



Press release

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Ceneri 2020: International meeting to promote rail transport

On the eve of the opening of the Ceneri Base Tunnel and the celebrations to mark the completion of the NRLA, President Simonetta Sommaruga met for talks with delegations from neighbouring countries. Those present agreed to continue efforts to promote the use of rail to transport freight and passengers internationally. Switzerland and its neighbouring countries also backed increased night train services as an alternative to air travel. President Sommaruga then took her colleagues on a tour of the north portal of the Ceneri Base Tunnel. She signed an agreement with her Italian counterpart on upgrading the rail line between the Simplon and Novara.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, original plans for a large-scale transport ministers' conference were scaled back to a gathering of ministers from neighbouring countries. Austria and Italy were represented by transport ministers Leonore Gewessler and Paola de Micheli. Germany was represented by State Secretary Michael Guntner, and the EU by Paweł Wojciechowski, the coordinator of the Rhine-Alpine rail freight corridor.

At the conference, chaired by President Simonetta Sommaruga, participants spoke in favour of further promoting freight transport by rail and making railways even more attractive for international passenger transport. This includes more night train services as an alternative to air travel. In a joint declaration, they stated that rail transport is important for an environmentally and climate-friendly transport system and that rail systems in Europe should therefore be further harmonised and strengthened. The declaration was also signed by correspondence by the Principality of Liechtenstein and by other countries along the Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Mediterranean (France, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg) rail freight corridors. The European Commission and Slovenia have also agreed to it and will sign it later.

Following the conference, Ms Sommaruga and Dieter Schwank, CEO of Alptransit Gotthard AG, and Vincent Ducrot, CEO of SBB, explained the origins, importance and

role of the NRLA while visiting the north portal of the Ceneri Base Tunnel in Camorino (TI).

The official ceremony to open the Ceneri Base Tunnel and mark the completion of the NRLA will take place on 4 September. Test operations will then be conducted before scheduled train services commence running through the tunnel in mid-December.

Agreement to upgrade the Simplon route

Simonetta Sommaruga and her Italian counterpart Paola de Micheli also signed an agreement on upgrading the railway line between the Simplon and Novara. Italy has pledged to expand the line by 2028 so that semi-trailers with a corner height of 4 metres can travel continuously to the major terminals in northern Italy, thereby further strengthening the traffic transfer policy. Switzerland is contributing CHF 148 million towards the project. That funding is drawn from the credit to upgrade access routes to the NRLA. Italy will bear the remaining costs.

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