

UNION POSTALE

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27th UNIVERSAL POSTAL
CONGRESS SPECIAL ISSUE

THE ROAD FROM ABIDJAN

A WIDENING HORIZON FOR THE UPU



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The UPU’s blog “Postal Matters” offers fresh insights into the international postal sector, as well as its technological advances and latest innovations. Postal operators and other postal sector players are welcome to send us their contributions containing reflections, views and perspectives on the postal future, e-commerce, sustainable development, financial inclusion and other related areas.

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To have your postal blog featured, contact us at communication@upu.int.



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UNION POSTALE

UNION POSTALE is the Universal Postal Union's flagship magazine, founded in 1875. It is published quarterly in four languages and takes a closer look at UPU activities, featuring international news and developments from the postal sector.

The magazine regularly publishes well researched articles on topical issues facing the industry, as well as interviews with the sector's leading individuals. It is distributed widely to the UPU's 192 member countries, including thousands of decision-makers from governments and Posts, as well as other postal stakeholders. All regard it as an important source of information about the UPU and the postal sector at large.

UNION POSTALE is also published in French, Arabic, and Chinese.

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DESTINATION REACHED

Our 27th Universal Postal Congress marked an important milestone for the UPU. It marked the close of one chapter, the Istanbul Cycle, and the start of a new one, the Abidjan Cycle.

The Istanbul Cycle brought with it great challenges to surmount. We were faced with questions on the Reform of the Union. It was a need we all agreed was urgent and important, but we all had different ideas of how to achieve it. In the end, we called an Extraordinary Congress in Addis Ababa in 2018 to resolve the issue. We worked fiercely towards our goal and we managed to find consensus. It seemed we could exhale.

Later in 2018, we were confronted with a possible fracturing of our Union, as the United States threatened to leave the UPU family if we were not able to take quick action on the issue of terminal dues. Other countries stepped up to express similar concerns and frustrations over the system. So, in 2019, we gathered in Geneva for the second Extraordinary Congress of the Istanbul Cycle. Again, we worked together to find a solution that would work for all members. Our "Victory Option" was accepted by acclamation. We had staved off a major existential crisis and narrowed our focus on the Congress to come. Our destination was clear on the horizon.

However, we hit a major blockage on our road to Abidjan. COVID-19 emerged as a global threat, forcing countries to close their borders. We had no choice but to delay our 2020 meeting. Our plans to go ahead with the quadrennial meeting in 2021 were also clouded by uncertainty as the pandemic necessitated continued restrictions on international travel.

When the opportunity arose, our member countries were determined to forge ahead. Our host country, Côte d'Ivoire, did the utmost to ensure the safety of our delegates and we worked with our technical experts at the International Bureau and on the ground to ensure those who could not be with us physically would have the option to participate virtually. The end result was a resounding success.

With our sincere thanks to Côte d'Ivoire, we managed to host the first-ever Universal Postal Congress in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the first hybrid Congress. We overcame the hurdles of the pandemic to gather, whether in-person or online, and make decisions that will advance our sector.

The end of the 27th Congress was also significant for me personally. It marked my last Congress as your Director General.

As part of our programme in Abidjan, the UPU's member countries selected the next Director General, Mr. Masahiko Metoki, and the next Deputy Director General, Mr. Marjan Osvald. They will take the reins from 2022 onwards. While we have achieved a great number of difficult feats during my two mandates, Mr. Metoki and Mr. Osvald will have a great number of tasks set ahead of them.

From now to the end of the year myself and the Deputy Director General, Mr. Pascal Clivaz, will be working with the new team to ensure they have all the information they need for a successful start to the Abidjan Cycle.

Bishar A. Hussein, Director General,
Universal Postal Union

"Our host country, Côte d'Ivoire, did the utmost to ensure the safety of our delegates and we worked with our technical experts at the International Bureau and on the ground to ensure those who could not be with us physically would have the option to participate virtually. The end result was a resounding success."

EDITOR'S NOTE

TURNING THE PAGE

It was a long road to Abidjan but, as you will read in this edition of UNION POSTALE, we reached our destination safely and successfully.

Our cover story examines some of the pressing issues addressed at the Abidjan meeting. It reviews progress on the matter of opening the UPU to wider postal sector players, takes a look at changes to products and remuneration and covers the evolution of the UPU's development cooperation policy.

The Congress also honoured the UPU's role as a UN specialized agency and partner in achieving the UN sustainable development goals, passing two resolutions that will assist the UPU's work on this front – particularly with regards to climate change and gender equality. You will be able to read about the UPU's planned work in these areas within the pages of this magazine.

The gathering provided an opportunity for the UPU to hear from those at the forefront of postal policymaking – Ministers responsible for the Post. At our Ministerial Conference, they told us how they view the future of the sector in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. A special feature covers some of the key highlights of this forum.

With this new work cycle comes a new administration. Our member countries have selected a new Director General and Deputy Director General, as well as Council of Administration and Postal Operations Council members and chairs. This edition of UNION POSTALE will give you a glimpse into the new administration.

I wish you happy reading.

Kayla Redstone, Editor-in-chief



UPU Director General Bishar A. Hussein spoke at an event celebrating the QSF's 20th anniversary.

Quality of Service Fund celebrates 20 years and adopts new funding stream

TEXT: Helen Norman

The Universal Postal Union's Quality of Service Fund (QSF) celebrated its 20th anniversary at the 27th UPU Congress in Abidjan. The financing mechanism, which was launched in 2001, has to date supported more than 900 projects and 175 beneficiary postal operators around the world.

According to Choy Han Chum, the head of UPU's QSF, the Fund has been, and continues to be "a vital component in the Union's development and cooperation policy." She explains, "After five cycles of the Fund's existence, the QSF has proven to be one of the most reliable instruments currently available to finance improvements in quality of service and postal infrastructure."

The QSF manages contributions from member countries, which are then dispersed to finance postal development projects in developing countries. Projects cover postal conveyance and delivery, track and trace, global performance monitoring, postal security, and disaster recovery, among other things.

Historically, QSF supported projects on a country-by-country basis, with member countries putting forward proposals for the QSF board's approval in respect of the type of projects that best address the operational needs of the designated operator and the budget for the projects. However, at the 26th Congress in Istanbul a new top-down approach was adopted, which now sees the International Bureau identifying, formulating, and putting forward projects that support member countries.

“After five cycles of the Fund’s existence, the QSF has proven to be one of the most reliable instruments currently available to finance improvements in quality of service and postal infrastructure.”

CHOY HAN CHUM, THE HEAD OF UPU’S QSF

Also at the 26th Congress, the QSF Common Fund was adopted. This additional funding mechanism mobilizes resources for global projects and extends their scope to cover all critical e-commerce elements. One of the most important Common Fund projects currently is Electronic Advice Data (EAD), which will support operators with handling new customs regulations.

One of the main aims of the QSF is to ensure that it remains sustainable. With this in mind, the Abidjan Congress adopted an additional stream of funding within the Common Fund, dedicated to helping least developed countries (LDCs) to develop their postal operations. Chum explains, “The additional funding is named the ‘LDC Special Account’ and the funds set aside will be used primarily to improve last-mile performance in these countries. The LDC Special Account is

aligned with UN policy on LDCs which calls for a focus on inclusion, graduation and special support measures for countries with special needs.”

In addition to the LDC Special Account, the Abidjan Congress also approved key changes to the Common Fund model. “The goal of the QSF was enhanced to include a sustainable development dimension in QSF activities,” says Chum. “Furthermore, the beneficiary groups of Common Fund projects were expanded to include countries in Group I [Industrialized countries], ensuring the transversal nature of the Common Fund, and a Prioritization Review Committee was created to ensure thorough, transparent and robust project prioritization.”

According to Chum, the UPU will propose an expert team over the coming months to launch work related to the development of the new rules and procedures for the LDC Special Account. This team will also update the current QSF Rules and Procedures to include information on the sustainable development dimension and the new committee.

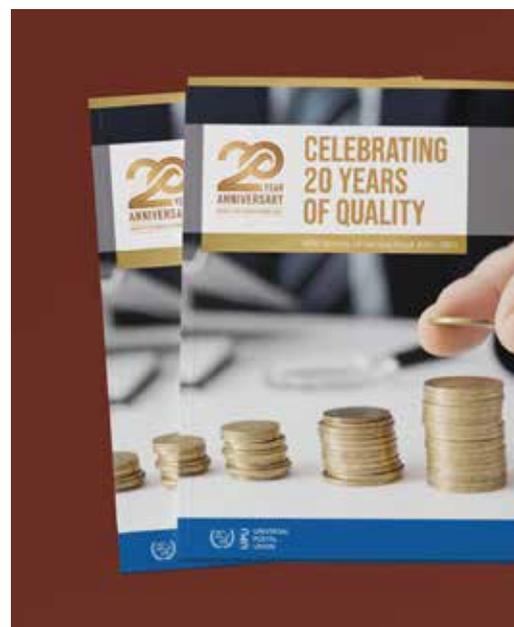
“It is envisaged that with the formalization of the element of sustainable development in the rules of the QSF, the future direction of the Fund will be geared toward supporting and contributing to UN Sustainable Development Goal 13 on ‘Climate Action’,



which encompasses action on carbon emissions and sustainable environment – an area which is directly related to the postal sector,” Chum explains.

Since 2017 QSF has launched campaigns every year for green projects, focusing mainly on the areas of the procurement of green vehicles, and for the construction of mail processing facilities that run on solar energy, among other projects.

Chum concludes, “The Istanbul Congress created the Common Fund and the Abidjan Congress empowered it with an additional funding stream for LDCs. What is needed now is the call for action. I hope all stakeholders of the QSF come together to ‘walk the talk’. The UPU global network is, after all, as strong as its weakest link.” **HN**



TO READ A SPECIAL 20th ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION DOCUMENTING THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF THE QSF, VISIT:

www.upu.int/UPU/media/upu/publications/QSF-ENG.pdf

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UPU commits to becoming a gender equality champion for the global postal sector

TEXT: Helen Norman

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap 2021 report, which was released earlier this year, revealed that COVID-19 has slowed – and, in some cases, even stopped – progress toward gender parity. The report measured four factors in 156 countries: political empowerment, economic participation and opportunity, health and survival, and education.

The report revealed that the world is only 68% of the way to gender parity globally. This is a step back of 0.5 percentage points compared to 2020. On the current trajectory the report said that it will take another 135.6 years to close the gender gap worldwide – up from 99.5 years in 2020.

The UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5 has a target of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030. But to reach this goal, it is clear that urgent action is needed to eliminate the many root causes of discrimination that still curtail women's rights in private and public spheres.



UPU staff celebrated International Women's Day 2020 at the International Bureau

The UPU's role

As a specialized agency of the UN, the Universal Postal Union has an important role to play in encouraging and supporting members to embrace gender equality within the workforce. The International Bureau has been working on this for many years. At the Doha Congress in 2012, for example, a resolution was approved which concerned the management of staff at the UPU and had a goal of achieving the widest possible gender balance and equitable geographic distribution in staffing at the International Bureau. The work surrounding this proposal continued through to the Istanbul cycle.

Now the International Bureau has gone further to ensure both women and men are well represented and respected within the postal sector. At the Abidjan Congress in August, a new proposal was adopted, which aims to tackle fair recruitment practices and to adopt the use of gender-neutral language within the UPU. The proposal, "Gender equality and the empowerment of women at the UPU and in the postal sector," was developed in line with the UN's System-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW).

