.org) |
3. **Mr. Gamal Eldin Ahmed A. Karrar** | Senior Communication Officer | Information and Communication Directorate (ICD), African Union Commission | E-mail: [GamalK@africa-union.org](mailto:GamalK@africa-union.org)

**Information and Communication Directorate**, African Union Commission | E-mail: [DIC@africa-union.org](mailto:DIC@africa-union.org) |  
**Web:** [www.au.int](http://www.au.int) | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | **Follow Us:** [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#) **Information and Communication Directorate**, African Union Commission E-mail: [DIC@africa-union.org](mailto:DIC@africa-union.org) **Web:** [au.int](http://au.int) | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | **Follow Us:** [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#)