

UNECE Ministerial Meeting on Euro-Asian Transport Links
Geneva, 19 February 2008

**STATEMENT BY MR. JOSÉ CAPEL FERRER, DIRECTOR FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF
ADIF SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF THE UIC GROUP OF EXPERTS ON INTERNATIONAL
CORRIDORS**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Executive Secretary, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to be part of this important Ministerial meeting, which is a major step forward in the process that the ECE and ESCAP secretariats launched five years ago.

In my former capacity as Director of the ECE Transport Division, I had the privilege, together with my colleagues from ESCAP, to launch this process. It is, therefore, also with great emotion and a bit of pride that I participate in this meeting.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Executive Secretary, Mr. Belka, for the strong support he has give to this process since his very entry on duty in the ECE.

I participate in this meeting on behalf of the International Railway Union (UIC). Born in 1922 as an association of European railways, the UIC has recently become a global organization, counting today 191 members across the world.

In the framework of its new global activities, the UIC is strongly committed to the development of international rail corridors for freight, including, with special focus, Euro-Asian rail corridors.

To this end, the UIC is establishing an Expert Group, which will be chaired by the President of the Russian Railways. I have been asked to be a Vice-Chairperson of the Group. I am pleased to offer the UNECE the collaboration of this Group.

Rail transport provides great potential for combating climate change. The development of rail corridors, in addition to other benefits for the countries concerned, including opening up and integrating landlocked countries, will also contribute to reduce congestion on infrastructures and to combat climate change.

For this, we must develop efficient, competitive rail corridors. This will not be a simple task. Rail corridors face serious obstacles. Inadequate and often missing infrastructure, long and complex border procedures, different track gauges, heterogeneous signalling and traction systems and insufficient cooperation between railways themselves, are some of the challenges we are facing.

The UIC group intends to mobilize all railway companies concerned. The UIC group will provide the basis for improved cooperation among them and between them and the authorities along the corridors. It will promote partnerships with public authorities and the private sector and propose solutions for harmonizing technical and operational rules on the corridors.

The result will be shorter transport times and improved quality of rail freight services along those corridors, leading to a better implementation of the Euro-Asian links that are being endorsed today.

However, for this we need the support of the Governments and collaboration from international organizations like the UNECE and UNESCAP, but also the OSCE, ITF and BSEC.

Needless to say, the UIC group fully supports the Joint Statement that is being signed today.

I wish the greatest success to this Ministerial Meeting and thank you for your attention.