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Congress President Keith Whitmore: "Golden Arrow once again on its way to France"

Strasbourg, 20 January 2012. –The President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Keith Whitmore, will attend the ceremony marking the arrival of the Golden Arrow headboard carried by the iconic cross-channel steam locomotives at the French Railway museum in Mulhouse on 24 January.

The handing-over of The Golden Arrow headboard is an important event in the framework of the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, as an act symbolic of cross-border and cross-channel co-operation in Europe, which is as relevant today as it was during the Golden Arrow's heyday. Keith Whitmore, himself a railway enthusiast, emphasized this, saying "As we celebrate the Golden Arrow being once again on its way to France, we recognise the value of cross-border activities, but more than this, this event is emblematic for the importance of connecting people, regions and communities through transport - in the past and nowadays." Modern equivalents of The Golden Arrow can be seen in the TGV service between the Rhone and the Rhine, and of course the Eurostar trains connecting the UK with the continent.

The Golden Arrow began life as a first-class only, luxury boat train which connected London and Paris, passing via Dover and Calais. Introduced in 1929, the service was interrupted during the war, but resumed on 15 April 1946, running until 30 September 1972, when it completed its last journey, unable to compete with car ferries, hovercraft and air travel.

In this context, President Keith Whitmore will meet with Jean Rottner, the Mayor of Mulhouse. Sylvain Vernerey, Director of the French Railway Museum in Mulhouse, will be presented with the Golden Arrow headboard by Steve Davies MBE, Director of the National Railway Museum in York, United Kingdom. The Golden Arrow headboard is on loan to the museum for 5 years.

Photo opportunity:

Tuesday, 24 January 2012 (10 am)
French Railway Museum
2, rue Alfred de Glehn
68 200 Mulhouse

The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 318 full and 318 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.

President of the Congress: Keith Whitmore (United Kingdom, ILDG), President of the Chamber of Regions: Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC)

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).