PRESS RELEASE

UIC and UITP call for rail and public transport to be central to national climate adaptation plans: a joint call to action

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As climate change increasingly disrupts transport networks worldwide, the International Union of Railways (UIC) and UITP, the International Association of Public Transport are calling on governments to place rail, public transport and urban mobility at the heart of their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).

Floods, extreme heat, storms, landslides, wildfires and sea-level rise are putting transport infrastructure, operations and services under growing pressure. Climate-related hazards already cause an estimated USD 15 billion in annual damage to transport systems, including more than USD 8 billion in low- and middle-income countries. Without stronger action, the transport sector could face infrastructure losses of up to 97.8% by 2050, according to the figures cited in the joint call to action.

Rail and public transport are therefore not only infrastructure to be protected from climate change - they are essential services that can strengthen the resilience of communities, cities and economies. Modern, well-connected and coordinated transport networks provide high-capacity, multimodal mobility options that can help communities respond to disruptions and recover more effectively.

Yet their role in national climate adaptation planning remains insufficiently recognised. UITP's analysis indicates that only around one-third of National Adaptation Plans include public transport measures aligned with the Avoid–Shift–Improve–Adapt framework. UIC's review of 44 plans found that, while transport was referenced in 39, rail was explicitly included in only 23. Both analyses point to a gap between recognising transport's vulnerability and establishing clear adaptation targets, indicators and dedicated financing.

Through their joint call to action, UIC and UITP urge governments to move from recognition to implementation, ensuring that rail and public transport are explicitly integrated into national adaptation policies, investment strategies and resilience objectives.

Four priorities for climate-resilient mobility

The joint call to action is built around the Avoid – Shift – Improve - Adapt framework, supported by four complementary priorities: Plan, Measure, Invest and Protect.

PLAN – Put rail and public transport at the centre of national adaptation planning

National Adaptation Plans should establish a long-term vision for climate-resilient mobility, recognising rail and public transport as critical infrastructure and essential services. Governments should align adaptation plans with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and national, regional and local strategies for transport, urban development and infrastructure. This requires climate-resilient design, proactive maintenance, nature-based solutions, emergency preparedness and stronger coordination across public authorities and transport stakeholders.

MEASURE – Make resilience measurable and focus on outcomes

Monitoring and evaluation should assess real-world outcomes, including infrastructure resilience, service continuity and accessibility. Tracking climate-related delays, cancellations, shutdowns and rerouting can help identify vulnerabilities, inform investment decisions, strengthen emergency preparedness and safeguard the mobility systems on which communities and economic activity depend.

INVEST – Mobilise finance for climate-resilient rail and public transport

Governments and financial institutions must improve access to climate adaptation finance for rail and public transport. Better alignment between National Adaptation Plans and Nationally Determined Contributions can strengthen policy coherence, investment planning and access to relevant climate finance mechanisms, including the Adaptation Fund under the Paris Agreement. Dedicated, predictable funding is particularly important for low- and middle-income countries, where climate impacts can have severe economic and social consequences.

PROTECT – Safeguard the transport systems that underpin resilient societies

Adaptation must protect not only physical assets but also the continuity and accessibility of essential transport services. Targeted investments in flood protection, climate-resilient vehicle and infrastructure design, nature-based solutions, operational preparedness and coordinated emergency response can help keep people and economies connected when climate-related disruptions occur.

The call also highlights the importance of the full Avoid–Shift–Improve–Adapt approach: avoiding unnecessary travel and climate exposure through better planning and compact development; shifting towards rail, public transport, walking and cycling; improving existing systems through smarter operations, emergency response and customer communication; and adapting critical assets to withstand current and future climate risks.

"Climate resilience and adaptation must be central to how we plan, fund and operate public transport. Climate-related disruptions, such as flooding and extreme heat, affect access to work, education and essential services, with significant consequences for communities and economic activity. National Adaptation Plans must recognise public transport as an essential service and systematically measure climate-related service disruptions, providing the evidence needed to prioritise adaptation measures and mobilise funding to protect public transport services, safeguarding communities and economies."

Mohamed Mezghani, UITP Secretary General

"Railways must be backbone of resilient transport system. Their ability to move large numbers of people and goods, and to connect with other transport modes, helps communities and economies stay connected when disruption strikes. Investing in climate-resilient rail protects these essential connections while supporting a shift towards a transport system that will reduce emissions, road congestion and accidents. Putting rail at the heart of National Adaptation Plans is an investment in safer, more connected and more sustainable future."

François Davenne, UIC Director General

Global Advocacy at UITP

About UIC

UIC is the worldwide organisation for the promotion of rail transport at a global level and collaborative development of the railway system. It brings together some 200 members on all 5 continents, among them rail operators, infrastructure managers, railway service providers, etc. UIC maintains close cooperation links with all actors in the rail transport domain around the world, including manufacturers, railway associations, public authorities and stakeholders in other domains and sectors whose experiences may be beneficial to rail development. UIC's main tasks include understanding the business needs of the rail community, developing innovation programmes to identify solutions to those needs, as well as preparing and publishing a series of documents such as reports, specifications, guidelines and IRS that facilitate the implementation of the innovative solutions. For more information, visit www.uic.org or on LinkedIn. **CONTACT** UIC Comms Dept: com@uic.org Head of Sustainability Lucie Anderton: anderton@uic.org

About UITP

UITP, the International Association of Public Transport works to enhance quality of life and economic well-being by supporting and promoting sustainable transport in urban areas worldwide. As a passionate champion of sustainable urban mobility, UITP is internationally recognised for its work to advance the development of this critical policy agenda. Beginning in 1885, and now with more than 2300 members in over 100 countries, UITP is the only worldwide network to bring together all public transport stakeholders and all sustainable transport modes. Visit the website: UITP.org. **Contact:** UITP Head of Corporate Communications and Press Relations, Scott Shepherd: scott.shepherd@uitp.org