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ICANN grants UPU .post top-level domain

UPU first UN agency to get such a domain; global postal sector to explore new frontiers of electronic postal services

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) today signed the contract that grants the UPU managing authority over the top-level domain name, .post (dot.post).

The UPU is the first United Nations agency to obtain a piece of real-estate space on the Internet for the global industry it represents. ICANN President Rod Beckstrom and UPU Director General Edouard Dayan signed the contract at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland.

Dayan said the .post project is an important initiative for developing and providing secure and trusted postal services over the Internet.

"Postal services will explore new frontiers and basically go where no postal services have gone before," said Dayan. "Many Posts already successfully offer a range of electronic products and services that meet customers' new communication needs, .post will enable the UPU to reach the full potential of its original mission, to build a worldwide space without borders where personal and business communication is facilitated in a secure environment. Postal services have facilitated the exchange of information for centuries; they were at the forefront of globalization and today continue to extend their reach across physical and digital boundaries."

"We are extremely pleased by this agreement because it marks an historic first," said Rod Beckstrom, president and chief executive officer of ICANN. "This contract with the UPU is the first agreement that ICANN has signed with a specialised agency of the United Nations and an intergovernmental institution. It is an important contribution to the Internet, and will help us expand ICANN's multi-stakeholder model to include as many global voices as possible."

Unparalleled reach

As a platform for extended postal services, .post will have many possible applications that expand the postal brand and business to the Internet, ensuring that mail received with the .post extension comes from a recognized postal-service provider.

.post will be used for developing e-commerce and facilitating international trade, enabling small entrepreneurs to offer their services more easily. It will also facilitate e-identification, linking electronic addresses to physical postal ones to serve as legal proof of a person's identity. Furthermore, the domain name could eventually act as a bridge between national governments for the transmission and recognition of official documents.

"With .post, we will be able to extend the universal postal service and make the Post a multi-channel service provider, enabling us to reach customers at any time and anywhere they are," said Faouzi Belhassen, a director at the Tunisian Post. Tunisia chairs the UPU's e-Services Group.

As its guardian, the UPU will develop, implement and monitor governance rules for .post and manage the attribution of domain names. These will be available to postal sector stakeholders who meet strict eligibility criteria.

The UPU will now identify an operator to set up the .post registry, as well as a number of ICANN-accredited registrars to sell the .post domains. The UN agency will also apply to the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) to have the .post domain registered in the Internet Root, enabling it to be operational and recognized by the Internet. The .post domain name is expected to be operational by mid-2010.

UPU to cooperate with Poste Italiane

In Geneva, the Italian postal operator, Poste Italiane, also agreed to work closely with the UPU on securing electronic postal services, including the .post project.

Poste Italiane has developed a vast technology-enabled integrated service platform and a unique capability in protecting its own data, services and infrastructure from digital threats and cybercrime. At the UPU, Italy currently chairs the Telematics Cooperative and the Standards and Technology Committee.

Massimo Sarmi, CEO of Poste Italiane, joined the UPU's Edouard Dayan in Geneva to sign a memorandum of understanding supported by the UPU's Postal Operations Council and Council of Administration.

"We are delighted to work with Poste Italiane and benefit from its expertise and we invite other member countries to join us in developing innovative projects," said Dayan.

Promoting electronic postal services is part of the UPU's world postal strategy for 2009-2012, adopted at its last Congress in Geneva in 2008.

Many Posts have been offering a variety of electronic postal services for more than 10 years, from online post offices and electronic certification postal marks to e-registered mail, hybrid mail, e-shopping platforms and e-government services, all electronic equivalents of a number of existing physical services.

About the Universal Postal Union

Created in 1874, the UPU, based in Berne (Switzerland), is an intergovernmental organization and the primary forum for cooperation between governments, Posts and other stakeholders of the worldwide postal sector. 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. Some 5.5 million employees process and deliver 433 billion domestic letter-post items annually, as well as some 5.5 billion international items and over 6 billion parcels. Many postal services also offer expedited mail, financial and electronic services. About 660,000 postal establishments make the postal network the largest physical distribution network in the world. The UPU celebrated 60 years as a specialized agency of the United Nations in 2008.

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