



UPU

UNIVERSAL
POSTAL
UNION

UPU Ministerial Strategy Conference 2018

Final report



**Second Extraordinary
Congress** • *Addis Ababa*



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Message from the Director General

The 2018 UPU Ministerial Strategy Conference was held on 6 and 7 September 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as part of the second UPU Extraordinary Congress. Over 30 ministers and heads of international organizations took part, delving into the question of how to promote socio-economic development through the Post. The discussions constituted a milestone on the road to building a comprehensive agenda for the sector, to be achieved by 2030.

Indeed, with a global network of over 677,000 post offices, 5.3 million staff, and a physical infrastructure covering 192 countries, the postal sector is a key contributor to national and international infrastructure. It plays an important role in national development and in the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As the UPU continues to implement the Istanbul World Postal Strategy (2017–2020), the second UPU Extraordinary Congress was the right setting in which to pause and reflect on the best ways to bolster the postal sector's capacity to deliver services competitively and efficiently to citizens and businesses worldwide.

Speakers at the conference, taking part in four main panel discussions, included ministers in charge of the postal sector, heads of regulatory authorities and intergovernmental agencies, and other high-level representatives of organizations interested in the benefits that Posts can bring to societies and economies worldwide.

The first panel focused on policy. Panellists recognized the fact that there is no longer a correlation between the revenues of postal operators and economic growth, even though the sector remains a key contributor to the UN SDGs. As a solution, ministers suggested that government policies need to be aimed at fostering the positive impact of the postal sector in areas such as digitalization, financial inclusion and the resilience of national infrastructure.

The second panel delved into the question of investments in the sector. Speakers acknowledged that, in the age of e-commerce, logistical inefficiencies persist and that the postal sector is part of the solution. They also recognized that Posts may no longer be a natural recipient of public investments. As a result, they advocated increased investments in postal infrastructure as a means of resolving inefficiencies in global supply chains.

The third panel covered the critical topic of regulation. Ministers agreed that digitalization has been transforming the context in which regulations are designed, as the boundaries between sectors blur. They thus recommended the development of regulatory frameworks that are more coherent between and within sectors, so that Posts can fully realize their potential in promoting socio-economic development.

The fourth panel revolved around partnerships. Speakers explained how the postal sector cannot achieve its transformation alone. They therefore encouraged all stakeholders, including ministries, regulators, postal operators, e-retailers, airlines and intergovernmental organizations, to work together in order to promote greater integration of all players, who are now part of the same e-commerce ecosystem. This, in turn, will encourage inclusion and socio-economic development through the Post.

Based on the input from the ministers present at the conference, four key areas of action for the postal sector were identified, which could serve to form the essence of a comprehensive agenda to be implemented by 2030 (Postal Agenda 2030). First, governments should decrease gaps in postal development through increased investments and focused policies. Second, regulators should harmonize and enhance

the sector's regulatory framework. Third, operators should seek to enhance their performance by implementing diversified strategies and operational improvements. Fourth, other stakeholders should pursue integration into the sector by engaging with traditional stakeholders, and vice-versa. This means opening up the market, fostering partnerships and enhancing the role of the UPU.

As for the UPU, it should align its activities in order to enable the sector to achieve this transformation.

Lastly, and very importantly, I wish to thank the Government of Ethiopia most sincerely for hosting the second Extraordinary Congress and the UPU Ministerial Strategy Conference. It contributed enormously to the success of these events through facilitation in various areas.

I hope that this report will provide a snapshot of this successful event. Thank you for your participation and support.

Bishar A. Hussein
Director General of the UPU International Bureau



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PROGRAMME

Panels and content

**Gearing up the postal sector
to drive socio-economic development**

Thursday, 6 September 2018

14:00 **Opening ceremony**

Speakers

Mr Bishar A. Hussein
Director General, UPU

Ms Ubah Mohammed Hussien
Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Ethiopia

14:30 **Group photograph**

14:45

PANEL 1 - Developing effective policies for a strong sector



Despite burgeoning e-commerce sales and strong economic growth worldwide, the revenues of postal operators have not kept pace – in a trend increasingly referred to as “postal–GDP decoupling”. Yet, the postal sector continues to be a key contributor to the UN SDGs, supporting businesses and citizens in areas such as digitalization, connectivity, financial inclusion and resilience of national infrastructure.

Panellists reflected on successful policies that have enabled governments to sustain or even foster the positive impact of the postal sector in priority areas. They have also considered the examples of similar reforms undertaken in other sectors.

