

Speech by Dr Samir Hamrouni, Chief Executive Officer of the World Free Zones Organization

Esteemed guests,

Colleagues and friends,

It is an honour to address you as you convene in Rabat for the second round table on the UPU Consultative Committee postal prosperity zone (PPZ) pilot project, spearheaded by Morocco Post and co-hosted by the Moroccan customs authorities.

Regrettably, I cannot be present in person owing to prior commitments, but I assure you of my commitment and engagement with all stakeholders involved in the PPZ pilot project.

My colleague, Mr Mehdi Tazi Riffi, CEO of Tanger Med Free Zone, a founding member of our organization and former member of the Board of Directors, can speak on behalf of our community and offer support to Morocco Post, the Moroccan customs authorities and UPU CC members to ensure the successful and sustainable set-up of the postal prosperity zone within Tanger Med.

I express my gratitude to Mr Amin Benjelloun Touimi, Director General of Morocco Post, for leading this PPZ pilot project, and also to Mr Amrani Abdellatif, Director General of the Administration of Customs and Indirect Tax, for hosting this round table in Rabat.

I also extend my thanks to Mr Marjan Osvald, UPU Deputy Director General, present here today, and my friend Mr Ricardo Treviño Chapa, Deputy Secretary General of the World Customs Organization, who provided a recorded message. Their joint declaration made on 7 June 2023, in Tokyo, emphasizing safe, secure and efficient global trade, was truly visionary.

The World FZO, a global non-profit organization, serves as the authoritative and collective voice representing the interests of free zones worldwide. Launched in Dubai in May 2014, we aim to have free zones recognized globally as tools for development, economic prosperity and socio-economic sustainability. Our mission is to unite free zones worldwide, providing guidance, knowledge and services to enhance their contribution to the economic prosperity and social development of host countries.

As Co-Chair of the Global Alliance of Special Economic Zones (GASEZ), which works to strengthen the community, we aim to create opportunities for partnerships at international and regional level, drawing together financial

institutions, special economic zone developers, governments and investment promotion agencies.

Over the past decade, free zones have grown significantly in both number and size. Today, there are over 7,000 economic zones globally, a substantial increase from the estimated 3,000 a decade ago. These zones not only contribute to the global economy but also generate more job opportunities, with approximately 100 million people employed in three million companies.

In addition to being a UPU Consultative Committee (CC) member since 2020, we take pride in being a CC Management Committee member. Our collaboration on the postal prosperity zone initiative, launched in 2019, aims to facilitate the global recognition of free zones as tools for safe and secure cross-border e-commerce development, economic prosperity and socio-economic sustainability.

The PPZ concept is simple: just as Posts and Customs collaborate within offices of exchange, why not include Posts in free zones? This would provide free zones with direct access to end users, enhancing their current capabilities.

The World Free Zones Organization represents 1,562 members in 140 countries. The UPU represents an industry employing over six million people, with a network of over 650,000 post offices in urban, rural and remote

areas providing vital physical, financial and digital services to billions worldwide.

Our joint vision with the UPU is to create a world where free zones have access to reliable, affordable and sustainable e-commerce, government, social and financial services.

Mr Masahiko Metoki, UPU Director General, expressed in his keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the World FZO Annual International Conference in Dubai, on 2 May, a commitment to ensuring that all Posts interested in working in free zones can do so within the framework of postal prosperity zones. This initiative aims to bridge the digital divide, allowing free zones to benefit from the global interconnectivity of the UPU network and extending the benefits of the digital economy to communities and SMEs.

Our joint pledge to bring together all Posts interested in working in free zones via interconnected regional postal prosperity zone hubs may be bold, but it is one that we are determined to honour in collaboration with UPU, WCO, World FZO members and wider postal sector players (UPU CC members) who wish to connect to the UPU backbone and bring global cross-border e-commerce volumes back into the UPU interconnected postal network. By working together, we can bridge the digital divide and create a more inclusive and equitable world.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you a very successful day in the launch of the PPZ pilot project.