



**58<sup>TH</sup> UITP WORLD CONGRESS AND EXHIBITION**  
**SPEECH OF MR ALAIN FLAUSCH, UITP PRESIDENT,**  
**AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY**

Mr. President, Dear Roberto,

Mr. Secretary General, Dear Hans,

Dear members of the Executive Board and of the Policy Board,

Distinguished members of our Association,

Dear colleagues and friends,

Being recently appointed President of UITP, such a respectable and worldwide known international organisation, is of course a privilege and a great honour and besides being thankful for all of you who endorsed my appointment, I shall of course make my best in the forthcoming two years to live up to your expectations and attempt to bring our great organisation a further step forward in the promotion of public transport and sustainable mobility.

As you all know or should know by now, I am the CEO of an integrated public transport network of a medium-size European city, be it the real capital of Europe and I have been in such a position for only nine years.

However immodest this may sound, all those ingredients are not making of me someone special but could explain why I may wish to stress some emphasis on issues which are generally not a concern for middle-of-the-road public transport executives.

Being a CEO of an integrated network metro-tram-bus in a medium-size European city makes me very sensitive to the concerns of both the rail world (I have been an active member for 9 years of the UITP metro division and, on the tram side, Brussels light rail system is one of the five biggest and oldest tram systems in Europe) and of the bus world (the Bus world of Kortrijk is only 40 miles from Brussels and our bus show every day in Brussels involves 650 buses) and the absolute need to deploy both worlds in an integrated public transport system.

Being a Belgian and a public transport operator in such a tiny country where intermodality, for historical and political reasons (those who know the Belgian intricate political and institutional scenery shall understand what I am talking about) does not really work, I am a fierce promoter of seamless travel and I am known in Belgium for having risked my position times and times again by summoning politicians to grasp that major concept of seamless travel as the real future of public transport in large conurbation areas;

Being only nine years in public transport makes me still like blowing some fresh air from the real world because coming from the private sector where companies do not survive if they are not efficient and growth-oriented, I continue to believe that, besides the absolutely needed public service requirements, a public transport public operator needs to be run the same way as a privately-owned business, I mean that, besides the fact that we may not need to deliver a level of profit as high as the one required by private owners, we still need, on an every day basis, to grow, to be efficient and market-driven, like any other private business.

No wonder then that as President of UITP, I shall continue to be influenced by what I did earlier in my professional life and, for my friends present here today, I guess this will not be a real surprise.

But then, what about the next 2 years?

As some of you may know, UITP has been developing for a while a new strategic vision both for the Association and for the public transport sector and the latter is in the process of being launched during this Vienna Congress.

Regarding our association, you may remember that we have chosen to base our future on five basic missions. Namely, being a platform for public transport knowledge and sharing the same, being a vibrant networking basis, promoting innovation, being or becoming a place for business opportunities and ensuring the best possible advocacy for our industry.

I'm convinced that for the first two missions, we are doing pretty well though of course we could always do better for instance by reinforcing our perception by the market and continue to be the best place where members can find the relevant know-how and best practices in public transport.

Advocacy is certainly not one of our weak point and the way for instance the European institutions are repeatedly calling upon us to represent the public transport sector whenever they want to take an initiative for public transport shows that UITP is well regarded as the respected voice of our industry despite the fact that many of us have not yet realised that our future, at least for the European one of us, is in the hands of Brussels and that, if we do not take care of our future, they will.

But in this time of worldwide crisis where we are on the verge of building a new society model and where citizens are expected to adopt new lifestyles if we want our world to survive, the voice of public transport which offers a major contribution to the gigantic problems the world is facing in terms of climate change is, in my opinion, yet not strong enough and we need to pursue with energy what was already started under Mr. Cavalieri era, namely developing stronger ties with all the International and multilateral organisations whose objectives are linked to our future, we need to reorganise a better and more active coordination between the UITP staff and our members whenever the future of our business is at stake and it is the moment to express our industry views, we need to develop a better articulation between UITP promotion campaigns and the local media declination of those on a national or local basis where our members are in a better position to pass the good words to their government.

The last two other missions of our association are not less vital than the other and need, in my opinion, to be more and more developed.

I was recently reading the advice given by a major international consulting firm to the western world big companies confronted with the surge of booming competitors coming from the emerging countries and looking for ways to keep their competitive edge against the "newcomers".

The advice was simple and clear cut: they need to forcefully invest in innovations and consolidate the value of their brands through this major effort.