Speakers

Mr Claude Isaac DE

Minister of Digital Economy and Post, Côte d'Ivoire

Mr Mouhamed Anouar Maarouf

Minister of Communication and digital technologies, Tunisia

Mr Ma Junsheng

Director-General, State Post Bureau of The People's, Republic of China

Ms Houda-Imane Faraoun

Ministre de la Poste, des Télécommunications, des Technologies et du Numérique, Algeria

16:15

PANEL 2 - Developing effective policies for a strong sector



Like any critical infrastructure, the postal sector requires significant investments in order to function effectively. As digitalization takes hold and governments pursue fiscal consolidation, Posts may no longer be natural recipients of public investments. And yet, in the age of e-commerce, logistical inefficiencies remain a concern. With its large physical network, the postal sector is undoubtedly part of the solution.

Panellists examined ways in which further investments could be channelled to the postal sector, thus reinforcing international supply chains and realizing the potential of e-commerce for citizens and businesses worldwide.

Speakers

Ms Rkia Derham

Secretary of State to the Minister of Industry, Investment, Trade and the Digital Economy, in charge of foreign trade, Morocco

Mr Nguyen Minh Hong

Deputy Minister of Information and Communications, Viet Nam

Ms Natalya Gordeenko

Deputy Minister of Communications and Informatization, Belarus

Dr Abdur-Raheem Adebayo Shittu

Minister of Communications, Nigeria

17:30

Statements from ministers

Ministers in the audience made statements on various topics outside the panel framework.

Friday, 7 September 2018

14:45 **PANEL 3 - Regulation in the age of digital innovation**

■ In the aftermath of the 2008–2009 financial crisis, regulatory activity worldwide soared, especially in the financial sector. However, 10 years later, the risks have evolved. Technological change and big data have further transformed consumption models, which in turn have triggered a multitude of innovations, from 3D printing to blockchains. The boundaries of many sectors such as the Post have thus become even more blurred, hence the need to rethink regulation and governance for this digital age.

Panellists discussed models that could be effective in helping governments strike a balance between fostering innovation and providing stability through regulation.

Speakers

Ms Fatuma Hirsi Mohamed

Principal Secretary of Broadcasting & Telecommunications, Ministry of ICT, Kenya

Mr Philipp Metzger

State Secretary, Director General of the Federal Office of Communications, Switzerland

Ms Maria-Manuela Catrina

Secretary of State within the Ministry of Communications and Information Society, Romania

Ms Ubah Mohammed Hussien

Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Ethiopia

PANEL 4 - Sustaining the relevance of the sector through partnerships



The socio-economic role of the postal sector can be viewed from two perspectives. First, the postal sector is a key element of national and global logistical supply chains, enhancing the robustness of economies and world trade. Second, it is a channel for connecting citizens with each other (through mail, parcels and financial services) and with governments (as an A–Z counter for public services). Nevertheless, for the sector to play this role effectively in the age of digitalization, it will need to strengthen links and partnerships with other segments of society.

Panellists considered how to favour the interconnection between the postal sector, e-retailers, governmental agencies and other stakeholders in the logistical supply chain. They have examined the effectiveness of solutions that can enable the sector to continue to fulfil its role in the age of pervasive digitalization. Examples included public–private partnerships, intergovernmental frameworks, data exchange and trade agreements.

Speakers

Mr François Davenne

Secretary General of the Intergovernmental, Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF)

Mr Katsuya Watanabe

Vice-Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan

Mr Siyabonga Cwele

Minister for Telecommunications and Postal Services, South Africa

Mr Oleg Voitenko

Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation

Mr Moctar Yedaly

Head of Information Society Division, Department of Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission

Closing ceremony

Speakers

Mr Pascal Clivaz

Deputy Director General, UPU

Mr Bishar A. Hussein

Director General, UPU

Ms Ubah Mohammed Hussien

Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Ethiopia

SPEAKERS



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Bishar A. Hussein

Director General, UPU

Bishar Abdirahman Hussein was first elected Director General of the UPU International Bureau on 10 October 2012 during the 25th Universal Postal Congress in Doha, receiving a second mandate during the 26th Congress in Istanbul.

Mr Hussein is vastly experienced in UPU and postal matters. He chaired the UPU Council of Administration for the 2008–2012 cycle, having been designated by the Government of Kenya to chair the 24th UPU Congress, held in Geneva in 2008.

In September 2010, he successfully chaired the UPU Strategy Conference held in Nairobi. The conference provided a forum for discussion of important global issues affecting the postal sector and paved the way for the development of the Doha Postal Strategy.

