



RABAT DECLARATION ON INVESTMENT AND FINANCING SOLUTIONS FOR AFRICA'S RAILWAY FUTURE

INTRODUCTION

The Investment and Financing Solutions for Africa's Railway Future Forum, organised by the International Union of Railways (UIC), together with the Office National des Chemins de Fer (ONCF), Under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, was held in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, on 14-15 October 2026.

Building upon the Dakar Declaration on the Financing of Rail Projects in Africa, adopted in October 2023, the Forum brought together representatives of African railway undertakings, infrastructure managers, development finance institutions, multilateral development banks, private investors, industry, international organisations and development partners to advance practical solutions for accelerating investment in railway infrastructure and services across Africa.

In this context, the Forum acknowledges the Kingdom of Morocco's longstanding commitment to South-South cooperation and sustainable railway development across the African continent. Through ONCF, Morocco actively contributes to strengthening cooperation among African railway networks by promoting knowledge sharing, capacity building and the exchange of expertise. The hosting of this Forum in Rabat further reflects Morocco's commitment to fostering regional partnerships and mobilising investment towards a more connected, integrated and sustainable railway system across Africa.

The Forum provided a platform to exchange experiences, strengthen cooperation among stakeholders, identify innovative financing solutions and develop practical recommendations to support the preparation, financing and implementation of railway projects that contribute to sustainable economic development, regional integration and climate action.

BACKGROUND

The participants identified the following factors for context:

1. Africa continues to experience rapid population growth, urbanisation and increasing demand for sustainable transport infrastructure. Expanding and modernising railway networks will be essential to support economic competitiveness, industrialisation, regional integration and resilient supply chains, while contributing to climate mitigation, climate resilience and sustainable development.
2. Africa is advancing the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which will further reinforce the strategic importance of integrated railway systems connecting ports, production centres and inland markets. Rail transport has a critical role to play in

facilitating trade, strengthening regional connectivity and supporting Africa's economic transformation.

3. Significant progress has already been achieved through major railway investments across the continent. Nevertheless, financing needs remain substantial and many projects continue to face challenges related to project preparation, institutional capacity, regulatory frameworks, risk allocation and long-term financial sustainability.
4. The international financing landscape continues to evolve. Alongside traditional public investment and development finance, new opportunities are emerging through blended finance, public-private partnerships, climate finance, sustainability-linked finance, resilience finance, land value capture, transit-oriented development and other financing mechanisms.
5. The implementation of the Paris Agreement, including the operationalisation of Article 6 carbon markets, presents new opportunities to recognise the climate value of rail and public transport, mobilise additional funding, strengthen project bankability and accelerate the transition towards low-carbon transport systems.
6. Africa offers one of the most promising environments for carbon finance in railways, specifically for greenfield and significant expansion projects, where investments can simultaneously advance sustainable transport, climate objectives, and economic development.

DECLARATION

Across two days of discussions, participants examined practical solutions to mobilise greater investment in railway infrastructure and services across Africa, recognizing rail's environmental credentials.

During the deliberations, it was noted that:

1. African States continue to demonstrate strong commitment to railway development as a driver of sustainable economic growth, regional integration and social inclusion.
2. Railways represent one of the most effective long-term investments for reducing transport emissions, strengthening climate resilience, improving accessibility and supporting inclusive development.
3. Mobilising investment requires not only greater financial resources but also stronger project preparation, improved institutional capacity, appropriate risk-sharing mechanisms and closer cooperation between public and private stakeholders.
4. Climate finance and carbon markets represent important opportunities to complement traditional financing instruments and strengthen the financial viability of railway and public transport investments.

In this respect, the Forum highlights the following points:

1. Strengthening Africa's Railway Investment Agenda

The Forum reaffirms the commitments contained in the Dakar Declaration and recognise the progress achieved since its adoption.

It encourages railway undertakings, development finance institutions and international partners to continue strengthening cooperation in support of the implementation of the African Integrated Railway Network, one of the 15 flagship projects of Agenda 2063, currently under the implementation by the African Union.

2. Mobilising Innovative Financing

Despite the progress made, financing railway projects across Africa remains one of the principal challenges to accelerating railway development.

The Forum encourages wider use of blended finance, public-private partnerships, guarantees, climate and sustainability-linked finance, resilience financing, land value capture, transit-oriented development and other innovative financing mechanisms capable of improving project viability and attracting long-term investment.

