

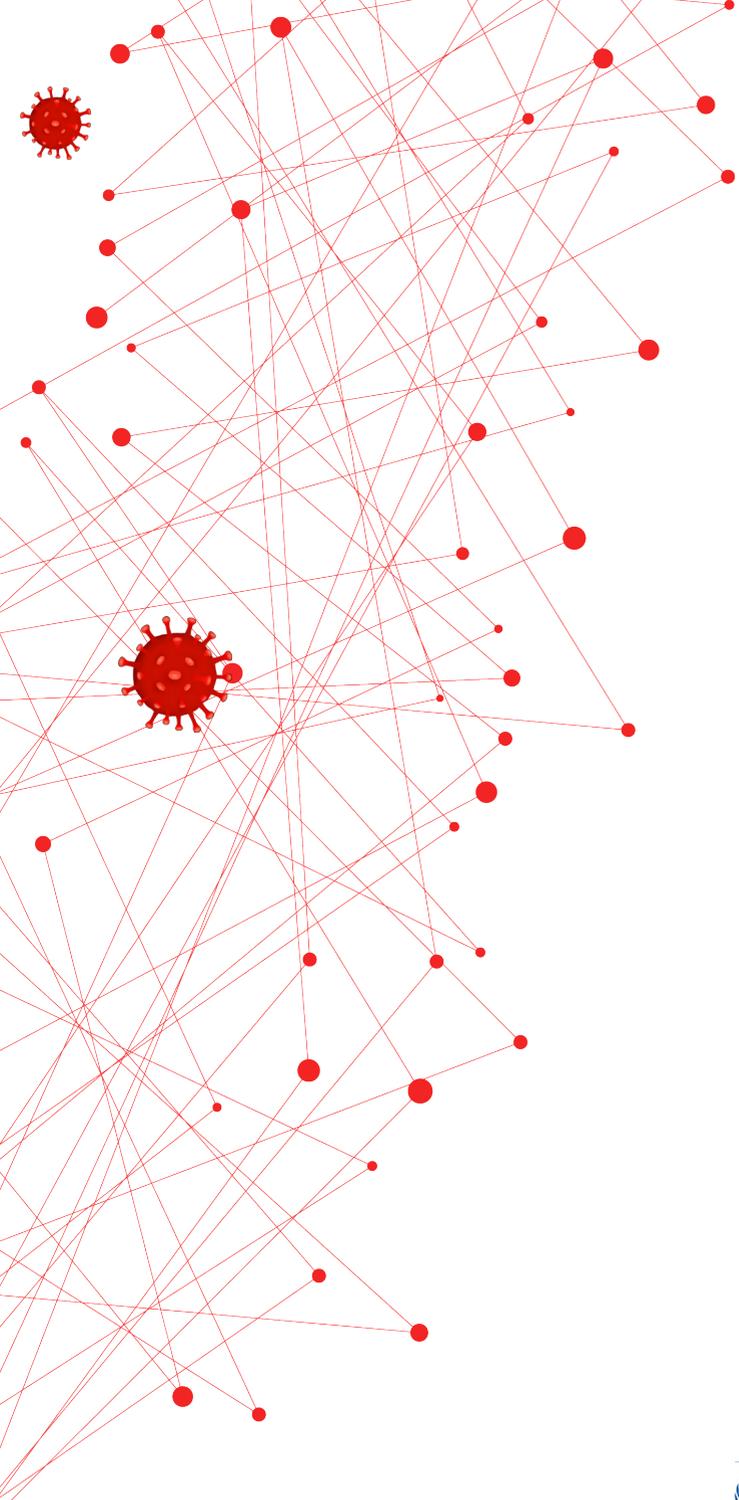


UPU | UNIVERSAL
POSTAL
UNION

UPU MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE 2021

**COVID-19 and the postal
sector – what has and
hasn't changed, and what
needs to change**

Tuesday, 10 August 2021
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (Rep.)