Mr Hussein began his postal career with the Kenya Posts & Telecommunications Corporation, which he joined in 1984 as a management trainee. He rose through the ranks and became the first postmaster general of the Postal Corporation of Kenya in 1999. He led the postal entity from a loss-making to a profitable and self-sustaining postal enterprise.

In 2002, he was appointed ambassador of Kenya to the United Arab Emirates, covering the Gulf Region, for a six-year period.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree (Honours) in political science and sociology from the University of Nairobi. Throughout his 28 years of public service, Mr Hussein has attended many courses and seminars in postal management, human resources, finance, administration and diplomacy.



Pascal Clivaz

Deputy Director General, UPU

Pascal Clivaz has been Deputy Director General of the UPU's International Bureau since 1 January 2013, after being elected to the position on 10 October 2012 at the 25th Universal Postal Congress in Doha, Qatar. He was re-elected in 2016 during the 26th Congress in Istanbul.

Until his election, he was director of finance and strategic planning at the International Bureau, which he joined in 2005.

A Swiss citizen from the alpine canton of Valais, Pascal Clivaz has 17 years' experience working in the postal sector and the UPU. A law graduate, Pascal Clivaz has held numerous roles in both private and public organizations, as well as at the European Commission in Brussels.

He began his postal career at Swiss Post as a scientific advisor responsible for finance and strategy, before rising to become director of international affairs and a member of the Swiss operator's management team. He led the Swiss delegation at the UPU Council of Administration and Postal Operations Council sessions between 2000 and 2004.



Ubah Mohammed Hussien

Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Ethiopia

Ubah Mohammed Hussien has been Ethiopia's Minister of Communication and Information Technology since April 2018. Since 2004, she has served as a Board Member of the Pastoralist Concern Association Ethiopia (PCAE), an organization that improves the socio-economic circumstances of pastoralist communities in Ethiopia.

Furthermore, Ms Hussien has worked as the Director of the Women and Children's Rights Coordination Office at the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission since September 2011. She has served in many government positions, including as a State Minister at Ethiopia's Ministry of Women's Affairs. She has also been a Member of Constitutional Inquiry, Women and Children Affairs Commissioner and a Special Legal Adviser to the Commissioner of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.



Maria-Manuela Catrina

State Secretary, Ministry of Communication and Informational Society, Romania

Ms Catrina joined the executive branch as Secretary of State at the Romanian Ministry of Communications and Informational Society in 2017. In addition to steering the complex preparations for Romania's upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union (January-June 2019), her mandate includes broader aspects of international relations and European affairs, as well as more specialized areas, such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and robotics.

Ms Catrina has a background in mathematics, computer science and cybernetics, as well as training in security and international relations. In the early 2000s, she joined the government as an adviser to the Romanian Prime Minister, after which she continued as the parliamentary advisor for Romania's Chamber of Deputies. Since 2013, Ms Catrina has been leading the Ovidiu Sincai European School, one of the Social Democratic Institute's key projects, under the aegis of the Council of Europe.



Siyabonga Cyprian Cwele

Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services, South Africa

Siyabonga Cyprian Cwele was appointed South Africa's Minister for Telecommunications and Postal Services on 25 May 2014. He was also the country's former Minister for Intelligence Services and, from 2002, the former Chairperson of the Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence (JSCI), on which he began serving in 1999. His main functions included convening and chairing the multi-party parliamentary committee responsible for oversight of the civilian intelligence community, defence and crime intelligence.

After the 2014 national elections, Mr Cwele was appointed Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services and was tasked with ensuring that the country realize the significant potential of the Post Office in delivering financial services to remote areas. He is also ensuring that the country derives increased value from the booming information communications and technology industry and the postal services sector.



François Davenne

Secretary General, OTIF

Mr François Davenne has been Secretary General of the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) since 2013, where he promotes interdisciplinary work and partnership building to expand uniform regulations for international carriage by rail.

Mr Davenne graduated from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications d'Evry in 1988 and the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA) in 1999.



Claude Isaac Dé

Minister of Digital Economy and Post, Côte d'Ivoire

Claude Isaac Dé is Côte d'Ivoire's Minister of Digital Economy and Post. Previously, he served as Minister of Construction, Housing, Sanitation and Urban Development.

Mr Dé has 28 years of professional experience in a wide range of development sectors.

