

## UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION PRESS RELEASE



### **Postal services position themselves as necessary allies in international trade**

***World's Posts meet for the 24th Universal Postal Congress, starting tomorrow  
Geneva (Switzerland), 22 July 2008***

The development gaps that separate the postal services of industrialized and developing countries at a worldwide level must be reduced for citizens and businesses to better participate in international trade, said Edouard Dayan, Director General of the Universal Postal Union, during a press briefing today.

The United Nations specialized agency tomorrow welcomes more than 2,200 participants to its 24<sup>th</sup> Universal Postal Congress, taking place in Geneva until 12 August. The majority of its 191 member countries will be represented, as well as many postal sector stakeholders, including the Posts responsible for the universal service.

According to Dayan, who heads the UPU since 2005, member countries will need to firmly commit to modernizing their postal networks so that, globally, they can fully contribute to their social and economic development objectives. Far from being obsolete, postal services are still alive and well, he said, adding that e-mail and the Internet had not rung the death knell for them. On the contrary, said the Director General, all means of communication complement each other, and the postal sector in this era of the Internet and online commerce has never played a more key role in today's commercial trade.

The postal sector's challenges are still many. Despite the governmental obligation of UPU member countries to ensure universal postal service, some 3% of the worldwide population still do not have access to basic postal services; that number is as high as 12% in Africa. Furthermore, national postal operators are currently delivering 57% of international letters in less than five business days, below the 68% objective set for 2008 at the 2004 Bucharest Congress. (Many countries, however, attain higher levels of quality, with industrialized countries often delivering each other's mail within two days.) Many countries must also undertake the necessary postal reform to ensure a level-playing field among all postal sector players or make the transition towards offering more secure and faster electronic money transfers, to replace the more than century-old paper money order and fill an urgent market need, especially for migrant workers.

These challenges and others will be at the heart of Congress discussions and the World Postal Strategy UPU member countries will be asked to adopt. This strategy is designed around three major areas, including the interoperability of postal networks, using new technologies and harmonized international standards, the development of markets and more well-defined governance rules for the postal sector. Four objectives will aim to better position worldwide postal services in the light of tougher competition, the opening up of markets, the advances made by new technologies, which offer new opportunities, and the need to improve their reliability and speed to respond adequately to individual and business needs.

During three weeks of Congress, which takes place every four years, participants will study 560 proposals. Some 330 are of a general nature or aim to modify the UPU Acts, an international treaty signed by all member countries at the end of Congress. The other proposals, more technical, will be examined by the next UPU Postal Operations Council. It will hold its first session after Congress in October at UPU headquarters in Berne.

In summary, Congress delegates will be called upon to adopt, among other things:

- the 2009-2012 World Postal Strategy, aimed at improving the quality of postal services and interoperability of networks, fostering the universal postal service, promoting the sector's sustainable development, and ensuring the growth of markets.



## UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION PRESS RELEASE



- a new Postal Payment Services Arrangement, an international treaty committing signatory countries to offer, often electronically, secure and accessible money transfer services. A new multilateral framework also facilitates these transfers among countries. Some 130 countries are current signatories of the Arrangement.
- a new system that aims to cover countries' real costs for processing other countries' international mail (called terminal dues).
- a new global monitoring system for the quality of service, which will give developing countries access to better technologies for monitoring and improving their quality of service.
- a proposal to ease the UPU's commitment to the principle of zero nominal growth, which has forced the organization to function with the same budget for the past 11 years.
- an extension of the Quality of Service Fund, an innovative financing tool for developing and least developed countries wanting to reinforce their national or regional postal network.

The world's postal services employ more than 5.5 million people. They process 439 billion letters annually, which generate 52% of global postal revenues, as well as 6 billion parcels, a volume on the increase because of e-commerce, in part. Taking advantage of new technologies, Posts are developing new services such as hybrid mail and logistics services, as well as electronic money transfers. Some 660,000 postal establishments make the postal network the largest physical distribution network in the world.

**Note to editors:** A PDF version of a new UPU book on postal economics, called *Posts, the infrastructure of the 21st century?*, can be viewed on the UPU website: <http://www.upu.int/congress/en/index.shtml>

### About the Universal Postal Union

The UPU, based in Berne (Switzerland), is the primary forum for cooperation between Posts. In addition to maintaining a genuinely universal network that provides modern products and services, it establishes the rules for international mail exchanges among its 191 members and makes recommendations to stimulate mail volume growth and to improve the quality of service for customers. Each year, more than five million employees process and deliver 433.6 billion domestic letter-post items, some 5.5 billion international items and over 6 billion ordinary parcels. The UPU this year celebrates 60 years as a specialized agency of the United Nations.

### Contacts

**Rhéal LeBlanc**  
Universal Postal Union  
+41 79 761 41 08  
(during Congress)  
[rheal.leblanc@upu.int](mailto:rheal.leblanc@upu.int)

**Laurent Widmer**  
Universal Postal Union  
+41 79 761 41 27  
(during Congress)  
[laurent.widmer@upu.int](mailto:laurent.widmer@upu.int)