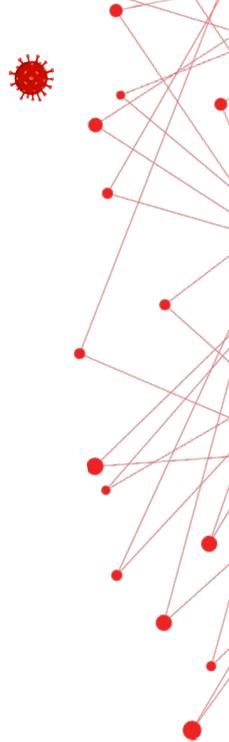
The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic shattered all global economic prospects: in addition to its tragic public health impact, the crisis has had devastating socio-economic consequences. Although governments, firms and citizens have adapted to the new reality, most macroeconomic aggregates have collapsed to unprecedented levels not seen since World War II. And although economic growth and trade are expected to rebound in 2021, there are still considerable risks ahead for the world economy.

While these trends will not necessarily limit the growth of e-commerce, they will change consumer behaviour, at least in the short term. As Internet connectivity continues to expand, the transformational impact of digitalization in all sectors will accelerate. Market players can thus expect to see an increase in services that are complementary to retail e-commerce, from payments to parcels and logistics.

With a global network of nearly 630,000 post offices, 5.2 million staff and physical infrastructure covering 192 countries, the postal sector is expected to play a role in this transformation, and to support the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the sector also faces a number of long-term challenges that it will have to address in order to retain its role as a network to promote communication between inhabitants of the world.

On 10 August 2021, as leaders convene for the Abidjan Congress, the 27th in the UPU's 147-year history, a Ministerial Conference will be held. Structured in four panels, it will be a unique opportunity to take stock of the transformations brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to reflect on what has not changed and what needs to change in order to bring about a sustainable future.

Speakers at the conference will include ministers, chiefs of regulatory authorities, heads of intergovernmental agencies and other high-level representatives of organizations interested in the benefits that the postal sector can bring to societies and economies worldwide.





9.00–9.30

OPENING CEREMONY

9.30–9.45

GROUP PHOTOGRAPH

9.45–11.00

PANEL 1: WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE WORLD SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF COVID-19?

COVID-19 has caused major disruptions in global supply chains, with ramifications for the postal sector. Panellists will discuss the effect that the pandemic has had in their respective countries and which solutions were found to address the challenges they faced.

11.00–12.15

PANEL 2: WHAT HAS NOT CHANGED OVER THE PAST 2 YEARS?

In spite of the disruption that it caused, COVID-19 has not reversed certain macro-trends that had been emerging over the past few decades. Panellists will reflect on which areas have remained unchanged in the face of the pandemic, taking national, regional and global perspectives.



12.15–13.45

LUNCH BREAK

13.45–14.15

STATEMENTS FROM MINISTERS

Ministers in the audience will make statements on various topics outside the panel framework.

14.15–15.30

PANEL 3: WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

Among the areas that did not change in the face of the pandemic, there may be some elements whose transformation is long overdue. Panellists will consider which changes would have been desirable and should be pursued in the postal sector and beyond with a view to building a more prosperous future.



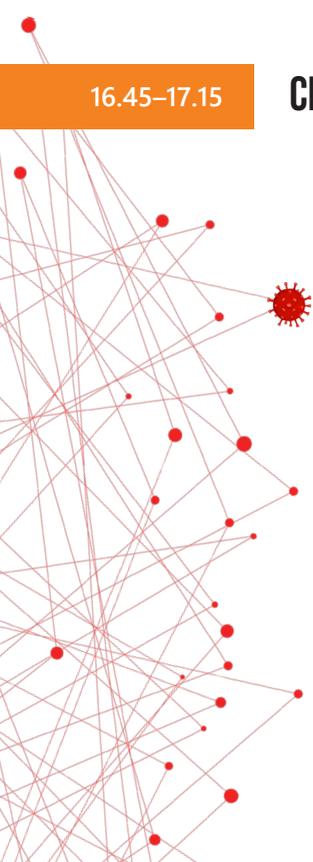
15.30–16.45

PANEL 4: KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR UN AGENCIES AND FOR THE UPU IN PARTICULAR

As the world changes and as transformations are triggered in international supply chains and in the postal sector, UN agencies have a role to play in providing multilateral solutions to complex global challenges. Panellists will take stock of all previous analyses and discussions in order to provide guidance to the UN system and to the UPU in particular on the way forward.

16.45–17.15

CLOSING CEREMONY





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