Peter Good, who is Head of the Australian Delegation to the 27th Universal Postal Congress, was part of a team that helped draft the final resolution that was passed in Abidjan. He says, "The decision of the 27th Congress demonstrates the UPU's unique position to contribute to achieving the sustainable development goals and ability to participate in system-wide action to accelerate gender equality."

Proposal work

Now the proposal has been adopted the UPU will begin work on developing the gender equality initiative by benchmarking against other UN agencies, requesting guidance from UN Women and consulting with interested Union member countries.

The proposal requires the UPU to proactively meet the requirements under the UN System-Wide Action Plan 2.0 on GEEW (UN-SWAP 2.0) reporting, as well as to encourage its member countries to increase the participation of women in leadership and decision-making positions, both in their

national postal sectors and in their delegations to the UPU. A clear UPU gender equality policy will be developed to achieve this. "It is hoped that by 2025, the UPU will be able to exceed expectations against key performance indicators of UN SWAP 2.0," notes Good.

The UPU will also, for the first time in its history, incorporate gender-balance requirements as one of the criteria to be used in the recruitment of staff members. "The Congress decision also stressed that the UPU should promote equality in leadership, decision-making and women's economic empowerment. As such, the decision will see the UPU focused on increasing the participation and representation of women in leadership and decision-making positions, both in their national postal sectors and in UPU delegations," explains Good.

At the Abidjan Congress in August, a new proposal was adopted, which aims to tackle fair recruitment practices and to adopt the use of gender-neutral language within the UPU.

Furthermore, the UPU will review all Acts of the Union and other documentation to ensure the use of gender-neutral language across the board. "The removal of gendered terminology in the UPU Acts and documentation reflects member countries' aim of creating a more inclusive and diverse policy and decision-making UPU, where no gender is favored in staffing, policies or language," Good adds.

The UPU will appoint a key focal point for the development of the policy and programs that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women within the UPU. "This will enhance organizational efficiency, productivity, innovation and engagement across the whole postal sector," says Good.

The gender equality policy team will report annually to the Council of Administration on progress of the policy development and its implementation. Good adds, "Developing and implementing this policy will also build a more inclusive and diverse policy-making and decision-taking UPU and build on the UPU's existing gender equality strategies."

Gender equality in Australia

According to Good, Australia Post is a great example of a designated operator leading the way in gender equality. "Australia Post has a proven record of improving gender balance at all levels of leadership and in traditionally male-dominated areas," he says.



Ms. Simona Tarabasnu represented Romania as a vice-chair of the 27th Universal Postal Congress.



Member country delegates participated in the 27th Universal Postal Congress.

The postal operator has already achieved gender pay parity and introduced organizational policies that support greater choice and flexibility for families to manage work and care, and that support women to be safe at work and home. “Australia Post also offers programs that promote women’s workforce participation, support women as leaders and positive role models, and respond to the diverse needs of women,” Good adds.

These programs include ProjectMe, which is a seven-week career and personal development program designed to give women in frontline positions the tools to build resilience, self-awareness and career agility, with over 1,500 graduates since 2015. There is also Elevate, which supports women to move into and thrive in leadership roles across Australia Post and to set up and drive business outcomes. Since 2012, 325 women have graduated from this program.

Another program is Women@Post, which has been designed to understand the systems and practices within the operations network that may be impacting on attracting, retaining, and promoting female talent. The program then works to implement recommendations that will support positive change for women.

“Australia Post stands ready to share its experiences and insights of implementing successful programs and initiatives as we implement the decision of the UPU membership,” Good concludes. **HN**

“The removal of gendered terminology in the UPU Acts and documentation reflects member countries’ aim of creating a more inclusive and diverse policy and decision-making UPU, where no gender is favored in staffing, policies or language.”

PETER GOOD, HEAD OF THE AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION TO THE 27th UNIVERSAL POSTAL CONGRESS



Delegates voted for the new UPU leadership during the 27th Universal Postal Congress.



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As a multi-stakeholder facility, Post4Health provides a flexible platform for donors to increase synergies and have a greater impact.

In order to operate, Post4Health relies on voluntary funding from governments, national Posts, the private sector and development partners.



La Poste Group (France) is supporting the Post4Health Facility with a total amount of 100,000 USD.



The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication of Japan (MIC) has announced a 300,000 USD support to Post4health.

No one is safe until everyone is safe. With over three billion people living in rural or isolated areas, the successful delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine is arguably the greatest logistical challenge ever faced by humankind. The Universal Postal Union's Post4Health facility aims to catalyze the capacity of postal operators to deliver health products, policies and services to people everywhere. In doing so, it will leverage access to one of the world's biggest networks, spanning 192 countries, 650,000 postal facilities and more than five million employees.

As the UN organization responsible for the postal sector, the UPU leads the way to strengthen Posts' value proposition in delivering health policies, products and services with Post4Health.

The pandemic has highlighted the support that postal operators can give to communities, national economies and public authorities in uncertain times, making the Post an essential service during lockdowns. Aside from core services, operators have once again proven the postal network's value as a key infrastructure by delivering a full range of

new social and economic services, including health-related services such as distribution of tests, personal protection equipment and medicines. With COVID-19 vaccine campaigns being rolled out, Posts are well placed to directly contribute to the success of those campaigns by providing delivery solutions for the vaccines where possible, along with the medical equipment and supplies needed for the vaccination process.

There is a protracted global logistics challenge in the early stages of vaccine deployment and delivery, owing to specific ultra-cold chain supply chain constraints. However, as different varieties of vaccines are developed, with different levels of cold chain requirements, there will be a rapid need to scale up worldwide delivery.

The most urgent global objective of the UPU Post4Health initiative is to leverage and mobilize the postal network for the last-mile delivery of COVID-19 vaccines and of related medical equipment and materials, wherever possible and feasible, and also for advocacy and information campaigns.

Through Post4Health, the UPU will work with governments, national and global health authorities, and postal operators, form partnerships and create and operate a unique, advantageous ecosystem to not only help deliver responses to the current pandemic, but also provide broader health services through the Post.

For more information, please contact: post4health@upu.int

Stefania Tarquini is a familiar face around the UPU's International Bureau, where she is something of an office style icon.

"I always try to be as fashionable as possible – the idealization of beauty is very Italian," she says with a grin.

While fashion is a passion she explores in her spare time, at work she devotes her time to development projects benefitting the UPU's member countries.

Tarquini began her journey with the UPU nearly 30 years ago, after an advertisement for a position in the French typing pool caught her eye. She loved languages and had once dreamed of becoming an interpreter; she thought working in the language department of an international organization could be an interesting job. After some time, she had the opportunity to move to "Section F" – what is today known as the UPU's Directorate for Development and Cooperation (DCDEV).

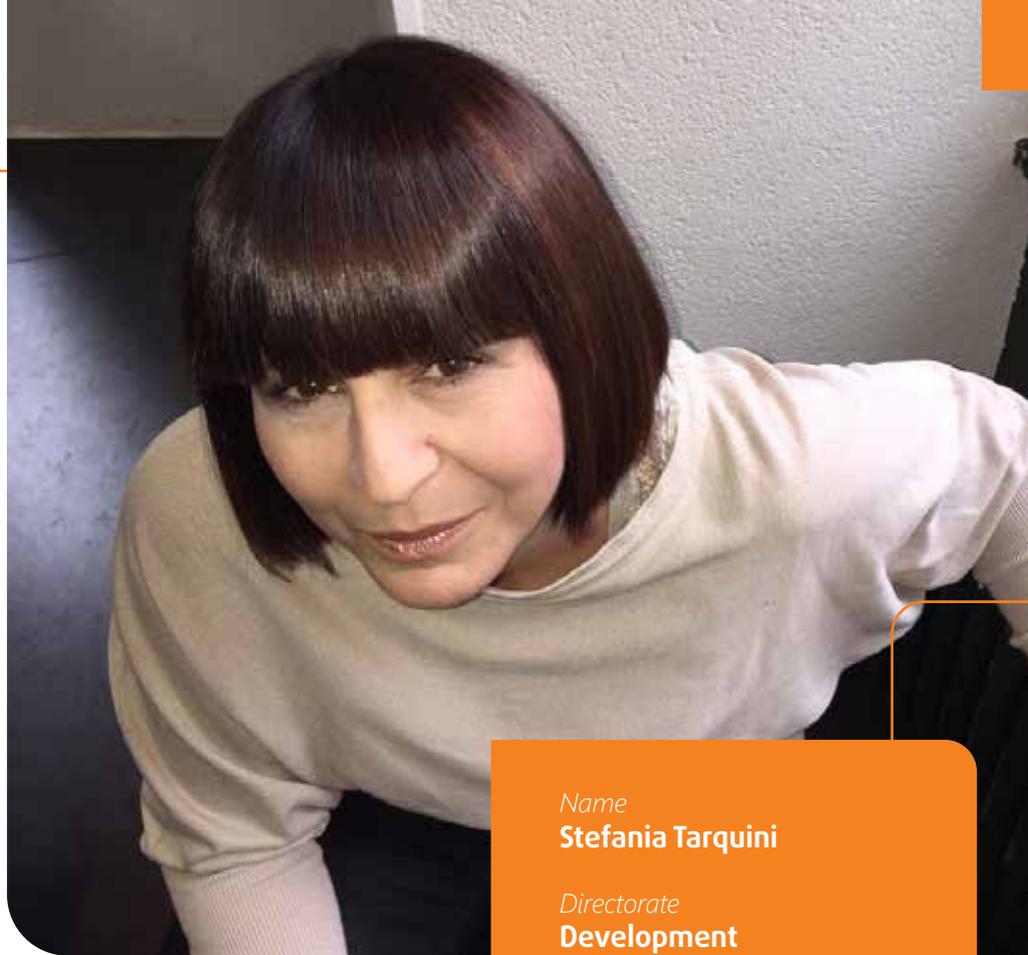
"It's strange because today I work with interpreters," she muses.

She does more than work with interpreters. Nearly three decades on, she has assisted all the UPU's regional programmes, except Latin America, and now assists the DCDEV Director with a wide range of tasks. Interfacing with member countries, working for the Union's bodies, supporting the organization of workshops, and managing internal projects are just a few of her daily responsibilities. She also trains new DCDEV staff on development cooperation methods to help them integrate within the team and the International Bureau.

"My job is interesting because I touch a piece of everything within DCDEV. When you are the assistant of a director you have an overview of everything," says Tarquini.

Professional development has also been a priority for her at work, and something that the UPU has supported.

"When you're younger and have less experience you work purely as an assistant. But through the years, I've learned how to do project management and I've done certificates in management and human resources," she explains.



Name

Stefania Tarquini

Directorate

Development and Cooperation

Position

Assistant to the Director and Assistantship "Coordination and Cooperation Committee" Secretariat

Nationality

Swiss, Italian

Languages

Italian, French, English, German, Spanish (learning)

She adds that her work in project management has brought her the most satisfaction so far. Two years ago she helped organize directorate-wide trainings on the subject to help her colleagues deliver more impact in the field.

"This was the last piece of the puzzle for my professional life," she says, adding that she is searching for her next professional goal. "I feel ready to do more. This gives me the motivation to fulfil my duties as best as I can for the countries, but also to grow my own skills," says Tarquini.

Tarquini adds that working with people from around the world has also allowed her to grow and enrich herself.