In particular, he has formulated sector policies and strategies, preparing, evaluating, negotiating, monitoring and supervising their execution with bilateral and multilateral investors as well as the private sector.

He has extensive experience working in a culturally diverse team environment and boasts a wealth of invaluable contacts in the private sector, public administration, associations, non-governmental organizations and both bilateral and multilateral international financial institutions.



Rkia Derham

Secretary of State to the Minister of Industry, Investment, Trade and the Digital Economy, in charge of foreign trade, Morocco

Rkia Derham was appointed by H.M. King Mohammed VI in April 2017 as Secretary of State to the Minister of Industry, Investment, Trade and Digital Economy, in charge of Foreign Trade.

A graduate of the International Institute of Higher Studies in Morocco (IIHEM), Ms Derham is currently preparing a master's degree in business administration in the United Kingdom. She previously served as deputy chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in her country's House of Representatives.

Ms Derham has participated in a number of economic forums and conferences in countries around the world.



Houda-Imane Faraoun

Minister of Post, Telecommunications, Technology and Digital, Algeria

Houda-Imane Faraoun is an Algerian physicist and materials scientist who has served as Minister of Post, Information Technology and Communication in the government of Abdelmalek Sellal since 1 May 2015.

She is also a professor of physics at the University of Tlemcen, a post she has held in various capacities since 2006.

Ms Faraoun holds a PhD in physics from the University of Sidi Bel Abbès, and a PhD in mechanical engineering from the University of Technology of Belfort-Montbéliard.

She is the youngest minister in the current Algerian cabinet, one of the youngest women ministers in the country's history, and one of only three women in the current Algerian cabinet.

In 2015, Forbes ranked Faraoun ninth in its list of the ten most powerful Arab women in government.



Nguyen Minh Hong

Vice Minister, Ministry of Information and Communications, Viet Nam

Nguyen Minh Hong has been the Vice Minister of Information and Communications of Viet Nam since 2006.

He has worked for the ministry responsible for the Post since 2002, holding various positions including Director General of Personnel Departments and Director General of the Bureau of the Ministry of Posts and Telematics.

Previously, Mr Hong worked for the Department of Posts, including as its Director General between 1996 and 2002. He holds a PhD in telecommunication, academy of sciences, Czech Rep.



Natalya Gordeenko

Deputy Minister of Communications and Informatization, Belarus

Natalya Gordeenko has served as the Deputy Minister of Communications and Informatization of Belarus since July 2011 and previously held various positions in the civil service of Belarus.

For the last several years, Ms Gordeenko has been working on the development of economic policy and pricing in the field of communications.

She has been administering state regulation and management of postal services, and fulfilling obligations on the provision of universal services in the territory of Belarus.



Ma Junsheng

Director-General, State Post Bureau of China (People's Rep.)

Ma Junsheng is currently the Director General of the State Post Bureau of China (People's Rep.). He draws upon decades of experience in the post and telecommunications sector. Previously, he was the Deputy Postmaster General of the State Post Bureau and the Deputy Director General of Planning and Construction at the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications.

Mr Ma graduated from Nanjing Post and Telecommunication Institute, majoring in telephone exchange. He also holds an MBA from Beijing University.



Mouhamed Anouar Maarouf

Minister of Communication Technologies and Digital Economy, Tunisia

Mouhamed Anouar Maarouf is the Tunisian Minister of Technology and the Digital Economy. He began his career as a consultant to numerous prominent companies, including France Telecom, Bouygues Telecom, SFR and Nokia, on topics such as network architecture and engineering, and has since directed several projects in these areas.

Mr Maarouf joined the Department of Information Technology and Communication as the Adviser to the Minister, and was in charge of steering the national strategy on "Digital Tunisia 2018". He also participated in the work of the Tunisian President's Intelligence and Strategic Foresight Unit.

He is a graduate of the Institut National des Télécommunication in Paris, and holds a master-of-change- management degree from Université Paris-Dauphine and a PhD in Mathematics from Joseph Fourier University in Grenoble (France).



Philipp Metzger

State Secretary, Director General of the Federal Office of Communications, Switzerland

Philipp Metzger is State Secretary, Director General of the Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM), Switzerland. He was Deputy to the Director of the Development Office of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) based in Geneva. His previous posts at OFCOM included Vice-Director and Head of the Telecom Services Division from 2007 and Deputy Director from 2012.

