

[Portos e Caminhos de Ferro de Moçambique](#) (CFM), the State-owned company responsible for the management of the Port and Railway system in Mozambique, has [announced](#) that an express train will be soon launched to facilitate the mobility of people and goods between the port of Maputo and South Africa and Eswatini. The announcement was made during the Maputo International Fair (FACIM), the Mozambique's biggest trade, industrial and services fair, by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the CFM. This initiative follows the recent signature by the CFM of two agreements, one with the South Africa's Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) for the [elimination of rail borders](#) (dated 1 July 2022) and one with Eswatini Railways dated 5 August for the abolition of the [rail border on the Goba rail line](#), which now allows the free movement of freight trains (mainly transporting coal) between the two countries.

The trains operated by CFM and the South African company TFR will cross the border at Ressano Garcia without restrictions or the need to change rolling stock. The train connection between the port of Maputo and South Africa (which mainly carry chrome and ferrochrome) will be initially expanded from the current 15 trains per week to 21 trains per week. The number of trains will be subsequently further increased. As a result of the rail border elimination agreement, the Goba railway will double the number of daily coal trains from the current two to four. The volume of coal transported will also increase proportionately, from 3,600 tonnes to 7,200 tonnes per day.

According to a [recent study](#) conducted by UNECA, railway transport in Africa is extremely underutilized, carrying **only 0.3 percent** of African trade. This mode of transport, however, is estimated to grow more than the others in the next years as a consequence of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) implementation, which will – according to the study – generate a demand in Africa of 170,000 additional rail wagons.

It must be noted that most of the railway infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa dates back to the [colonial era](#) and was built with the main purpose of connecting mining areas and agricultural production centers in the continent's interior to the coast, so to allow the exports of agricultural commodities and raw materials towards Europe. After African nations gained their independence, these railways have entered in a progressive and rapid deterioration process due to the lack of funds for addressing the high maintenance costs that they typically face.

However, initiatives aimed at creating express trains to facilitate transport of cargo from ports to landlocked countries or to inland destinations in adjacent countries have increased in the last decade. Among such initiatives, two of the most successful are in East Africa: in 2017 Kenya launched a new Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) that replaced the old meter gauge railway constructed nearly 100 years ago during the British colonial period to connect the port of Mombasa with the landlocked Uganda and the Great Lakes region. Djibouti and Ethiopia, on the other hand, inaugurated in January 2018 an SGR linking the two countries largely following the railway line built by France between 1897 and 1917.