"I like that it opens doors to get to know different cultures, religions and people who come from all countries and different realities. It opens your mind to what happens outside Switzerland," she explains.

She also derives her enthusiasm from her DCDEV team, which she describes as "a family."

"You cannot work in DCDEV and help countries and be an individual person. If you are social in your work, you are social in your life – these are directly linked," she adds. "We are like one hand with many fingers." **KR**



#FIGHT *racism*



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Setting sights on carbon reduction

TEXT: Kayla Redstone

The 27th Universal Postal Congress paved the way for the postal sector to do its part in the global fight against climate change.

A resolution co-authored by Austria, France and Germany and adopted during the quadrennial meeting will see greater action and cooperation on carbon reduction within the sector during the upcoming work cycle. This work will include the investigation of possible emission reduction targets and carbon-neutral cross-border services in the postal sector, as well as knowledge sharing on emission reduction strategies, climate finance and climate adaptation.

Posts operate the largest physical network in the world with more than 5 million staff, 650,000 post offices and half a million vehicles in their fleets. Although many posts have already undertaken measures to reduce their carbon footprint, the UPU resolution will help define a coherent sector-wide policy on the issue.

"If the global community, and that includes the postal sector with all its emissions through delivery, sorting and long-haul transport, does not change its behaviour, our children and grandchildren will not have to worry about a postal network, they will have to worry about their existence," said Felix Blaich, Head of International Postal Relations at Deutsche Post, who presented the resolution on behalf of Germany.

UPU Director of Policy, Regulation and Markets, Siva Somasundram, said, "I am delighted that Congress has reached a consensus and approved this important resolution, which further expands the extensive work of the UPU on environmental and social sustainability."

"If the global community, and that includes the postal sector ... does not change its behaviour, our children and grandchildren will not have to worry about a postal network, they will have to worry about their existence."

FELIX BLAICH, HEAD OF INTERNATIONAL POSTAL RELATIONS AT DEUTSCHE POST

"In particular, I am convinced that this will strengthen the ability of the postal sector to access funding for low emission and resilient infrastructure," he added.

The Postal Operations Council will take the lead in studying greenhouse gases emitted by the postal sector, as well as mitigation and adaptation measures. This will include identifying possible carbon neutral cross-border postal services that interested Posts could offer their customers.

In parallel, the Council of Administration will develop recommendations on greenhouse gas reduction targets to present to the next UPU Congress. It will also report on ways UPU member countries can improve knowledge sharing on carbon reduction methods employed across the sector. **KR**

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.POST Group continues to embrace private sector partnerships to accelerate innovation and cybersecurity

When the .POST Group (DPG) was launched back in 2012, partnerships were at the heart of its business model. The group set out to work closely with stakeholders from the public and private sector and with academia to ensure postal operators had access to the tools and procedures needed to keep them safe in a world where digital transformation was gaining pace, and fast.

TEXT: Helen Norman

Nearly 10 years on, the group has worked with 10 private sector companies to collaborate on innovative secure digital services. “.POST is the UPU-led postal industry cybersecurity initiative,” says Paul Donohoe, Manager of the UPU’s Digital Economy and Trade Programme and DPG Secretary.

“It is based on the safe and secure .POST top-level domain, which is the result of an agreement between the UPU and ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers). .POST provides posts with security protection on the internet for things like hijacking, phishing, and spoofing. Private sector partners have become a really critical element of the DPG’s success.”

The .POST initiative was initially created and supported by some of the leading industrialized countries, including France, Sweden, Canada, and Australia, who were driving the need for posts to prepare themselves for the digital economy in the 2000s. The DPG was established in 2012 thanks to funding from Italy, Malaysia, and Morocco to oversee its growth. Today,

37 countries and two private sector members support the project financially from across the globe.

The DPG is governed by a seven-member governance board within the UPU, which is led by Massimiliano Aschi from Italy with Oussama Rouatbi from Tunisia as Vice-Chair. The other elected representatives are from the U.S., China, Nigeria, Namibia, and Turkey.

“All of the regions of the world are covered in this board and guiding DPG’s development,” adds Donohoe. “The 37 member countries

“Private sector partners have become a really critical element of the DPG’s success.”

PAUL DONOHOE, MANAGER OF THE UPU’S DIGITAL ECONOMY AND TRADE PROGRAMME AND DPG SECRETARY

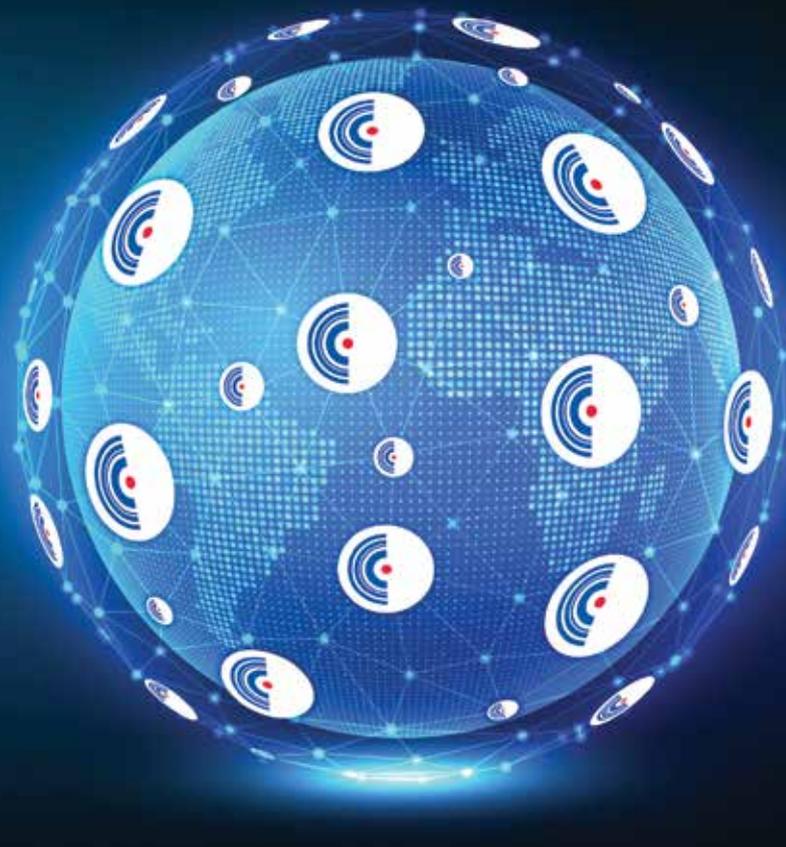
composing the DPG General Assembly meet every six months to decide on what the future holds for the initiative.”

Alongside the .POST domain’s names registration services, the DPG provides its members with postal sector policies on cybersecurity, technical assistance for digital capacity building, training courses on cybersecurity, and IT tools to implement those policies.

“The UPU has an approved cybersecurity policy for email, for example, which includes recommendations on how posts can protect themselves against things like phishing and spam using .POST,” Donohoe explains.

New Congress proposals

According to Donohoe, cybersecurity has become even more important due to COVID-19. “The global pandemic has accelerated digital transformation,” he says. “More and more customers now want access to digital channels for services and as a result we have seen an increased interest from posts in the .POST initiative. Cybersecurity



has also been thrust into the spotlight as a number of bad actors have taken advantage of any online vulnerabilities.”

At the 27th Universal Postal Congress in Abidjan, the importance of the cybersecurity element of DPG was reinforced. “With this in mind, two new proposals were adopted,” explains Donohoe. “One was for new IT support services and the other for increasing innovation and business development.”

The latter is where partnerships will become very beneficial, notes Donohoe. “We are, for example, working with the Global Cyber Alliance to give our members access to new cyber security tools, services and training programs,” he explains. “We also have a number of startups who have recently joined the DPG and they are collaborating with DPG members to explore implementation of cutting edge new technologies by the posts, such as STAMPSSDAQ’s blockchain-based digital marketplace to host, trade and track crypto-stamps, and Ship2myID’s digital addressing and digital marketing platform, which will utilize the security features of .POST.”

Digital philately

Speaking about the crypto-stamps initiative, Andrii Shapovalov, CEO of STAMPSSDAQ and Associate Member of the DPG since November 2020, says, “We hope to build a NFT [non-fungible token] philately blockchain ecosystem, which would create a common global marketplace for all postal operators to issue postage stamps in NFT format. Currently, we are in the process of discussions to find the right formula to have an operation agreement with the UPU to open up the collective benefit for the bureau and all its members.”

The STAMPSSDAQ marketplace is currently in a ready-to-launch stage. The team is fine-tuning all the elements of the blockchain and marketplace infrastructure on a testnet and will be migrating to the mainnet by the end of October. “In January 2021 we signed our first exclusive license agreement with La Poste de Côte d’Ivoire, which gave us the grounds to start the production of the blockchain and marketplace,” Shapovalov explains. “The launch of sales on STAMPSSDAQ marketplace is expected to commence in December 2021.”

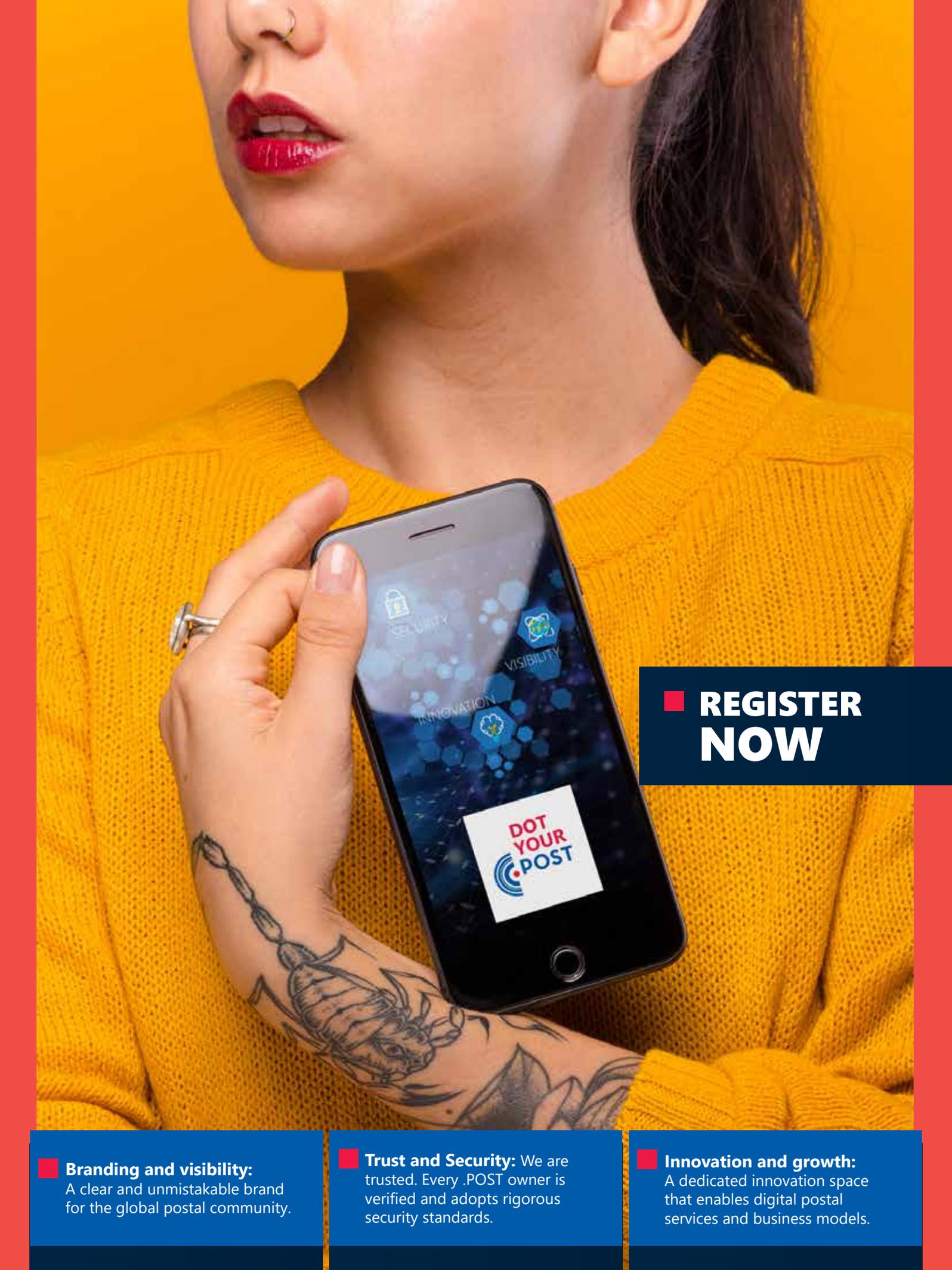
According to Shapovalov, the postal sector’s cooperation with private sector companies brings flexibility and speed-to-market. “Private players are willing to invest immediately in bringing to life the ideas to develop and transform the postal industry to its new heights,” he adds. “All they need in return is the willingness of posts to engage in discovering these new offers and for them to be brave and test them. We intend to develop our cooperation with UPU in the coming years and increase our efforts to create one common NFT philately ecosystem.”

