

UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION PRESS RELEASE



Working towards a greener postal sector

UPU and UNEP step up their cooperation

Berne (Switzerland), 5 May 2008

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU) have agreed to work together to slash the CO₂ emissions caused by members of the postal sector.

Under the agreement signed in Berne last week by Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, and Edouard Dayan, Director General of the UPU, UNEP will help the UPU calculate the volumes of greenhouse gases generated by the postal sector, using a clearly-defined methodology.

The UPU's International Bureau is shortly to launch a survey of the organization's 191 member countries, to collect data on the sector as a whole, including buildings and vehicles, the mileage these vehicles cover, and the volumes of fuel consumed. Once this information has been gathered, UNEP will help the UPU develop a method to quantify the greenhouse gas emissions generated by the postal sector. The UPU and UNEP will then offer postal operators a range of solutions to cut these emissions, and will monitor the impact of these measures from year to year.

The initiative is in line with the United Nations' commitment to make climate change one of its top priorities, and the heads of UN agencies, programmes and funds agreed at the October 2007 meeting of the Chief Executives Board of the United Nations System to work towards climate neutrality. As part of this partnership with UNEP, the UPU is looking to move towards becoming a climate-neutral organization.

"Any initiative that puts environmental protection at the heart of postal businesses' development strategy will have my support, and the scale of our contribution should reflect that of the sector," declared Edouard Dayan.

According to Achim Steiner: "By joining our forces we are bringing the issue of sustainability to one of the major global networks, the postal service, which has a massive responsibility to connect the world but which also has a significant footprint".

The UPU is a member of the UN's Environment Management Group, and has formed a global network of correspondents within the postal operators of its member countries to help raise awareness, within the worldwide postal sector, of the importance of adopting green policies and sharing best practices. Sustainable development of the postal sector also lies at the heart of the organization's world postal strategy adopted by its 2004 Bucharest Congress, and will remain an objective in the next postal strategy, to be presented at the 24th UPU Congress in Geneva from 23 July to 12 August 2008.

The issue of the environment will be discussed extensively at the Congress, and Mr. Steiner will take part in the General Debate on 25 July 2008, which will be attended by heads of international organizations, representatives of the governments and operators of the UPU member countries, and other decision-makers from across the sector.



UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION PRESS RELEASE



Many Posts today recognize the impact their activities have on the environment, and have adopted environmental policies accordingly; some have acquired non-polluting vehicles and use eco-friendly materials, actively participate in recycling programmes, or have adopted green purchasing policies.

But much more still needs to be done. According to even the most modest estimates, the world postal sector comprises over five million staff (twice that number if we consider the wider sector) and 660,000 postal establishments, and uses some 250,000 motorcycles, over 600,000 cars, vans and trucks, and hundreds of aircraft to deliver mail to the four corners of the world... Not to mention the tonnes of paper used daily in postal communications. The sector therefore has a significant role to play in cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

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.

About the United Nations Environment Programme

The United Nations Environment Programme was founded in 1972. Its mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnerships in caring for the environment by enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. As the principal United Nations body in the field of the environment, UNEP sets the global environment agenda, promotes implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate of the global environment.

Contacts

Laurent Widmer
Universal Postal Union
Berne, Switzerland
Tel. +41 31 350 35 95
E-mail: laurent.widmer@upu.int



Nick Nuttall
United Nations
Environment Programme
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. +254-20 7623084
E-mail: nick.nuttall@unep.org

