

Arab Postal Leaders Forum

Muscat Declaration

On behalf of the designated operators of the Arab region, we support this Declaration issued at the conclusion of the first Arab Postal Leaders Forum, held in Muscat, Oman, from 12 to 14 February 2024, on the theme “**Arab Posts: On track towards digital transformation and innovation**”.

Upon the conclusion of the deliberations, we have pleasure in declaring that:

- 1 Postal networks have immense potential to bridge the digital divide for both people and businesses. Postal infrastructure is often available even in the most remote and underserved areas, providing a unique opportunity to leverage this existing network to extend digital, financial, e-commerce, e-government and other services, as well as connectivity;
- 2 Designated operators can facilitate the uptake of digital services, including e-commerce, digital identity, e-health and e-government, and enhance digital inclusion in the region through their ubiquitous presence and trusted brands;
- 3 Cooperation and development of public–private partnerships are instrumental to harness the benefits of digital transformation;
- 4 Digital technologies play a transformative role in socio-economic development, and the postal network can therefore contribute to realizing this potential by creating smart, connected communities, thereby enabling people and businesses in such communities to reap the dividends of the digital economy;
- 5 The Forum supports the competent authorities in the governments of member countries as they incorporate their strategies for the growth of the postal sector, with the aim of supporting their national development plans related to digital transformation and the sector;
- 6 The Forum supports member countries and regional bodies in their development of effective and efficient policy and regulatory frameworks to foster postal development as a key building block of an inclusive and sustainable digital society and economy;
- 7 Several financing facilities can be mobilized to support investments oriented towards postal digital transformation, including development banks, blended finance and the universal service fund.

Accordingly, we emphasize the importance of the following:

- 1 Encouraging regulatory bodies, governments, industry stakeholders and international organizations to foster a collaborative approach towards enabling the connectivity of designated operators’ post offices by 2030;
- 2 Advocating for policies that promote affordable and inclusive access to communication and digital services, thereby facilitating regional integration and driving the expansion of communication networks and the digital economy;
- 3 Collaborating, sharing expertise, and undertaking capacity-building and knowledge transfer activities to empower postal staff and enhance their digital skills;
- 4 Encouraging the uptake of innovative solutions in the postal network, such as mobile applications, digital platforms and cloud-based services to harness added value from connectivity;
- 5 Improving the cybersecurity of postal infrastructure, including adoption of the .POST top-level domain;

- 6 Working with stakeholders to foster the use of appropriate tools to finance the universal service to support the contribution of postal organizations to digital infrastructure deployment and the digital economy;
- 7 Strengthening cooperation and partnerships with the main players involved in the movement and transportation of postal parcels across borders, especially Customs and local carriers.

The Arab Postal Leaders Forum calls on the UPU membership and all development-oriented stakeholders to contribute actively towards the successful implementation of this Declaration.

Done at Muscat on 14 February 2024