Looking at the key benefits the STAMPSSDAQ/DPG partnership will bring to UPU members, Shapovalov adds, “By partnering with STAMPSSDAQ UPU member countries have the possibility to establish themselves successfully on the extremely fast growing NFT market and to monetize their existing philatelic collections. In addition, our business model, which is focused on collector engagement and entertainment, serves as a unique marketing opportunity to promote the countries’ values to the global NFT collector community via common NFT philately platform.”



“The global pandemic has accelerated digital transformation.”

PAUL DONOHOE, MANAGER OF THE UPU’S DIGITAL ECONOMY AND TRADE PROGRAMME AND DPG SECRETARY



■ **REGISTER
NOW**

■ **Branding and visibility:**
A clear and unmistakable brand
for the global postal community.

■ **Trust and Security:** We are
trusted. Every .POST owner is
verified and adopts rigorous
security standards.

■ **Innovation and growth:**
A dedicated innovation space
that enables digital postal
services and business models.

COMING SOON...
BECOME PART OF AGES OLD PHILATELIC AND ART HERITAGE IN THE CRYPTO WORLD
 STAMPS AND ART NFTS: COLLECT, TRADE, COMPETE AND EARN REWARDS.

**BETA TESTING
 SEPTEMBER 2021**

“We will explore this issue with private sector partnerships, and we are also planning to launch a hackathon to encourage collaborative problem solving between the private, public, and academic sectors. This will be part of our aim to continue to accelerate digital transformation in a safe and secure way.”

PAUL DONOHOE, MANAGER OF THE UPU'S DIGITAL ECONOMY AND TRADE PROGRAMME AND DPG SECRETARY

Future outlook

As DPG approaches its 10-year anniversary, the board is looking to build even more capabilities into the group's offering. “We will soon be releasing a new compliance self-assessment tool, for example, so members can assess their level of compliance with UPU cybersecurity policies,” explains Donohoe. “Members can use this tool for all their domains – not just their .POST ones. We hope, however, that the tool will show them the security benefit of using .POST domains.

“The other area we will be looking at is building a partnership to help posts develop new secure identity services,” he adds. “This is a very important issue currently and posts have a key role here, especially if they want to be successful in offering government services.”

“We will explore this issue with private sector partnerships, and we are also planning to launch a hackathon to encourage collaborative problem solving between the private, public, and academic sectors. This will be part of our aim to continue to accelerate digital transformation in a safe and secure way.” **HN**



“Private players are willing to invest immediately in bringing to life the ideas to develop and transform the postal industry to its new heights.”

ANDRII SHAPOVALOV, CEO OF STAMPSDAQ AND ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF THE DPG



The UPU's 27th Universal Postal Congress in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, saw the approval of not only a new World Postal Strategy, but also a series of decisions paving the way for a modern UPU.

TEXT: Kayla Redstone

THE ROAD FROM ABIDJAN: A WIDENING HORIZON FOR THE UPU

Opening the quadrennial meeting, UPU Director General Bishar A. Hussein said, “We have come to Abidjan not only to reflect on the milestones of the Post in the last five years, but also to discuss and define how posts will assist economic and social development in the future.”

Delegates from the UPU’s member countries convened both in person in Abidjan and online, via Zoom and UPU TV, in what was the first-ever hybrid UPU Congress. It was also the first regular Congress to be held in Sub-Saharan Africa.

After a year of delay caused by the global pandemic, they had much to discuss. However, after three short weeks, they were able to agree a way forward on several matters that would be key to the organization’s progress in a rapidly changing sector: engaging wider postal sector players in the work of the Union, approving a plan to modernize the UPU’s portfolio of products, harmonizing postal remuneration systems, and expanding the organization’s strategy for postal development.

Making way for all players

Over the course of the Istanbul Cycle, the UPU has been working to develop a policy to determine how wider postal sector players (WPSPs) might play a role in the Union’s activities.

As an intergovernmental organization, the UPU’s membership has traditionally been restricted to government entities and postal operators designated by governments – also known as designated operators. However, the liberalization of the sector, privatization of posts and digitalization have meant a

broadening market with non-designated operators quickly capturing new opportunities in the parcels and express spheres. Posts are also increasingly working with external actors, such as transport and customs partners, to ensure the postal supply chain.

The 2016 Istanbul Congress adopted a resolution directed at allowing widened participation, instructing the UPU's Council of Administration to approve and oversee the implementation of a policy for wider postal sector players to access UPU products and services. In the meantime, the Council approved supply chain partners, such as airlines, customs and transport companies, to access a set of UPU IT services and established a special task force to investigate other ways the UPU might engage WSPSPs in its work.

This task force presented its recommendations to the Abidjan Congress, with the decision-making body approving several proposals, including the hosting of a 2023 Extraordinary Congress to finalize a plan for opening, and changes to the UPU's Consultative Committee - a UPU body established in 2004 to allow wider sector players to contribute to UPU dialogue, but without participating in decision-making processes.

Mutua Muthusi, Director of the UPU's Executive Office and Secretary of the Congress Committee that passed the

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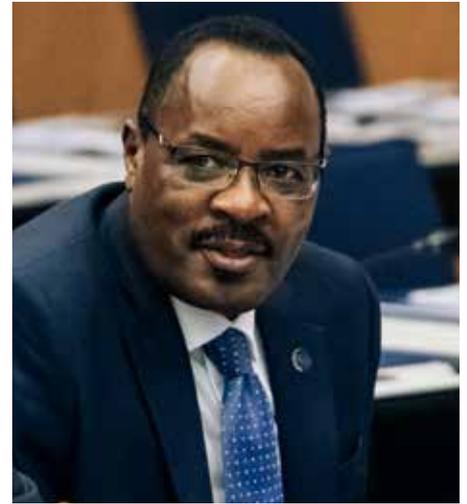
proposal said, "The decision made by Congress shows that countries are now united on the importance of opening up the UPU so that the organization can keep pace with transformations taking place across the sector. I expect the 2023 Extraordinary Congress will provide a clear way forward for the UPU to embrace the entire postal industry."

The Council of Administration will be responsible for analyzing possible opening strategies. This work should leave it ready to propose a step-by-step opening plan considering future structural changes, wider postal sector participation methodology, and a corresponding financial contribution model, to the Extraordinary Congress in two years.

In parallel, the UPU will undertake reforms to the Consultative Committee. These reforms will allow for more flexible participation and introduce new membership categories.

Integrating products

Today, cross-border e-commerce volumes represent 20% of global e-commerce, and



"I expect the 2023 Extraordinary Congress will provide a clear way forward for the UPU to embrace the entire postal industry."

MUTUA MUTHUSI, DIRECTOR OF THE UPU'S EXECUTIVE OFFICE



Mr. Pascal Clivaz, Deputy Director General of the UPU, during the Congress.



Some countries chose to travel to the 27th Universal Postal Congress in Abidjan, while others participated online.

this number is growing at twice the rate of domestic e-commerce services. Customer expectations have evolved along with increased demand for cross-border e-commerce services. A new Integrated Product Plan (IPP) adopted by countries in Abidjan sets the foundations to ensure that the Union's entire membership are positioned to embrace the opportunities created by the rise in e-commerce.

“The Integrated Product Plan is the UPU’s living roadmap to enable the posts to proactively address the evolving market.”

ABDELILAH BOUSSETA, DIRECTOR OF THE UPU’S POSTAL OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

“In the booming e-commerce market, modernizing and innovating the postal offer in line with ever-changing customer needs is critical. The Integrated Product Plan is the UPU’s living roadmap to enable the posts to proactively address the evolving market,” said Abdelilah Bousseta, the UPU’s Director of Postal Operations.

The goal of the IPP has been to evaluate gaps in the current postal product portfolio to ensure that posts are positioned to offer the types of services desired by the modern customer. This includes identifying associated changes required to remuneration, supply chain coordination, standards and security requirements.