After passing his bar exam in Berne in 1992, Mr Metzger began his career in major commercial law firms in Geneva and London. From 1996 to 2001, he was a legal and subsequently senior legal officer at the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in

Brussels and Geneva, mostly dealing with European Economic Area matters. He went on to serve as a Senior Corporate Counsel of a US multinational IT corporation in Amsterdam, before rejoining EFTA in 2002 as Director of the Trade Relations Division, which assists EFTA member countries in their free trade negotiations with partner countries worldwide.

Mr Metzger is a member of the ITU/ UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development.



Fatuma Hirsi Mohamed

CBS – PS Broadcasting and Telecommunications, Ministry of ICT, Kenya

Ms Fatuma Hirsi Mohamed was the Principal Secretary of the State Department of Tourism.

Ms Mohamed had also served as an international civil servant with the Universal Postal Union. She has previous experience in various business sectors, including the former Kenya Posts and Telecommunication Corporation, the Communications Commission of Kenya (now Communications Authority), Kencell Communications Ltd (currently Airtel Kenya Ltd), Nation Media Group and the Gulf African Bank.

Ms Mohamed has wide experience in strategic implementation and governance of business through marketing, public relations, communications, community and stakeholder relation building, corporate social responsibility and media engagement.

While at the Tourism Ministry, Ms Mohamed steered the tourism sector to become the second highest foreign exchange earner in the country, with a growth rate of some 17% in both arrivals and revenue receipts.

This achievement earned her global recognition as the 2018 Woman Achiever in the promotion of tourism by the Institute of South Asian Women at the annual International Tourism Bourse in Germany.



Abdur-Raheem Adebayo Shittu

Minister of Communications, Nigeria

Abdur-Raheem Adebayo Shittu is a renowned lawyer, administrator, author, entrepreneur and community leader. In 2015, he was appointed as Minister of Communications in the current Federal Cabinet, in which capacity he oversees the Telecom Regulator, Nigerian Communications Commission; IT Regulator, National Information Technology Development Agency; Nigerian Postal Services; Nigerian Communications Satellite; and the Government Digital Infrastructure Agency, Galaxy Backbone.

Since assuming duty as the Honourable Minister and chief anchor of the communications sector in Nigeria, Mr Shittu has recorded significant achievements, including the development

of an integrated roadmap for the sector; re-engineering of the policy, legal and regulatory framework; infrastructure development; and capacity building.

His vision for the postal subsector is that of a modernized Nigeria Postal Service (NIPOST) that will be a key ICT asset for inclusiveness.

He aims at transforming the Post to an efficient nationwide infrastructure for communication and distribution of public interest services, including basic financial services, IT services, government services and other third party services, thus contributing to the phenomenal growth of the Nigerian economy.



Oleg Voitenko

Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation

Oleg Voitenko has held the position of Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation since July 2018. He has previously held various positions with the government.

Before joining the ministry, he was First Deputy Head of Administration of the Analytical Centre for the Government of the Russian Federation. He has also headed the Department of Cooperation with Public and Municipal Authorities of the Federal

Foundation for Assisting the Development of Housing Construction and worked in the Department of Regional Programmes in the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation.

Mr Voitekno graduated from the Higher School of Economics with specialization in public and municipal management.



Katsuya Watanabe

Vice-Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan

Mr Watanabe is the Vice-Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications, and Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIC). He was previously the Director General of the Telecommunications Bureau of the MIC.

He has held diverse high-level positions in the government, including as the Deputy Director-General of the Information and Communications Bureau, Director of ICT Strategy Policy Division, Global ICT Strategy Bureau and Director of Radio Policy Division, Radio Department, Telecommunications Bureau.

Mr Watanabi obtained his degree in the Department of Electrical Engineering, Keio University.



Moctar Yedaly

Head of Information Society Division, Department of Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission

Mr Yedaly is the Head of the Information Society Division, Department of Infrastructure and Energy, at the African Union Commission. He has over 20 years of international experience in the fields of communication and network management, resource evaluation and policy preparation.

Mr Yedaly is a satellite, telecoms and computers engineer with an MBA in international business. He graduated from George Washington University, Amity University and the Institute of Informatics. He held the position of senior capacity planner at Intelsat from 1996 to 2004.

From 2005 to 2006, he became chief of strategy and implementation of new projects at Société Mauritanie-Tunisienne des Telecommunications (MATTEL), and has owned Beiticom since February 2011.

Mr Yedaly has managed and contributed to many projects and conferences worldwide. He is fluent in English, French, Arabic, Russian and Wolof.