3. Improving Project Preparation and Bankability

The Forum recognises that many railway projects face difficulties reaching financial close due to limited project preparation capacity.

Therefore, it encourages the establishment and expansion of project preparation facilities, technical assistance programmes and capacity-building initiatives aimed at strengthening project design, governance, financial structuring, risk allocation and investment readiness.

Improving the quality and bankability of railway projects will help mobilise both public and private capital more effectively.

4. Accelerating Regional Integration and Supporting Sustainable Urban Mobility

The Forum reaffirms that railway corridors constitute strategic infrastructure for implementing the African Integrated Railway Network and strengthening regional integration.

The Forum also recognises the essential contribution of urban rail and public transport systems to sustainable urban development, economic productivity, accessibility, public health and climate action, recognising the wider social, environmental and economic benefits generated by public transport systems.

5. Unlocking Climate Finance

The Forum recognises that climate finance should become an integral component of railway financing.

It encourages greater recognition of rail and public transport within Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), national investment strategies and international climate finance mechanisms.

It further recognises the growing opportunities presented by Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, and other carbon markets, to extend and adapt existing carbon crediting methodologies (e.g. CDM ACM0016, AM0090, AM0101) to recognise avoided emissions from modal shift and generating additional financing for sustainable transport infrastructure. It also calls for the recognition of such methodologies by the UNFCCC and other carbon market entities under their activities.

6. Launch of the Coalition on Carbon Markets for Rail and Public Transport

The Forum welcomes the official launch of the MoveCredits Coalition on Carbon Markets for Rail and Public Transport.

The Coalition will serve as a collaborative international platform bringing together, railway and public transport operators, industry, multilateral development banks, development finance institutions, governments, academia and international organisations to:

- support the development of practical carbon market methodologies for rail and public transport;
- facilitate knowledge sharing and technical cooperation for carbon markets;
- build capacity among stakeholders;
- advocate for greater recognition of sustainable transport within international climate finance frameworks;
- advance harmonised standards and key performance indicators for verifying the climate benefits of rail and public transport projects across financing instruments.

Analysis undertaken by a UIC study shows that if Low Income Countries (LICs) and Low- and Middle Income Countries (LMICs) were able to quadruple rail modal share to 8%, it could avoid a total of 1.8 Gt of carbon emissions by 2050. Closing this rail infrastructure gap would require annual investment in rail in LICs and LMICs of USD 80 billion per year through 2050. Annual investment of USD 25 billion would still allow the addition of 50,000 km of interurban lines and 4,000 km of urban lines and the avoidance of 1 Gt of emissions by 2050.

Building on this study and subsequent modelling, the Forum recognises that a structured carbon market could significantly contribute to financing rail investment. Rail and public transport projects can generate high-integrity carbon credits through modal shift, electrification and renewable energy generation. At values in the range of USD 15–50 per tonne of CO₂ equivalent for ITMO transactions, USD 4-10 per tonne for voluntary-market credits and EUR 100/tCO₂ for developed-market compliance schemes such as the EU ETS, carbon revenues could cover a significant share of the capital cost of the projects concerned.

This Forum is a natural extension of the MoveCredits Coalition's work, bringing together key stakeholders around a common vision and shared goals, bringing initiatives together, strengthening partnerships, and opening up new opportunities for cooperation on the continent which has many projects for this kind of coalition.

The Forum also invites interested organisations to actively contribute to the work of the Coalition and recognise it as an important implementation platform for advancing the climate finance objectives contained in this Declaration.

7. From Dialogue to Implementation

The Forum recognises that continued dialogue must now be accompanied by concrete implementation and the establishment of mechanisms to monitor progress, exchange experiences and identify new opportunities for cooperation.

CALL TO ACTION

The Forum calls upon African stakeholders, development finance institutions, multilateral development banks, private investors, industry and international organisations to strengthen their cooperation in support of sustainable railway development across Africa.

They reaffirm that investing in rail is not only an investment in transport infrastructure, but also in economic growth, regional integration, climate action, resilience and sustainable development.

Working together, the Forum commits to translating the outcomes of the Rabat Forum into concrete partnerships, investment opportunities and practical actions that will help shape Africa's railway future.

Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, 15 October 2026.