Public transport companies need to do exactly the same if they want to increase their market share: from dusty old nice and charming ladies, we need to transform ourselves into modern and customer-driven brands which incorporate in their service innovations and new technologies thereby attracting new customers – the smart traveller- and new staff bluffed by the exciting experience public transport can offer them

Our association should be at the forefront of that battle and facilitate that major move towards innovative public transport.

Last but not least, favouring business opportunities between our members should be further developed: besides our every two years exhibitions , the model of which could eventually be revisited with the view to make it even more vibrant and interactive, other events and forums need to be further developed for the intermediate period, transforming UITP in our members' mind as one of the major places where they can develop their business: the small and medium size industry members are to that extent a territory to further develop.

So far so good for the Association strategy, let's turn now to the sector future.

With the help of the Prescom and the policy Board, the General Secretariat under the smart guidance of Hans Rat and Laurent Dauby has developed a new strategy for our public transport sector which has been launched during this Vienna congress as the Vienna manifesto.

I am not going to make you a new summarized version of that Manifesto which will guide our steps during the next five years but shall try to emphasize few things which, in my opinion, are of the essence if we want to take advantage from the economic crisis we are now facing.

Among the various solutions proposed by the manifesto to reach the ambitious objective we have set for the sector namely the doubling the market share of public transport within the next 15 years on a worldwide basis let me make three points of special attention.

First and because we are at a time where, because of the economic crisis, people are asked or forced to rethink their way of living and life style, public transport marketers need to develop new ways to approach our potential customers for convincing them to make of public transport their preferred mode of transportation. Proximity with our customers, proposing some kind of individual relation and recognition within the framework of a collective system, experience sharing with our clients, co-production of new services, collaborative platforms for creating new services or assessing existing services are only some of the tools we may want to rely on for the sake of meeting our clients evolving needs.

Creating a next business culture within our companies and becoming an effective service industry is another major challenge that our sector needs to face. My experience within STIB after nine years shows me indeed that besides implementing innovative management tools allowing to plan and monitor our companies' performances, there is still a lot to do inside our organisations for making room for entrepreneurship, strong management skills and business development attitudes.

Applying new technologies and especially the digital one for the sake of facilitating the use of our services by our clients and thereby making of public transport services something as attractive and trendy as the new industries that developed in the last ten years like telecoms or the web-related one is no doubt one interesting route for associating public transport with the new generations evolving lifestyle.

Marketing, new technologies and a strong business culture: these are the very basic ingredients which I think we need to inject with more strength in our sector if we wish to develop and reach our market share doubling objective within the forthcoming years.

But, as you all know, in our sector there is a lot of our future that depends on our political partners and on their willingness to make room in our cities for the development of public transport.

On that part of the issue, I think that we need to be very clear and specific and this should sound as a call on our political partners to be consistent with what they have been saying for years but haven't done for many of them: there is no future for public transport in our cities and communities if they do not accept and promote on an every day basis the principle of permanent priority for public transport.

Let me explain what I mean thereby.

Obviously, I do not only speak of the right of way that our carriages and buses should always have on our streets and avenues though, in certain communities, this obvious tool is not always considered as common sense and admitted as a permanent prescription;

What I mean is that political deciders and opinion leaders, whenever they are confronted with city planning or urban renovation projects, need always to give first priority for soft mobility modes namely walking and biking (they are complementary to us) and especially to public transport. Logistic traffic namely what I would summarise as "feeding the city" need then to be a second priority whereas private transport should always come after those two. With these priorities in mind, cities like Copenhagen which is eventually the best example but also Lyon or Vienna have become years after years more pleasant, safer and pollution-poor cities and are regaining inhabitants whereas cities which have not made that choice are still struggling for keeping their historical population.

By the same token, whenever mobility investments need to be made in order to provide mobility solutions for all, public transport should by all means received a preferred treatment: in nowadays difficult times, they are the most efficient from all points of view.

Ladies and gentlemen, times ahead especially in 2009 and 2010 will certainly be tough for all of us, citizens of our cities and communities, because the policies aimed at recovering from the economic crisis and its social impact will inevitably have to be combined with the measures aimed at reducing the green-house gas emissions and curbing the growing traffic congestion.

The public transport community must seize those difficult times as a fantastic opportunity to further enhance its market share in the overall mobility scenery and thereby contribute to the sustainable development of our cities and planet.

To the extent of my capabilities and energy, I promise I shall do my best for the next two years to serve all the public transport community and UITP members to continue swimming into those troubled but promising waters.

Thank you.

Vienna, 11 June 2009