MODERATOR



Alex Taylor TV and radio journalist

Alex Taylor is one of the most experienced events hosts in Europe, having presented more than 700 events over a period of 15 years around the world. He has hosted all types of conventions, conferences and ceremonies, both corporate and institutional, together with a wide number of ceremonies, mainly in Europe but also throughout the world. He has produced and presented a wide range of programmes about Europe, mainly on French television and radio, but also for the BBC and VOX TV in Germany. He was also Programme Director of Radio France Internationale. Currently he hosts I-Talk on Euronews, interviewing Europe's leading policy-makers in the European Parliament. Alex has vast experience of dealing with all kinds of personalities and situations, ranging from the Queen of England, President Clinton, Nelson Mandela and various Prime Ministers, to company managers but also people with less experience being on the stage. He has also written several books, including one on the wonderful untranslatability of languages.



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KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DISCUSSIONS





Ministers and representatives of international organizations engaged very openly in the discussions during the conference. They provided numerous examples of situations faced by their countries and organizations, which found an echo in the audience. The four key areas of action identified for the postal sector are described below.

1. Decrease gaps in postal development through increased investments and focused policies

Despite robust economic growth in many regions in recent years, governments worldwide continue to face the challenge of unequal development. This is particularly visible in the postal sector, where global revenues are not following the upward trend seen in the wider real economy. This “postal decoupling” is exacerbated by persistent gaps in performance between and within regions. Through the panel discussions, ministers found that such gaps in postal development could be decreased through increased investments and focused policies.

Speakers said that, owing to the large network of post offices run by the Posts, investments should focus on enhancing citizen outreach and the efficiency of the physical infrastructure. As pointed out by Ms Houda-Imane Faraoun, Algeria’s Minister of Posts, Telecommunications and Digital Technologies, the Post plays a central role in the lives of citizens in every country. Her comments were echoed by Mr Mouhamed Anouar Maarouf, Tunisia’s Minister of Communication and Digital Technologies, who emphasized that citizens see the post office as a branch of the state. Increased investments would therefore be required in order to retain the local, trustworthy image of post offices.

With regard to the geographical presence of Posts, Mr Philipp Metzger, State Secretary and Director General of the Federal Office of Communications of Switzerland, pointed out that his government is currently considering whether or not to promote the expansion of the physical network of the Post. As he explained, in this age of pervasive digitalization, the question that is being asked is whether investments in such infrastructure would be an anachronism or a response to a true need of society.

In addition, several ministers in the audience pointed out the need to invest not only in infrastructure, but also in the development of skills through training and links to educational systems.

The process of investment and transformation was also deemed important. In the words of Ms Maria-Manuela Catrina, Secretary of State within the Ministry of Communications and Information Society of Romania, digitalization and technology can only deliver if the process is clear from the start. Ms Rkia Derham, Secretary of State to the Minister of Industry, Investment, Trade and the Digital Economy, in charge of foreign trade in Morocco, also explained that investments should not be a one-off exercise, but rather, a continuous process in order to sustainably develop the postal sector.

However, in order to be effective, investments in all the above-mentioned areas need to be coupled with well-designed policies. In this regard, speakers agreed that no sector can develop properly without political will. They therefore discussed three key policy areas that would encourage postal development: inclusion, citizen services, and innovation.

Mr Maarouf informed the audience that, in Tunisia, the government is trying to ensure that the Post remains relevant by serving as a trusted link for inclusion in three dimensions: digital, social and financial. For example, a de-cashing commission has been created by the Tunisian Central Bank to favour financial inclusion. In the case of Nigeria, Dr Abdur-Raheem Adebayo Shittu, the country’s Minister of Communications, pointed out that the Central Bank of Nigeria had launched a financial inclusion strategy in 2012, giving an important role to Nigeria Post in terms of ensuring social inclusiveness.

In a similar vein, Mr Katsuya Watanabe, the Japanese Vice-Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications, explained that his country's policies focus on providing excellent postal service while prioritizing inclusion and the societal role of the Post. Such an approach helps the Post play a key role in dealing with trends such as ageing and the concentration of populations in megacities. A similar example was provided by Mr Oleg Voitenko, Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation. He gave examples of social services provided by his country's post offices, including that of telemedicine, a particularly useful feature in rural areas.

The focus on inclusion was further echoed by the audience. For example, Malawi shared that e-government services offered by the Post had led to inclusion for 80% of its population, who live in the countryside.