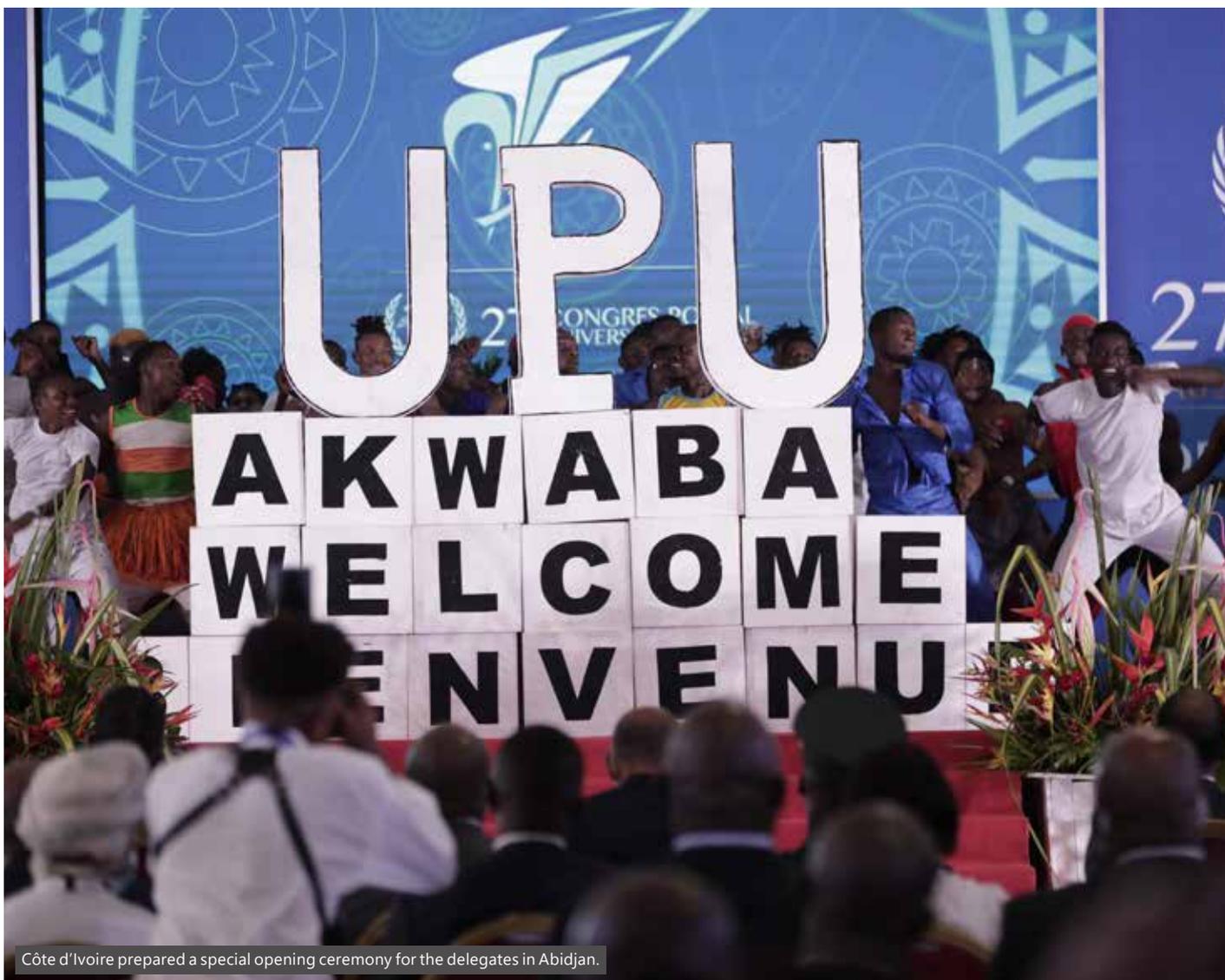
The Plan’s first step, introduced at the 2016 Congress, moved the UPU towards the goal of modernizing the product portfolio. It defined goods versus documents in the post, which in turn helped to introduce a system to classify letter-post items not only by format, but also by content.

“We’re on the road to full integration of the UPU remuneration systems by 2026.”

ALTAMIR LINHARES, UPU’S COORDINATOR FOR REMUNERATION GOVERNANCE, DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION

This first step also had posts apply a mandatory barcode identifier on small packets – an essential precursor to electronic advanced data (EAD). Finally, it also defined services by their delivery speed.

In a second step, members attending the 2018 Extraordinary Congress in Addis Ababa approved the reclassification of several other products and introduced a timeline for reviewing a menu of supplementary and add-on services, as well as the mandatory exchange of EAD.



Côte d'Ivoire prepared a special opening ceremony for the delegates in Abidjan.

The IRS recognizes cost-coverage concerns, while bearing in mind affordability and countries' economic and postal development, to set out a system of remuneration that better reflects current market dynamics and customer's needs.

Now, in a third step, the Abidjan Congress has approved a series of 18 recommendations to make further improvements to the integration of products. Among them are expansions to the menu of optional services offered to postal customers, the facilitation of pre-Customs processes, coordination of common data and communication frameworks, and improvements to international returns.

This new step in the IPP will also have the Postal Operations Council work towards increasing the Post's share in the international e-commerce market for items over 2 kg. Posts already hold the lion's share of market for items under 2 kg, with postal operators delivering 70% of these cross-border items. However, wider postal sector players control the over-2 kg market.

Harmonizing remuneration

Each Congress holds discussions on the systems of rates used to remunerate different categories of postal items, but for the first time, in Abidjan, member countries approved an Integrated Remuneration System (IRS).

Altamir Linhares, the UPU's Coordinator for Remuneration Governance, Development and Integration, said the adoption of the IRS helps mark an important step forward in rationalizing, modernizing and integrating the complex set of UPU remuneration systems.

"We're on the road to full integration of the UPU remuneration systems by 2026," he added.



“There can be no doubt that development cooperation is fundamental to the achievement of the UPU’s Abidjan Strategy.”

**BISHAR A. HUSSEIN, DIRECTOR
GENERAL OF THE UPU**

The UPU has four different systems of remuneration used to determine rates: terminal dues for letter post; inward land rates and ECOMPRO for parcels; and a specific system applied to Express Mail Service (EMS) items. The development of these systems has typically been siloed, with each one developing independently over time.

However, the profile of the mail has changed as e-commerce has gained traction in the global market. The individual systems do not adequately respond to actual market demands. This has also reflected, to a certain degree, a lack of alignment between the remuneration of letters, parcels and EMS items.

While letter post was once used primarily to send documents, e-commerce growth has led to an increasing volume of small packets containing goods are being shipped internationally in the letters stream. This led to increased costs for destination posts, who had to handle a larger number of heavier letters. This issue was partially resolved in 2019, with the adoption of self-declared

terminal dues rates for bulky letters and small packets at the Geneva Extraordinary Congress.

These discrepancies can also be noticed between the other remuneration systems. For example, there are cases where an item sent through EMS – a premium service – could be remunerated at a lower rate than the standard parcels service using inward land rates.

The IRS recognizes cost-coverage concerns, while bearing in mind affordability and countries’ economic and postal development, to set out a system of remuneration that better reflects current market dynamics and customer’s needs. It also improves quality of service through incentives linked to remuneration.

While countries have been able to self-declare terminal dues rates for small packets since 2020, the new system also allows them the same flexibility for inward land rates for parcels beginning in 2022. It also harmonizes the terminal dues framework used across postal development country classification groups. This will help make significant strides





The UPU Director General and Deputy Director General acknowledged the success of the 27th Universal Postal Congress in Abidjan.

“Gross inequalities across the international postal sector are not only a drag on successful cooperation and partnerships, but they also prevent technological advancements and hinder participation in global e-commerce.”

BISHAR A. HUSSEIN, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE UPU

towards resolving imbalances, while maintaining protection mechanisms for least developed and low-volume countries.

The Congress also approved an update to the Integrated Remuneration Plan (IRP) for the new cycle. The first IRP was adopted during the 2018 Extraordinary Congress in Addis Ababa. Its work resulted in the IRS proposals adopted in Abidjan.

The IRP is a partner to the IRS, giving the UPU’s Council of Administration and Postal Operations Council the mandate to monitor the postal market throughout 2022-2025, with a view to proposing further improvements to the remuneration system at the 2025 Congress. Its goal, as explained by Linhares, is to establish a fully integrated UPU remuneration system by 2026.

Big-picture development

The new cycle brings with it a new approach to development on a much larger scale, thanks to a new Development Cooperation Policy approved by the Abidjan Congress.

Speaking to Committee 6, which handled development cooperation issues during the Congress, Director General Bishar A. Hussein said, “There can be no doubt that development cooperation is fundamental to the achievement of the UPU’s Abidjan Strategy.”

“The UPU’s role in creating a level playing field for development must be seen and widely recognized. Gross inequalities across the international postal sector are not only a drag on successful cooperation and partnerships, but they also prevent technological advancements and hinder participation in global e-commerce,” he added.

Taking into account lessons learned during the 2017-2021 period, the new policy moves away from an operations-based approach and towards an approach that engages policymakers. Under the new policy, the UPU will launch larger-scale projects with the goal of having them incorporated into national development policies, triggering change at the national and regional levels. Results from 2017-2021 showed that better results were obtained in countries where the government was more supportive of postal sector development.

The new policy is structured around eight target areas. The first will work to link the Union’s development strategy to postal development indicators, such as the UPU’s Integrated Index for Postal Development (IIPD). These indicators will be integrated into the project management process and used to monitor progress.

A second target area will see more UPU engagement in the field to build stronger relationships with governments and international organizations. The hope is to encourage strategy-sharing with these important actors to maximize the potential return on investment of development activities.

Assistance to developing countries will continue under the new plan, with a focus on helping them achieve operational standards, adopt necessary technologies, assist in social inclusion, and implement the range of value-added products required by the modern postal customer.

In order to better engage governments in the development process, the new policy will have the UPU work to build action strategies directly with them. This will include increasing their involvement in project deployment, as well as working with governments on reform plans and regulatory processes to ensure modernization of the Post while bearing in mind the universal postal service.

Assistance to developing countries will continue under the new plan, with a focus on helping them achieve operational standards, adopt necessary technologies, assist in social inclusion, and implement the range of value-added products required by the modern postal customer.

Other areas focus on targeting support for the postal sector in least developed countries, strengthening South-South and triangular cooperation, building human resources capacity among posts, and building on the organization's disaster risk management efforts across the sector.

Sights on Dubai

Speaking at the closing ceremony, the Director General named the Congress a "resounding success." He added, "I have always known that change is never easy. Unfortunately the rapid changes in postal sector were not going to allow us the time to be complacent. Change was not only necessary but urgent."

Referring to incoming Director General Masahiko Metoki and incoming Deputy Director General Marjan Osvald, Mr. Hussein said, "I know the new team will take it up from where we have left and will bring in new perspectives and energy to lead our Union to prosperity. I wish them success on the difficult road ahead."

The next Universal Postal Congress will be held in 2025 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. **KR**



Some countries chose to travel to the 27th Universal Postal Congress in Abidjan, while others participated online.

A photograph of two men in dark suits shaking hands. The man on the left is of Asian descent, wearing a red tie and a watch. The man on the right is of European descent, wearing a patterned tie. They are standing in front of a blue backdrop with white and orange text. The text includes '7e CONGRES POSTAL', 'UNIVERSEL - ABU DHABI', and 'du 27 Août 2021, Sofitel Hotel'. A logo is visible in the top right corner.

7^e CONGRES POSTAL
UNIVERSEL - ABU DHABI
du 27 Août 2021, Sofitel Hotel

NEW FACES AT THE UPU

The 27th Universal Postal Congress not only brought change to the UPU's workplans, but also its leadership. Member countries voted for a new Director General and Deputy Director General to take the helm beginning 1 January 2022. They also welcomed a new Council of Administration chair, selected a Postal Operations Council chair and voted for the membership of both councils.

Masahiko Metoki

Director
General Elect



"I promise you I will work for all the UPU member countries by listening to each voice carefully and considering you are different. The road ahead will not be easy, however, as our predecessors did, we must appropriately respond to the changes of the time and move forward as an organization that is truly needed by customers and society. I ask all the member countries to keep your faith that our future will be bright. It may seem dark now, but I will work hard to grasp opportunities and collaborate with you and our Deputy Director General, Mr. Marjan Osvald, and International Bureau staff to achieve [our goals]. I sincerely ask for your continuous support and trust. As the UPU marks its 150th year and marches forward, we will respond to the demands of our customers and society. Let us move the UPU forward."

Masahiko Metoki has enjoyed an extensive career in the public service, particularly in the postal sector.

He first joined Japan's Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications in 1983. Mr. Metoki later took on the role of Postmaster at the Nihonmatsu Post Office in Fukushima Prefecture, eventually moving back to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications' Postal Savings Bureau as its Director of the International Service Office. In 2003, he made his way back to Japan Post, where he continued his work in the postal savings

business until he was called upon to join the organization's privatization efforts as Director of the Office for the Promotion of Privatization of Postal Services in the Cabinet Secretariat. Since the Post's privatization, Mr. Metoki has held executive roles related to the Post's initial stock offering, governance and international postal affairs.

