

News AG

On 25 and 26 September 2018, OTIF held its 13th General Assembly. This meeting of the Organisation's supreme body also marked the 125th anniversary of COTIF.

To commemorate this anniversary, a reception provided the opportunity to celebrate the three elements that make OTIF a successful forum for international railway law:

- A neutral, open arena, thanks to the constant involvement of the Host State, the Swiss Confederation;
- A spirit of innovation that anticipates developments in the sector, represented here by Swiss Federal Railways, who presented their digital strategy for freight;
- Great willingness to be open, symbolised by the speech given by a representative of China's National Railway Authority, who presented his vision of Euro-Asian trade and the positive role of OTIF.

With regard to the substance, the General Assembly took three strategic decisions:

- The creation of a new appendix on the safe operation of trains, which opens the way to the expansion of interoperability beyond Europe;
- Modification of the Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of Use of Infrastructure (CUI UR), which will make it possible to develop simple, shared rules for the rail sector concerning the allocation of international train paths;
- Modification of Article 34 of COTIF to harmonise the deadlines for the entry into force of modifications to the Convention with the rail sector's constant need to adapt.

In order to deal with the increased activity this will entail, the General Assembly set up an ad hoc Committee on Cooperation that will help involve the Member States in operational contact groups. The first of these groups should look at the carriage of packages by rail between China and Europe and should involve a great number of partners in addition to UPU and OTIF;

In order to optimise the running of the Organisation, the General Assembly supported setting up a working group of legal experts, which will deal with the challenge of adapting the regulations to the new digital environment on which the globalisation of logistics chains depends for its success.

Lastly, the General Assembly noted that the Secretary General of OTIF, Mr Davenne, had been appointed as the future Director General of UIC from 1 July 2019. He would join UIC on 1 January 2019 as its deputy Director General. The General Assembly decided to convene an extraordinary session on 27 February 2019 to elect a new Secretary General. It also nominated Mr Bas Leermakers to act as the interim Secretary General from 1 January 2019 until the new, elected Secretary General takes up his duties.



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