Moreover, Mr Claude Isaac Dé, Minister of Digital Economy and Post for Côte d'Ivoire (Rep.), stressed that government policies should focus on providing "citizen services". This view was reinforced by the comments of Mr Maarouf, who explained that postal carriers should be viewed as people who deliver a service rather than simply as employees delivering mail. These views complement those of Mr Voitenko, who strongly emphasized that postal operators continue to remain important partners for states and are often seen by citizens as the face of public service, and not just in remote areas. For example, 40% of legal documents in the Russian Federation are now sent electronically through the Post.

Lastly, participants also considered the topic of policies that promote postal innovation. In the words of Mr Ma Junsheng, Director-General of the State Post Bureau of the People's Republic of China, the postal sector is reaching out to every household, and is thus fundamental to the stability of society as a whole and to the exchange of information between governments and other stakeholders. In this sense, as digitalization takes hold, the sector also needs to pursue innovation through effective policies. A clear example was provided by Mr Metzger, who pointed out that the focus of Switzerland's digital strategy is on education, research and innovation.

As all these comments have shown, governments around the world are acting to reduce developmental gaps through increased investments and focused policies that enable inclusive citizen services to be provided through the Post.

2. Harmonize and enhance the sector's regulatory framework

Pervasive digitalization has led to the creation of new services, such as bitcoin and 3D printing. However, it has also created new challenges, such as those related to data privacy. Regulation worldwide, including in the postal sector, is thus facing an urgent need to adapt to these new developments. Participants discussed two key aspects of postal regulation: the need to keep up with innovation and the need to preserve the image of trust that Posts have traditionally enjoyed.

Indeed, in the words of Ms Ubah Mohammed Hussien, Minister of Communication and Information Technology of Ethiopia, traditional regulation does not work in an age of fast-paced change. Posts need to follow along with the population in the wave of digital transformation – and regulation needs to be supportive of that. She provided the example of the development of Ethiopian postal services with the support of the UPU, including the formulation of a sector policy, regulatory framework and definition of the universal service obligation. Participants agreed that a challenge in the area of regulation when it comes to innovation is a lack of capacity and skills. In this regard, they highlighted the importance of having the UPU organize relevant conferences and workshops to keep the sector updated.

Mr Ma informed the participants that his government is now focusing strongly on the promotion and regulation of Internet clouds, smart devices and big data. Similarly, Ms Fatuma Hirsi Mohamed, Principal Secretary of Broadcasting and Telecommunications, Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology of Kenya, highlighted that her country has enabled regulations to favour innovation, citing M-Pesa as a prominent example. Leapfrogging in fast-developing countries therefore needs to be supported by adequately dynamic regulation.

Moreover, speakers agreed that a fundamental requirement for harmonized postal regulation is an understanding of innovation at all levels. As noted by Ms Catrina, policy makers, regulators and postal employees alike need to be up to date with recent developments in technology so that they remain connected with all citizens.

When it comes to the trust traditionally enjoyed by Posts, speakers recognized that preserving this asset is critical in an environment of data privacy concerns. Ms Catrina echoed this sentiment by stating that regulation needs to be aimed at building trust. She was supported by Ms Hussien, who added that privacy is now a human right.

In this regard, Mr Metzger explained that, in Switzerland, the concept of privacy and fraud prevention dates back to the 1990s. He added that postal regulation requires a climate of mutual trust between the postal service and its customers. He stated that there is a need to move away from long and involved general terms and conditions towards a model in which users can make tailor-made choices about what happens to their data.

Speakers thus agreed that there is potential to further harmonize postal regulation, bearing in mind current developments in the sector and the world in the age of digitalization.

3. Enhance performance by implementing diversified strategies and operational improvements

The needs of customers are changing rapidly, and their expectations of the Post are also changing. It is no longer enough for Posts to merely deliver mail; if their revenues are to follow economic growth more closely, they need to implement diversified strategies and undertake substantial operational improvements.

Owing to the increased availability of substitutes in the logistics sector, it is vital for Posts to quickly adapt to the needs of their customers. Indeed, in the view of Mr Ma, the three key words that Posts should focus on today are customer, market and service.

Similarly, other speakers recognized that customers have two main needs. Firstly, they require new products that serve their changing requirements, and secondly, they expect better service from the existing solutions of the Posts.

In this fast-paced environment, postal operators have a dual responsibility. In the words of Mr Nguyen Minh Hong, Deputy Minister of Information and Communications of Viet Nam, Posts are entrusted with providing public services and improving logistics to serve their customers, especially in the new expanding segments.

