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UIC ERTMS WORLD CONFERENCE 2007:

ERTMS/ETCS/GSM-R at the point of no return in Europe and important potential worldwide.

Railways have really started to implement and the technology is being used. The European ETCS-net is taking shape: more than 25.000km of lines will be equipped with ETCS and a roll-out of GSM-R over 147.000km has been planned for the next ten years

(Paris, 14 September 2007). "We are in the middle of the stream and returning to where we were would be as demanding as moving forward to reach our objective", with these paraphrased words from Shakespeare's Macbeth, Gerard Dalton, Director of UIC Infrastructure Department closed the UIC ERTMS 2007 World Conference held from 11 to 13 September last in Berne.

The UIC ERTMS 2007 Conference focussed on the theme **'From independent Networks to Interoperability'**. ERTMS (with its components ETCS, GSM-R and the Traffic management Layer, Europtirails) is now available and working and has reached a point of maturity where the benefits of considerable research and investment can, and is beginning to be, exploited both within and outside Europe. Accordingly, the issue is no longer whether a nationally performing signalling system is available but rather how the ERTMS system can be integrated into feasible and economical migration plans that will ensure interoperability and compatibility between networks

The objectives of the conference have been largely achieved

760 participants from the European Union, government officials, railway operators and the supply industry coming from Europe, Asia, Africa, North America and Australia as well as 29 exhibitors gathered in Bern. Such a large audience has never been reached before. The conference proved itself, once again, to be the major forum for active debate on this subject and an excellent environment for networking.

The attendance of Karel Vinck, ERTMS-Coordinator of the European Commission and of Marcel Verslype, Executive Director of the European Railway Agency, throughout the entire proceedings of the Conference gave witness to their full support and underlying commitment to see ERTMS implementation on rail corridors proceed in an effective manner.

Mr Vinck explained that, at present, only one third of the originally planned EU TEN budget for rail has been approved by the EU but he foresees that the budget will be reviewed in mid 2009 to the possible advantage of rail, having regard to the increasing needs to adapt to

climate change. This could mean that more money could be available for rail projects and plans, including ERTMS. However, he stressed the importance of preparing pragmatic business plans, with clear facts and figures, supporting the railways' commitment to a masterplan for rail corridors, to establish a solid basis to attract such further funding

On the status and ongoing consolidation of ERTMS, Marcel Verlsype underlined that the railway sector need a stable and reliable signalling system. The challenge of ERA is to guarantee a transparent and efficient management of the 2.3.0 specification (the current legal version for ERTMS) and of the development of the future release of 3.0.0. This will ensure the compatibility of the two releases and the protection of the investments of the actors.

The technical visits organised by BLS and CFF demonstrated the progress made in ERTMS:

The Swiss (BLS and CFF) played the role of pioneer in the development of ERTMS. They are the first railway companies that achieved commercial operation of ETCS on one of the most densely trafficked line in Switzerland between Olten and Bern and through the Lötschberg tunnel. Today, ETCS assures on the Olten-Bern Line around 260 trains per day with speeds up to 200 km/h and intervals of 2 minutes between trains at certain periods.

From December next ETCS will be put into full commercial passenger service on an another important part of the North South-Corridor in Switzerland. Traffic on the BLS line through the new Lötschberg base tunnel will be controlled by ETCS Level 2. 110 trains will run through the tunnel every day with speed up to 250 km/h and with train intervals of 3 minutes.

SBB has already collected more than 2 million train-kilometres of experience in ETCS. In 2012, SBB would like to see the whole North-South Corridor from Rotterdam to Genoa equipped with ETCS train control system and at the end of 2015 they would like to have equipped their whole network with ETCS, as a replacement for their current command/control system, which will be at the end of its life cycle.

In connection with the conference two reports have been released on the deployments and perspectives of ERTMS "**Atlas of ERTMS worldwide implementation**" and **Global Perspectives for ERTMS/ETCS and GSM-R**". (see press release of 11 September last)

The Conference identified topics for future work: harmonisation for operational rules, profit from experience in the migration; the efficient management of the 2.3.0 and 3.0.0 specifications, system integration management, to prepare a 2009 master plan that will coincide with the mid term EU finances, Private public participation, the set up of common testing centres, system version management and the development of ERTMS –Regional .

The next UIC ERTMS World Conference will be held in the Spring of 2009. Several countries have already shown their interest to host the event.

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