

## **Meeting of the Working Group on South American Rail Integration**

September 26, 2013  
Santiago de Chile

### **NOTES OF THE MEETING**

On September 26, 2013, the city of Santiago de Chile hosted the Meeting of the Working Group on South American Rail Integration. The meeting was attended by delegates of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela as well as representatives of the UNASUR General Secretariat, and IIRSA Technical Coordination Committee. The meeting agenda and the list of participants are attached as Annexes 1 and 2, respectively.

The objectives of the meeting were the following: (i) report the status of rail projects included in the COSIPLAN Project Portfolio (individual and structured projects within the Integration Priority Project Agenda - API); (ii) assess the progress made and the advances expected with regard to the Bioceanic Rail Corridor (BRC); (iii) identify other binational and multinational rail initiatives and assess likely connections to the BRC; and (iv) agree on the next steps toward the development of South American Rail Integration.

The work sessions were opened by the Presidency Pro Tempore (PPT) held by Chile represented in the person of Mr. Lucas Palacios, the Under-Secretary of Public Works. Mr. Palacios stated that the rail transportation in South America is far behind other transportation means. Rail freight transport is less damaging to the environment, safer, less vulnerable to weather hazards, and a fundamental means for commercial exchange and cultural integration purposes. It is very important to promote the development of this means with a long-term strategy and with a regional perspective, considering investments to enhance and streamline rail transportation and making headway into the harmonization of regulations and procedures to facilitate its operation. South America faces the big challenge of creating a rail platform to promote sustainable development and improve people's quality of life.

Afterwards, the Working Group (GT), presided over by the Uruguayan Transport Vice-Minister, Mr. Pablo Genta, stated the objectives and expected results of the meeting. Mr. Genta stressed how important it was to direct efforts to improving rail freight transport, since passenger rail transport at national levels plays a key role in urban and suburban connections in the region. At this first meeting, the objective of the Working Group was to lay down the foundations for discussing the COSIPLAN-IIRSA Portfolio projects and, particularly, the ones included in API, and for designing a joint work plan to enhance the progress of these projects with the ultimate purpose of integrating rail networks among the UNASUR member countries.

At the beginning, participants presented the current status of the COSIPLAN-IIRSA and API rail projects by Integration and Development Hub. These presentations are attached as Annexes 3, 4 and 5.

The Venezuelan delegation presented the “Socialist National Rail Development Plan,” including sections in operation and under construction, the rails scheduled to be built, the sea ports expected to be connected, as well as the social projects related to this plan. This presentation is attached as Annex 6.

Subsequently, some elements of the report entitled “Más y mejores trenes - Cambiando la matriz de transporte de América Latina y el Caribe” (More and Better Trains – Changing the Latin America and Caribbean Transportation Matrix), prepared by the IDB (Jorge Kohon. IDB TN 303) were presented, and relevant topics for discussion by the Working Group were underscored. This presentation is attached as Annex 7.

Afterwards, the background, technical studies, and main characteristics of the Bioceanic Rail Corridor (BRC) were described. This presentation is attached as Annex 8. The Argentine delegation made reference to the status of the Belgrano Cargas rail branch, which forms part of the BRC. This branch, which had operated under a concession, was later recovered by the State and its service is now in the hands of a State-run enterprise. A complex recovery plan has been designed, since the intervention required is intensive; furthermore, goods transported by this railway are expected to increase, so that the railway will gain incidence in the field of freight movement. Then, the Paraguayan delegation presented the “Feasibility Study for the Construction of the Rail-Road System in Paraguay,” comprising the Paraguayan section of the BRC. This presentation is attached as Annex 9.

Finally, in relation to this work area, the following actions were identified:

1. Complete and update the information on rail projects in the project file database. It was suggested that under “description” the following data be included: gauge, actual or expected axle weight, and train length.
2. As long as the COSIPLAN GIS is not put in operation, draw up a map of existing rail networks taking into account the maps produced by the Latin American Railways Association (ALAF) and highlighting the COSIPLAN-IIRSA and API Portfolio projects.
3. Seek the mechanisms to start an analysis of the regulatory aspects associated with rail transportation that facilitate movement at border crossings and rail service operations. The Working Group Presidency will prepare its terms of reference to gather and analyze the national and international regulations in force in order to find a way to harmonize and eventually come up with a common regulation. These terms of reference will be revised in the meeting to be held in November 2013 so that the necessary funds can be managed through a technical assistance.
4. Request that each country submit at the next WG meeting its own national rail development plan, including information on the current and expected demand and focusing on the interconnection points with other countries.
5. Organize a WG meeting in the first half of 2014. The WG President proposed its country to host the next meeting.

## **List of Annexes**

- Annex 1: Meeting Agenda
- Annex 2: List of Participating Delegations
- Annex 3: Presentation on the Rail Projects included in the COSIPLAN-IIRSA Portfolio Projects
- Annex 4: Presentation on the Situation of the Individual Rail Projects within the COSIPLAN-IIRSA Portfolio by Integration and Development Hub
- Annex 5: Presentation on the Status of the API Rail Projects
- Annex 6: Presentation Made by the Venezuelan Delegation on the Socialist National Rail Development Plan
- Annex 7: Some elements of the Report entitled “Más y mejores trenes - Cambiando la matriz de transporte de América Latina y el Caribe” (More and Better Trains – Changing the Latin American and Caribbean Transportation Matrix) IDB - Jorge Kohon (IDB TN 303)
- Annex 8: Presentation on the Bioceanic Rail Corridor
- Annex 9: Presentation Made by the Paraguayan Delegation on the Feasibility Study for the Construction of the Rail-Road System in Paraguay