In addition to his experience with the Post, Mr. Metoki has worked with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Japan in Thailand.

Mr. Metoki is a familiar face at the UPU, having represented Japan as Chair of the Postal Operations Council since 2012. He has also chaired the 22nd Congress committee for postal financial services and the Postal Operations Council's Postal Financial Services Group. Mr. Metoki also led the first-ever revision of the UPU's Convention, allowing for equipment containing lithium batteries to be sent via post.



Marjan Osvald



Deputy Director
General Elect

“You recognized that I will fight for accountability, transparency and business ethics. ‘Less is more,’ is my motto in my life so, I would like to challenge you to make this organization better and more efficient. Thank you for this trust and I promise I will not let you down.”

Marjan Osvald is an accomplished executive with 24 years of progressively responsible experience in international postal operations, strategy and sales.

Currently a Senior Adviser to the Executive Management of the Post of Slovenia, responsible for international relations and organizations, Mr. Osvald was promoted to this position following 12 years of service as International Mail Director.

Throughout his career, Mr. Osvald has been deeply involved in international postal business. He is an active member of the PostEurop Management Board for the third consecutive mandate and a long-standing member of various Steering Committees within the International Post Corporation (IPC). He also participated in the establishment of the Postal Union for the Mediterranean (PUMed), and in 2019, was elected Member of the PUMed Board of Directors. Domestically, Mr. Osvald is the Chairman of the Slovenian National Stamp Advisory Committee and a Lecturer in

International Postal Operations at the Vocational College of Postal Services and Telecommunications in Ljubljana. He was also the Chairman of the supervisory board of Feniksšped (Freight and Forwarding Company) in 2011–2018.

Mr. Osvald has actively participated in the work of the UPU, including UPU Congresses in 1999, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2018. He was a UPU National Quality of Service Coordinator with two awarded projects, one of them for a new concept of postal customs procedures backed up by a software solution that was awarded the 2014 Postal Technology Award for the Digital Innovation of the Year.

Council of Administration Chair



Represented by **ISAAC GNAMBA-YAO**, CEO, LA POSTE (CÔTE D'IVOIRE)

Isaac Gnamba-Yao describes himself as a product of the African digital ecosystem, having led an extensive career in the ICT sector.

As CEO of La Poste (Côte d'Ivoire), Mr. Gnamba-Yao is responsible for the company's management, the objective of which is to sustainably grow the company's value for its main shareholder – the government. Mr. Gnamba-Yao is responsible for executing decisions made by the Post's Board of Directors and developing its activities in line with the targets agreed by the Board.

Before joining La Poste, Mr. Gnamba-Yao brought his vast sales experience in the

French African territories to eTranzact Global, where he held roles in IT, operations, finance, human resources and marketing. Prior to eTranzact Global, Mr. Gnamba-Yao held senior account executive positions and sales manager positions in both the Windows mobile platform industry (i-mate Dubai) as well as the mobile network industry (Moov, Orange & MTN). He led the introduction of i-mate into the Africa market and worked closely with many of i-mate's top distributors in 34 African countries, as well as the Republic of Malta.

Mr. Gnamba-Yao is a graduate of the MDE Business School Public Advanced Management Program.

Postal Operations Council Chair



Represented by **JEAN PAUL FORCEVILLE**, DIRECTOR OF EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, LA POSTE GROUP (FRANCE)

Jean Paul Forceville joined Le Groupe La Poste in 1979. Since then, he has enjoyed a progressive career with various appointments within the Group, including Director of Cabinet of the President and General Manager, Director of External Relations, Director of European and

International Affairs, as well as Director of Regulation, Institutional and European Affairs.

Since January 2011, Mr. Forceville has been chairing the Board of Directors of PostEurop. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of PUMed. Within the UPU, Mr. Forceville chaired a Congress Commission in Doha (2012) and Istanbul (2016), among other engagements. In August 2021, he was elected Chair of the Postal Operations Council. Mr. Forceville is a graduate of the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris (1979) and the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Postes et Télécommunications (1986).

Members of the Council of Administration (2021-2025)

AFRICA



ALGERIA



CAMEROON



EGYPT



GHANA



KENYA



MADAGASCAR



MALI



NIGERIA



TANZANIA (UNITED REP.)



TUNISIA



ZAMBIA

SOUTHERN ASIA & OCEANIA



BANGLADESH



CHINA (PEOPLE'S REP.)



INDIA



JORDAN



MALAYSIA



OMAN



QATAR



SAUDI ARABIA



THAILAND



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

WESTERN EUROPE



BELGIUM



FRANCE



GERMANY



SPAIN



SWITZERLAND



UNITED KINGDOM

EASTERN EUROPE & NORTHERN ASIA



BELARUS



BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA



GEORGIA



KAZAKHSTAN



RUSSIAN FEDERATION

WESTERN HEMISPHERE



ARGENTINA



CANADA



CHILE



CUBA



URUGUAY



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



PERU



PARAGUAY

WESTERN EUROPE

**Members of the
Postal Operations
Council
(2021-2025)**

AFRICA



ALGERIA



BURKINA FASO



CAMEROON



EGYPT



KENYA



MADAGASCAR



MOROCCO



NIGERIA



SENEGAL



TANZANIA (UNITED REP.)



TUNISIA

**SOUTHERN ASIA
& OCEANIA**



AUSTRALIA



CHINA (PEOPLE'S REP.)



INDIA



INDONESIA



JAPAN



KOREA (REP.)



MALAYSIA



SAUDI ARABIA



SINGAPORE



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



VIET NAM



AUSTRIA



BELGIUM



GERMANY



FRANCE



ITALY



NETHERLANDS



NORWAY



SPAIN



SWEDEN



SWITZERLAND



TURKEY



UNITED KINGDOM

**EASTERN EUROPE
& NORTHERN ASIA**



BULGARIA (REP.)



GEORGIA



KAZAKHSTAN



POLAND



ROMANIA



RUSSIAN FEDERATION

WESTERN HEMISPHERE



ARGENTINA



BARBADOS



BRAZIL



CANADA



CHILE



COLOMBIA



URUGUAY



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



INSIDE THE ABIDJAN POSTAL STRATEGY

Each Congress brings with it a new direction for the UPU and its work. The 27th Universal Postal Congress adopted the organization's first fully data-driven strategy – the Abidjan Postal Strategy and Business Plan for 2021-2025.

TEXT: Kayla Redstone

Speaking on the Strategy at the Congress opening ceremony, UPU Director General Bishar A. Hussein said, "In developing the Abidjan World Postal Strategy ... we took into consideration the ever-changing global business environment, as well as the challenges that face the postal industry and the UPU now and in the future. We believe the Strategy holds the promise for a brighter future."

The Strategy is the result of an extensive consultation process, through which more than 170 member countries and territories took part in data analysis, outreach, discussion and drafting to set a roadmap for the organization over the next four years.

Bearing in mind the UPU's status as a specialized agency of the United Nations, the Abidjan Postal Strategy puts forth a Postal Vision 2030 to help position the postal sector as a driver of sustainable development. It calls on governments to make investments and produce policies that reduce gaps in postal development. For regulators, it suggests the harmonization of postal regulatory frameworks. Operators are encouraged to continue diversifying their

business strategies and making operational improvements under the vision. Postal Vision 2030 also includes wider sector stakeholders, encouraging them to continue their integration as partners to traditional operators in the sector.

This vision is supported by three strategic pillars that will guide the UPU's work.

The first pillar focuses on strengthening the UPU's role as a forum for the sector. This role is carried out through the organization of meetings, treaties and international agreements and settlement mechanisms.

The second will see the UPU's role as a provider of affordable technical solutions for the sector reinforced through its consulting and capacity-building initiatives, IT solutions, and standards.

Finally, a third pillar will position the UPU as the primary knowledge centre for the sector. This will be done using the organization's research and insight on market trends, its focused analysis on topical issues and its data storage and protection capacity.

To achieve these three strategic goals, the organization will have to focus on developing new products and services, diversifying its funding structure, investing in highly skilled human resources and regionalizing its activities.

Planning ahead

While the strategy paints a view of the UPU's destination, the Abidjan Business Plan lays the directions for how to get there. It sets out work proposals to support each pillar, defining the, outputs, key performance indicators, and finances required to successfully achieve the strategy.

While the Strategy is fixed, the Business Plan is open to adjustment throughout the cycle as circumstances change or evolve. This process is aided by regular strategy implementation reports.

The first UPU Business Plan was introduced during the Istanbul Cycle. However, that plan was only finalized after Congress. The approval of the Abidjan Business Plan ahead of the new cycle will help the UPU hit the ground running as the Cycle begins.

OVERVIEW OF THE ABIDJAN POSTAL STRATEGY

THE UPU'S MISSION

TO STIMULATE THE LASTING DEVELOPMENT OF EFFICIENT AND ACCESSIBLE UNIVERSAL POSTAL SERVICES OF QUALITY IN ORDER TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD BY:

Guaranteeing the free circulation of postal items over a single postal territory composed of interconnected networks;

Encouraging the adoption of fair common standards and the use of technology;

Ensuring cooperation and interaction among stakeholders;

Promoting effective technical cooperation;

Ensuring the satisfaction of customers' changing needs.

POSTAL VISION 2030

POSTAL VISION 2030 IS THE UPU'S ADVOCACY MESSAGE FOR THE SECTOR. IT WILL INSPIRE THE DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF STAKEHOLDERS TO TAKE ACTION IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS OF COMPETENCE. IT WILL ALSO GUIDE THE UPU'S VALUE PROPOSITION, ARTICULATED THROUGH THREE STRATEGIC PILLARS.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

PILLAR 1

STRENGTHEN THE UPU'S MANDATE AS THE FOREMOST FORUM FOR POSTAL SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

SOLUTIONS

Organization of events and meetings of technical working groups

Treaties and international agreements

Settlement mechanisms

PILLAR 2

REINFORCE THE UPU'S ROLE AS A PROVIDER OF INNOVATIVE AND AFFORDABLE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS FOR POSTAL SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS

SOLUTIONS

Consulting and capacity building

IT solutions

Standards

PILLAR 3

ENABLE THE UPU TO BECOME THE PRIME INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE CENTRE OF THE POSTAL SECTOR

SOLUTIONS

Research and insights on market trends

Focused analysis on various topical issues

Data storage and protection



Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire Patrick Achi spoke at the opening of Ministerial Conference.

MINISTERS EVALUATE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE SECTOR

The 2021 Ministerial Conference, which was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, during the 27th Universal Postal Congress, reflected on how COVID-19 has changed the world and provided guidance on how posts and governments can work together for a sustainable postal future.

TEXT: Helen Norman



This year, the theme of the conference was, “COVID-19 and the postal sector – what has and has not changed, and what needs to change.” The event brought together leading postal and government executives, including from host country Côte d’Ivoire and from Mali, China, the UK, Japan, Belgium, Russia, and Indonesia, among others, to provide their insight and experiences of how the global pandemic has impacted their countries and their respective postal operators.

The key aims of the Ministerial Conference were for the international postal sector to take stock of the transformations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to highlight to government authorities the ability of posts to help transform societies and economies.

The conference included opening remarks from the UPU’s Director General, Bishar A Hussein, Patrick Jérôme Achi, Prime Minister of Côte d’Ivoire, and Choguel Maïga, Prime Minister of Mali. In his opening remarks, Côte d’Ivoire’s Achi spoke about living through the shock of COVID-19 and the need to bridge the digital divide between north and south. He told the audience that, after the pandemic “nothing will be as it was before.”

