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The Market Place Seminar, organised by UIC and FIATA, focusing on “Rail Crossroads”, successfully held in Antwerp, Belgium

(Paris/Antwerp, 25 September 2015) The Market Place Seminar is holding its 7th edition in Antwerp on 24 and 25 September organised in partnership between UIC and FIATA, the Antwerp Freight Forwarder's Association and Belgian association for freight forwarders and customs agents, which has invited participants to this seminar, and the Antwerp Port Authority, which has agreed to host the event focusing this year on “Rail Crossroads”.

As a global railway organisation representing 240 Members on 5 continents, UIC is pleased to organise – year after year – large events bringing together all freight operators and customers to examine, region by region, all the possibilities of fostering partnerships in the interest of each and every one. The previous editions provided an opportunity to establish this useful dialogue in the regions as part of the previous seminars in Prague, Barcelona, Istanbul, Hamburg, Vienna and Trieste.

This year the seminar is being hosted in the second largest port of Europe, with continuous growth generated by container traffic, and large volume of rail traffic (1000km of rail tracks in the port connected to everywhere in Europe). The port has to offer integrated transport between sea and rail, and faces three main challenges: logistic chains, upscaling and sustainability.

Mr Luc Arnouts, Chief Commercial Officer of the Port of Antwerp, had the pleasure to welcome us *“in these busy days for his city where a big transport and logistics exhibition is held at the same time. Antwerp is an interesting choice, because it is a **real forwarders** port: 80% of the volume traffic is generated by forwarders (200 million tonnes this year). It is a growing port with a crucial role and the necessary evolution for forwarders is clearly understood. It is much more than a transit port; it is a real part of the supply chain. Antwerp is also a good place for hosting the Market Place because it is a **rail port**. In 2009, in the context of the crisis, the port decided to improve connectivity: there was a tremendous potential for transport in the hinterland market share, and for good collaboration between private and public sector.”*

Mr Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General addressed a message to participants of this 7th edition of the Market Place Seminar, *“the world famous meeting point for railways and their customers and partners. UIC is working with all stakeholders (railways, logistics operators, international organisations, national administrative authorities...) to encourage the creation of partnerships between all these stakeholders involved in intermodal transport, including shipping companies, ports, terminals, etc. and ensure that these international, multimodal corridors become a reality.*

The Market Place Seminar is an example of this. These intermodal partnerships established with all these stakeholders in the areas of shipping, intermodal transport and industry also constitute a strong element in all the Regional Strategic Visions for the railways that UIC has recently developed.”

Mr Francesco Parisi, FIATA Immediate Past President welcomed the participants to this “long-standing successful seminar”. He said that is the major cooperative event between

FIATA and UIC. The constructive developments over the past year were significant, but there is still potential for more projects in the future. Indeed, almost all corridors begin and end in seaports. He felt that maritime traffic can generate the critical mass that continental traffic is often lacking.

Mr Parisi reminded the meeting that earlier this month FIATA elected new President, Mr Huxiang Zhao from China, who will provide further inputs on rail matters, especially linking China with Europe. In addition Mr Ivan Petrov Bulgaria and Chairman of the FIATA Working Group Rail Transport has been elected as Senior Vice President to the FIATA Presidency.

Mr Johan Proost, President of the AFFA, Antwerp Freight Forwarding Association said that *“thinking multimodal will be inevitable in the coming years and rail is one of the most important modus in the changing market. A well organised connection between the modi – sea/rail in particular – will make the difference whether a supply chain stays or leaves a port. To organise this and be ready for the future, a vision is imperative in all layers of the flow. Terminal operators, train – and barge operators, truckers, shipping lines and freight forwarders, all of them will have to create a mutual vision for the next 10-15 years how the supply chain should develop. Indeed, the organisation of the seminar has a real vision: from every echelon and every part of the supply chain they invited the experts and therefore this can only be a success for Antwerp, and for everyone involved in international multimodal transport and logistics.”*

This two-day seminar has been the opportunity to debate from different perspectives: from the operators' point of view, that could represent the bridge between UIC and FIATA, from the ports' point of view, of Antwerp mainly but Rotterdam too, and the region, the conjunction between sea and rail because rail is nothing if not integrated; new terminal operations, the railway connections in the hinterland traffic, and the results of digitalisation on logistics.

The next major event for rail freight will be the UIC Global Rail Freight Conference to be held from 22 – 24 June 2016 in Rotterdam: GRFC has become the worldwide reference for all decision-makers and all professionals participating in the development and operations of rail freight and logistics services across the globe.

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