In this sense, a key area of growth in recent years has been the delivery of parcels. Indeed, China has seen postal revenues grow by 50% thanks to this trend, and many Chinese express delivery companies now rank among the top 10 in the world. Similarly, Mr Voitenko stressed that, in his country, the main target is to improve parcel delivery times, aiming to ensure that 80% of the people in the country get their parcels within D+2.

Yet parcels are not the only promising area in which the postal sector can increasingly serve citizens. The large amounts of data generated by Posts could also be seen as a source of future growth. Mr Ma strongly encouraged Posts to use big data to find out what exactly customers need. In a similar vein, Dr Siyabonga Cwele, Minister for Telecommunications and Postal Services of South Africa, highlighted that his country is already exploring uses for the massive amounts of data captured by the Post.

In order to meet customer expectations of better service within existing postal solutions, speakers stressed the importance of resorting to partnerships when seeking to improve operations. In this sense, Ms Derham pointed out that the private sector could play an important role in helping postal operations improve. Dr Cwele discussed the leasing of offices and private-sector partnerships as the Post attempts to monetize physical infrastructure.

Ms Natalya Gordeenko, Deputy Minister of Communications and Informatization of Belarus, went on to explain how better interaction with banks can also be beneficial to postal operations. She also advocated the increased use of automation as a means of improving logistical performance.

In conclusion, participants determined that the sector could enhance its performance by keeping the needs of customers central to its operations, implementing diversified strategies, and undertaking operational improvements.

4. Open up the market, foster partnerships and enhance the role of the UPU

The power of networks is becoming an increasingly important element in the world today. With the rise of digitalization, globalization and cross-border trade, partnerships have become an essential component of successful industries.

In the words of Mr Moctar Yedaly, Head of the Information Society Division, Department of Infrastructure and Energy at the African Union Commission, the world is moving from firm-based to network-based organizations, and the future will be based on intangibles and networks.

In this environment, as pointed out by Mr Dé, it is necessary to build a Post that people continue to trust. Speakers agreed that this can be achieved in three ways: opening up the market, increasing partnerships, and enhancing the role of the UPU.

Mr Ma emphasized that governments should make it possible to reduce monopolies since the market is big enough to accommodate all market players. The focus should thus be more on market reform and increased competition. These views were echoed by Mr Voitenko, who highlighted the need to create an enabling e-commerce environment. Since a single market player cannot build such an environment on its own, there is a greater need to be open to all market players.

With regard to partnerships, Mr Voitenko also pointed out that, in Russia, an increasing amount of goods are being sold through e-commerce. This increases the need for significant investments and partnerships, particularly with e-retailers. In a similar context, Mr Dé encouraged the use of public-private partnerships. He added that, in 2012, Côte d'Ivoire (Rep.) had adopted legislation to promote public-private partnerships, based on the assumption that the private sector can do better in some cases.

The role of the UPU in supporting these efforts was clearly underlined by participants. Ms Faraoun highlighted the key role of the UPU in increasing and maintaining the vast international network of Posts, as e-commerce becomes an essentially cross-border phenomenon.

Mr François Davenne, Secretary General of the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail, also pointed out the need to improve alignment between internal regulation and external interfaces, in which cooperation with the UPU would be key. In addition, Mr Metzger suggested that the UPU should continue to remain a platform of exchange between organizations within and beyond the postal sector.

Through these three actions – opening up the market, increasing partnerships, and increasing the role of the UPU – participants saw great potential for giving the postal sector a bright future in the age of e-commerce.

About the UPU

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) is an intergovernmental organization with 192 member countries that is mandated to ensure universal access to affordable public postal services of the highest standard. Established in 1874, it is considered the world's second-oldest international organization. Since 1948, the UPU has been a part of the United Nations family, operating as a specialized agency.

The UPU is the only international organization representing the interests of the worldwide postal sector in a neutral fashion. In addition to maintaining a genuinely universal network – with physical, financial and electronic dimensions – it establishes the rules for international mail exchanges among its member countries and makes recommendations on how to modernize products and services, stimulate mail volume growth, and improve quality of service for customers.

The global postal network is a formidable infrastructure through which essential public services are provided to millions of citizens and businesses. This enables the postal sector to play a critical role in fuelling countries' social and economic development. Postal operators also provide financial, logistical and e-commerce services to countless customers to meet their evolving needs. Today, the world's postal services process and deliver some 303 billion letters and 9 billion parcels annually, using a worldwide network linked through state-of-the-art technology and processes. This infrastructure is staffed by 5.3 million employees in some 670,000 postal establishments, making it the world's largest physical network.

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