

UK reaffirms support for Ukraine as government hands over presidency of International Transport Forum

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Transport Secretary Mark Harper has reiterated the UK's condemnation of Russia's war on Ukraine – highlighting the devastating impact it's had on the country's transport infrastructure – during a 2-day summit of transport ministers from across the world in Leipzig, Germany.

The UK has held the presidency of the International Transport Forum (ITF) for the past year, and today (25 May 2023) **issued a statement – in conjunction with vice-presidencies Lithuania and Chile** – highlighting the work the ITF has done to support Ukraine in rebuilding its transport systems and infrastructure.

As part of our ongoing support to Ukraine and its people, the UK rail industry has made several donations of critical rail infrastructure and humanitarian aid, recently delivering £10 million in materials to repair rail infrastructure and to facilitate the movement of grain out of Ukraine. Bolstering the country's skillset, Ukrainian engineers were trained in the UK on how to use the bridge repair materials, too.

In a speech during the forum, the Transport Secretary Mark Harper said: "As the UK hands over the ITF

presidency, we do so not just with pride at what ITF has achieved over the past 12 months, but also a commitment to continue championing the values and aims of this vital organisation.

“But sadly, those values and aims aren’t shared by all. We continue to see parts of Ukraine laid waste by Putin’s illegal war.

“Today’s joint presidencies statement, from the UK, Lithuania and Chile, shows Ukraine doesn’t stand alone.”

The statement came as the UK handed over its year-long presidency of the ITF to Lithuania during the 2-day annual summit.

The UK also called for amendments to the general rules of the ITF to make sure the organisation can be more flexible in responding and adapting to future unprecedented events as seen with coronavirus (COVID-19) and the invasion of Ukraine.

The ITF is a world-leading intergovernmental organisation for transport policy bringing together over 60 countries, hosted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Last year, former Transport Secretary Grant Shapps assumed the presidency by outlining 5 priorities for the UK’s tenure: leading global transport transformation by making transport more connected, greener, inclusive, safe and resilient, and innovative.

Also during the summit, Mark Harper chaired meetings of the inter-governmental **Zero Emissions Vehicles Transition Council (ZEVTC)**, which he used to discuss efforts to transition to zero emission heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) – essential to decarbonising our roads and meeting global climate targets.

He also held bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Chile, Brazil, South Korea and Switzerland, discussing how to increase collaboration between the UK and its international partners around the world to tackle shared transport priorities.

Following the ITF summit, the Transport Secretary will travel to Berlin to meet his counterpart Dr Volker Wissing, Federal Minister for Digital and Transport, and Richard Lutz, CEO of Deutsche Bahn.

Next month, the UK will host the Ukraine Recovery Conference – a continuation of the series of annual events dedicated to Ukraine’s transformation. The first took place in London in 2017 as the Ukraine Reform Conference.

This year’s conference will focus on the mobilisation of international and private sector support for the economic and social stabilisation of Ukraine.

Photo credit: Department of Transport