Speaking about the conference during his opening remarks, Hussein said, “All of this is undertaken with a view to building a more sustainable and prosperous future for the post business.”

The Ministerial Conference was split into four panels: panel one looked at what had changed in the world since the outbreak of COVID-19; panel two examined what had not changed over the past two years; panel three looked at what needs to change; and panel four highlighted the key takeaways for UN agencies and for the UPU.

Panel discussions

In panel one, ministers discussed how COVID-19 caused major disruptions to global supply chains, with huge ramifications to the postal sector, including delayed cross border deliveries because of grounded aircraft.

Paul Scully, Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets and Minister for London, in the UK, highlighted the impact the pandemic had on the UK postal sector. “Decades of change has been squeezed into a single year,” he said while discussing changes that had been made at Royal Mail including contactless deliveries,

“Decades of change has been squeezed into a single year.”

PAUL SCULLY, MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS, CONSUMERS AND LABOUR MARKETS AND MINISTER FOR LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

“One critical cross-sector solution to help countries and economies recover from COVID-19 is digital transformation. We are all agreeable that digital transformation has accelerated global postal chains and increased customer satisfaction and confidence in the global postal service.”

DR. ISMAIL, VICE MINISTER FOR POSTS AND INFORMATICS OPERATIONS, MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATICS, INDONESIA

single person van use, better mail tracking and new returns solutions.

Scully also highlighted Royal Mail’s key role in assisting the government during the pandemic, such as how it is now the delivery partner for the UK Government testing strategy, which sees it handle three million COVID-19 test kits each week. “We all owe a great debt to postal workers across the globe for their unfailing commitment and dedication,” he added.



Mr. Bishar A. Hussein, Director General of the UPU



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Panel two included speakers from Belgium, Russia, and Cuba, and looked at how COVID-19 has not reversed certain macro-trends that had been emerging over the past few years. Dmitriy Kim, Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation said, “Despite all the unpredictability and the problems caused by the pandemic there is one thing that has remained very important and that is stability. Posts and administrations still have their obligations which they must meet. For example, we have managed to continue international deliveries without many changes, and given the disruption, the postal service has remained a factor for stability in many countries.”

Panel three included presentations from Brazil, the World Customs Organization, and Indonesia. Looking ahead at what needs to change because of COVID-19, Dr. Ismail, Vice Minister for Posts and Informatics Operations, Ministry of Communications and Informatics, in Indonesia, highlighted the requirement for continued investment in digital technologies. “One critical cross-sector solution to help countries and economies recover from COVID-19 is digital transformation. We are all agreeable that digital transformation has accelerated global postal chains and increased customer satisfaction and confidence in the global

“We have a common interest to help one another, recover and grow again.”

HON. JOSEPHINE TEO, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION & SECOND MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, SINGAPORE

postal service,” he said.

Finally, panel four speakers took stock of all previous analyses and discussions to provide guidance to the UN system on the way forward. Speakers included Bernard Maissen, Secretary of State, Director General of the Federal Office of Communications, Switzerland; Hon. Faustine Engelbert Ndugulile, Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Tanzania; Hon. Josephine Teo, Minister for Communications and Information & Second Minister for Home Affairs, Singapore.

Singapore’s Teo highlighted the importance of international cooperation in moving on from the pandemic. She said, “We have a common interest to help one another, recover and grow again.”

Teo also echoed other speakers during the Ministerial Conference by stressing the importance of digital transformation. “Consumers themselves are going digital. Postal operators therefore need to rethink their businesses and overhaul their services end-to-end. Regulators too must not stand still. There is nothing like a crisis to spur action,” she added.

UPU Deputy Director General Pascal Clivaz at the closing ceremony of the Ministerial Conference 2021, said, “To sum up, regulators need to examine the best regulatory means of improving efficiency of the services without threatening the existence of these services. Regarding operators, these should keep modernizing and use the latest technologies and standards to meet the goals of their government’s digital strategy.” **HN**



The president of the 8th Universal Postal Congress in Stockholm led a procession of member country delegates in alphabetical order from the Riksdag (Parliament) building to the Hall of the State at the Stockholm Royal Palace. The Congress was formally opened by the King of Sweden on 4 July 1924. Photo: The UPU Archive

A Congress story

As the sector deals with the challenges imposed by a global pandemic and the thrust of digitalization, it is easy to forget that our predecessors faced similarly challenging moments. The successful organization of the first-ever hybrid virtual Congress in UPU history – 27th Universal Postal Congress in Abidjan – provides an opportunity to reflect on the obstacles the UPU has surmounted throughout Congresses past.

TEXT: Sonja Denovski

Almost 160 years ago, in 1862, US Postmaster General Montgomery Blair wrote a letter to the then Secretary of State Mr William Henry Seward proposing the creation of an international conference, inspired by the structure of the Austro-German Postal Union, that would simplify the international postal exchange. Hardly anyone could imagine at that point that this organization would change the course of the postal industry forever.

Since 1874, when 22 countries signed the international treaty founding the Universal Postal Union, the organization has strengthened itself through its regular Universal Postal Congresses. These meetings have opened the Union's doors to member countries, bringing different cultures together to exchange groundbreaking ideas with one mutual goal: facilitating the international exchange of communication.

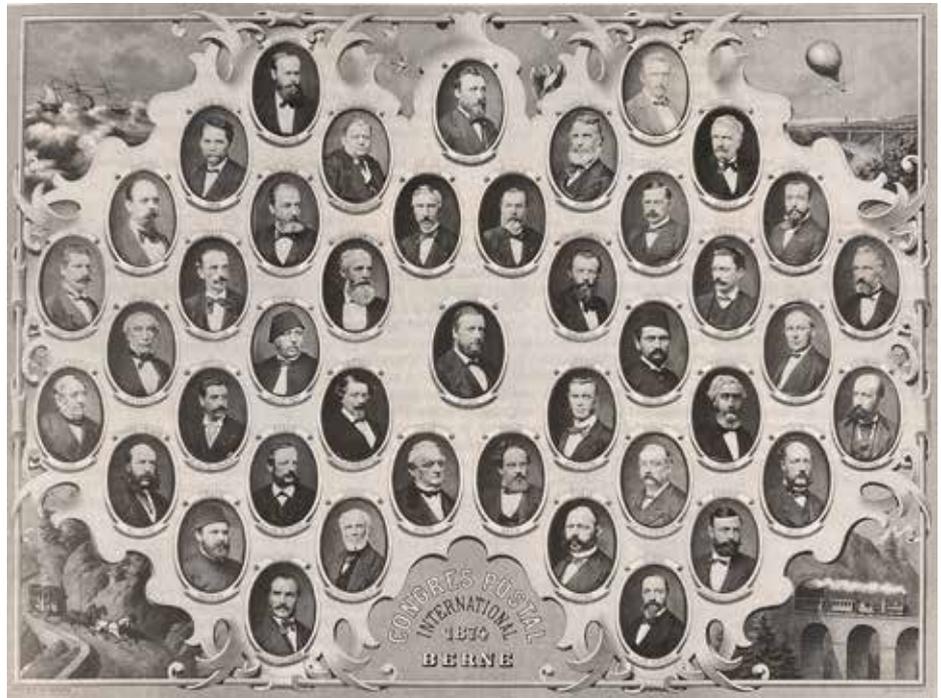
This postal mechanism has kept turning its wheels, working around global events and challenges to move the sector forward.

We must recognize the determination of these pioneers – postal representatives from the late 19th and early 20th century who travelled far and wide, sometimes for months, by horse carriages, steamboats, and steam trains to be able to reach those distant destinations, wanting to contribute their voices to sculpt what was perceived at the time as one of the grandest projects of the century to remove obstacles from the path of postal progress and reforms.

Their achievements are numerous.

The second Congress in Paris in 1878 introduced money orders. The third Postal Congress organized in Lisbon in 1885 introduced the term “bulky items,” an expression we still use today for parcels, and proudly greeted delegates from four distant continents. A decision made in Rome in 1906, during the first Congress of the 20th century, enabled prisoners of war to send and receive correspondence and money orders free of charge. This decision is still honoured through the Geneva Convention.

The postal visionaries of the early 20th century decided in 1924 to replace manual labour with machines and other technical innovations to reduce expenses. The same visionaries noticed the rapid development of the airline industry, therefore, adding air transport to the UPU Convention in 1929. Those attending the 1939 Congress in Buenos Aires introduced the short-lived, but hypermodern “Phonopost,” an experimental voice mail service where the sender could record their voice on a gramophone record. This is now a feature we take for granted in our daily lives.



Founders of the Universal Postal Union. Photo: The UPU Archive

Each new Congress welcomed not only member countries but also countries outside the Union, allowing all involved to shape new services while working on improving and developing existing ones. More participants brought fresh ideas, and more ideas meant more proposals to take into account. For this purpose, a Preparatory Committee, responsible for examining all proposals and communicating them to the participants beforehand, was established during the London sessions in 1929. Today, the Union’s decision-making bodies are still created and shaped according to need, with committees and task forces adapting their work to the most pressing topic of the industry.

The postal sector of the past faced its own share of “unprecedented times.” Even when conflict shook the world during both World Wars, postal services continued to operate. It was shortly after this time the Union earned the recognition of the newly established United Nations Organization, which acknowledged it as a specialized institution that overcame conflict to deliver truly peaceful objectives. The Universal Postal Union officially became part of the UN family in 1948.

This postal mechanism has kept turning its wheels, working around global events and challenges to move the sector forward.

Looking back through history, it is clear that the work of the Union has changed to match the requirements and pace of the market and need to gather is becoming more urgent. Though regular Congresses are scheduled every four years, the UPU recently organized two extraordinary Congresses in the same work cycle, with one more announced for 2023.

Today, the Union has extended its focus to global sustainable development, tackling climate change and fostering gender equality.

With its original mission still in mind, the UPU will continue to pass the torch of transformation to future Congresses. **SD**



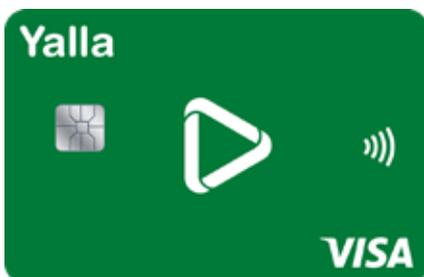
Egypt Post continues to expand its financial services offering

Egypt Post's experience in postal financial services dates back more than 120 years. The postal operator offered its first savings account through the post office in 1901. Since then, Egypt Post's financial service offerings have grown significantly. They are now offered at the Post's 4,200 post offices, 2,000 ATMs and 100 mobile post offices.

TEXT: Helen Norman

"Our aim is financial inclusion for all of Egyptian society and to offer financial services at a high quality and affordable rate," explains Egypt Post's General Manager of Quality Control, Nermin Hassan. "Today we offer current accounts for individual and corporate customers, savings accounts, domestic and international money remittances, debits cards, micro finance, and prepaid cards for younger customers, as well as government financial services."

Currently, Egypt Post manages 25 million savings accounts, offers more than 100 payment services on behalf of government entities, and has issued more than 13 million electronic payment cards. Furthermore, more than 20.4 million domestic money remittances were disbursed through the operator's post offices in 2020.





In 2019, Egypt Post built on the success of its remittances services by launching its first financial app, which enables customers to manage their financial accounts and send and receive domestic and international money, as well as pay utility bills – all without needing to go to the post office. “We incentivized customers to use the app by giving them a 50% discount on service charges,” Hassan adds.

Egypt Post has now improved its offering further through the launch of its super app, which is an all-encompassing self-contained commerce and communication online platform. “We partnered with one of the most successful fintech companies in Egypt to launch the new Yalla Super App, which will take Egypt Post to the next level of digital financial services and enable us to service our customers with the most advanced, secured financial technology, still at affordable rates,” explains Hassan.

According to Hassan, Egypt Post’s ability to offer financial services on such a large scale made it the ideal partner for the Egyptian Government during the COVID-19 pandemic. “We were depended on to deliver social welfare given to Egyptian citizens who carried out temporary work during the pandemic in March 2020,” she explains. “Egypt Post provided cash disbursement for the first month and then completed citizens’ registration for a prepaid card so they could receive the payments through them. Egypt Post was able to register, deliver and activate more than 1.6 million of these cards in just 15 days.”

In a bid to further promote financial inclusion, Egypt Post has also launched a range of micro finance products. “We have worked with companies that operate under the Financial Supervisory Authority to offer our citizens micro lending products,” Hassan explains. “We have now developed a range of standard services for micro lending, which comply with national regulations. These services include handling loan requests, document submission, loan inquiries, SMS notifications to inform customers of loan status, loan disbursement, and repayments by cash or card.”

In the future, Egypt Post has plans to expand its financial service offering further with the launch of several new products, as Hassan explains: “We are currently developing micro healthcare and micro insurance products in partnership with an international insurance company. We are also working on enabling all payment services to be made via our ATM/ITM network, making it easier for things like social housing instalments, traffic violations and micro lending instalments to be paid 24/7.”

“Within the Yalla Super App we will also be developing a mini-app for communities,” she continues. “This is a solution for closed communities, such as universities or schools, which offers services such as digital access control, service requests, intra-community payments, news bulletins, and social collaboration. The solution promotes cashless transactions within the community and offers a seamless digital customer experience.” **HN**



“Our aim is financial inclusion for all of Egyptian society and to offer financial services at a high quality and affordable rate.”

NERMIN HASSAN, GENERAL MANGER OF QUALITY CONTROL , EGYPT POST

Argentina

CORREO ARGENTINO is improving the sustainability of its last-mile logistics. The company has introduced 500 delivery carts for the delivery of letters and small packages by foot in large urban centres. The project is part of the Post's 2020-2030 Strategic Plan, which takes a focus on greenhouse gas reduction. Another part of this plan will see the operator implement small logistics hubs in urban centres to increase the efficiency of parcel delivery.

Australia

AUSTRALIA POST is taking a special focus on mental health, contributing AUD 500,000 (USD 375,000) to mental health projects across the country through its 2021 Community Grants programme. Through the programme, the Post has selected 76 organizations working on projects that will improve connection and mental wellbeing in different communities.

Canada

CANADA POST is partnering with Toronto-Dominion Bank (TD) to advance financial inclusion through the postal network. A pilot launched this Fall will introduce a new personal loan product in select locations, particularly in rural, remote and Indigenous communities. The partnership will expand the range of financial services products available through the Post, which currently offers remittances, money orders, and pre-loadable payment options.

Germany

DEUTSCHE POST DHL GROUP is reporting promising financial results in its third quarter of 2021, having already exceeded its previous year's total year-end results. The Group reported a 28% increase in earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) to EUR 1.765 billion (USD 2.055 billion) in the third quarter. The company has attained a cumulative total of EUR 5.760 billion (USD 6.707 billion) EBIT in 2021.

Greece

HELLENIC POST is making use of artificial intelligence to speed up its sorting processes. The Post has implemented a fleet of 55 autonomous robots to scan, weigh and sort packages, in an effort to deal with surging parcel volumes during the pandemic. The robots conduct as much as 80% of the Post's parcel sorting, with the ability to process as many as 168,000 parcels per day.

Jamaica

JAMAICA POST is celebrating its 350th anniversary on 31 October 2021. To mark the occasion, the Post has launched a series of celebratory activities under the theme, "Transformation Through Innovation," including a special ceremony, a customer appreciation day and a media campaign. The Post will also take the occasion as an opportunity to spruce up some of its major locations.

Kenya

POSTAL CORPORATION OF KENYA has secured an investment of KES 72 million (USD 650,000) from TradeMark East Africa, a trade development organization operating in the region. The funds will help the Post to boost its e-commerce services through improvements to its package processing and digital capacities, as well as enhancing collaboration with regional and global e-commerce partners.

Philippines

THE PHILIPPINE POST OFFICE is helping the country advocate for COVID-19 vaccinations through a special stamp release. The release features diverse images of the population with the message "Keep the faith! Be a hero. Get your dose. Fight Coronavirus" to encourage people to get their jab. The series was launched with several Olympic medallists as well as the mascot of the country's iconic fast food chain, Jollibee.

Senegal

LA POSTE SENEGAL is launching a special online fair, PosteMarket 3.0, to help exhibitors and traders access the online market through the Post's new digital platform. In addition to acting as a sales space, the platform will also be used for discussion panels, business meetings and product demonstrations. The Post expects to host more than 10,000 exhibitors and 150,000 visitors on the platform, which is open from 5 October through 5 November.

Singapore

SINGPOST is supporting both the community and the environment with its new Re:Post initiative to upcycle old postal uniforms into everyday items such as tote bags, coin pouches and bottle carriers. Nearly 33,000 items were collected and shared among several social enterprises for production. The proceeds from the sale of these items will be donated to a local caregiving service and Meals-On-Wheels.

Switzerland

SWISS POST is preparing to launch its first crypto stamp this November. The stamp, which is the first of its kind in Switzerland, will feature two parts: a physical stamp and a digital image that is stored in a blockchain and can be traded online. There will be 13 possible collectible designs, with several produced in limited numbers as rare collectible items.

Tunisia

LA POSTE TUNISIENNE and Tunisia's Ministry of Education have agreed to resume a partnership enabling students to register for school using the Post's payment cards. The partnership allows those families who do not have access to digital payment services to seek help through digital wallets available at post offices across the country.

All items by Kayla Redstone

Ukraine

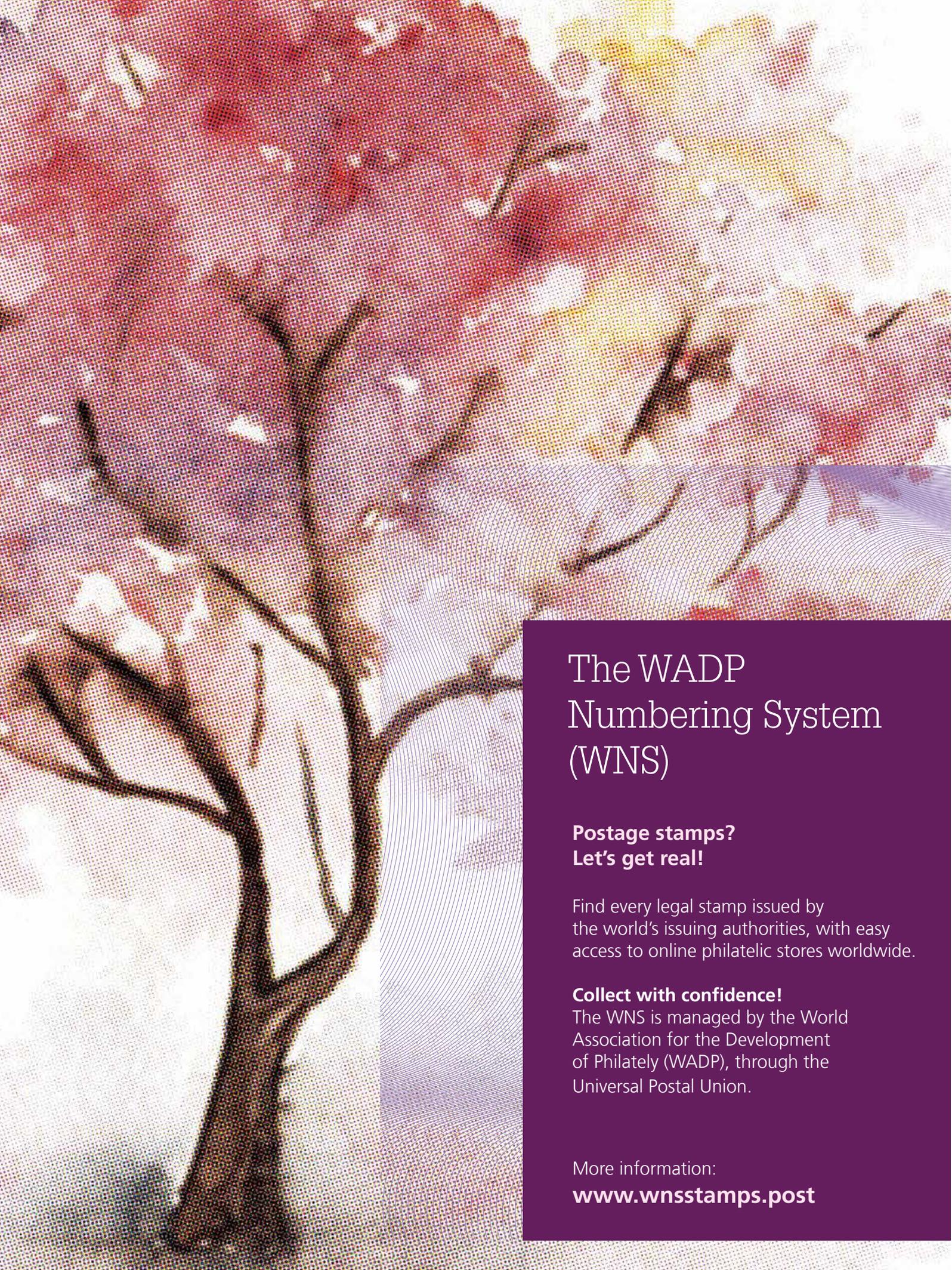
UKRPOSHTA will open a new sorting and logistics centre outside the country's capital city Kyiv to help improve quality of service. The new centre will help the Post take on an additional 40,000 parcels and 45,000 leaflets per hour, reducing express shipment wait times from 20 hours down to three. The opening of the new centre is planned for 2023.

United Arab Emirates

EMIRATES POST is launching five new services to help improve its customer experience, quality of service and flexibility. The services include the addition of new parcel lockers and service points at post offices, petrol stations and other locations. The Post is also improving its cold chain solutions with the addition of temperature-controlled vehicles. The addition of a new fulfilment centre will allow the Post to offer additional e-commerce services to its customers. Finally, the Post will offer a new domestic same-day express service.

United Kingdom

ROYAL MAIL has trialed the use of uncrewed aerial vehicles to help it reach customers living in remote island communities. The vehicles would help the Post overcome challenges imposed by tides and weather to deliver to small, difficult to reach communities. They can carry up to 100 kgs of post.



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Some 12,000 copies of Union Postale are sent to named distribution lists annually. The bulk of these readers are the top decision-makers from national Posts and ministries from the UPU's 192 member countries. They include chief executives, operations managers, technical experts, industry regulators and government ministers.

Around 1,000 further copies of the magazine are also distributed each year during meetings of the UPU's decision-making bodies, the Postal Operations Council and Council of Administration, attended by thousands of delegates from member countries and special industry events, such as Post-Expo.

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