

**THEME FOR ABIDJAN CONGRESS - MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE:  
COVID- 19 AND THE POSTAL SECTOR- WHAT HAS AND HASN'T  
CHANGED- WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE**

**TOPIC FOR GHANA: What hasn't changed over the past two years?**

**Mr. Chairman,  
Prime Minister of CI  
Prime Minister of Mali  
Colleague Ministers from member countries,  
Director General and Deputy Director General of the UPU,  
Members of the Council of Administration  
Members of the Postal Operations Council,  
Postmaster Generals,  
Heads of government delegations,  
Members of the Congress Planning Committee,  
Delegates,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,  
All protocols observed.**

I am delighted to be part of this meeting and sincerely appreciate the opportunity to contribute on the theme for this Ministerial Conference, specifically, what has not changed in postal operations over the last two years since the world started battling the COVID-19 outbreak.

It is always a pleasure to be in Abidjan and Ghana thanks President Alassane Ouattara and the people of CI for the warm hospitality extended to our delegation since our arrival here. We lost say Akwaaba so for us, this is our home.

President NAA has asked me to extend his warm regards and best wishes for a successful hosting of the UPU in sub saharan Africa for the first time in its history and regrets his inability to be here in person to demonstrate how proud we all are for this opportunity to hold this special congress here on the mother continent. Africa indeed welcomes all delegations.

We commend the planning Committee of this Congress for being able to organize the logistics, technology, and protocols to make the Congress a success despite the impact of the disease.

**Premise:** With the rapid and overwhelming demand for the digitalization of media and channels of communication, there has been remarkable pessimism over the future of traditional media, institutions, and systems of communication, including postal systems. In some societies, the use of postal services continues to dwindle while the generation of people who have never had any postal transaction rises.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic created havoc and turbulence in several aspects of life and digital technology proved the only safe way of communicating and transacting any form of business. The world witnessed the widespread switch to virtual activities and the prominence of digital and social media. Indeed, some business models fizzled out and died completely and now belong to history.

Despite these changes, there are services, processes and business models that haven't changed with particular reference to the Postal establishment whether in Africa or across the globe.

### **1. The social Value of the Post has not changed.**

First of all, I want to emphasise the fact that the social value of Postal services across the globe has remained intact over the past two years in spite of the havoc created by the pandemic. The social value of the Post extends even beyond economic benefits provided by its delivery operations. The Post has continued to connect families, friends, fostered democracy in some jurisdictions and demonstrated that it forms a key part of our emergency and national security infrastructure. Indeed, the Post has continued to be in many things, among them, a key public service, part of a nations critical infrastructure and a good employer.

Ghana Post for example has never considered downsizing since the past two years despite the huge challenges posed by the pandemic. Neither did Ghana Post contemplate salary reduction. In fact, within the past two years the Company has increased staff salary by over 30% and even engaged additional staff in critical areas.

The vision of the President, to formalize our economy through technology, the ‘Digital Ghana Agenda’, sets the tone for reaping the benefits of digitalisation, promoting efficiency, and encouraging innovation. Furthermore, it is incumbent on government to provide the necessary infrastructure and the enabling framework for economic transformation. Digital technology, applications, processes, and services provide the key and we recognised that very early in this administration.

The Covid 19 pandemic demonstrated to us all that digital transformation of our businesses, and indeed of the economy at large, is the way to power business and ensure economic growth and resilience. The most critical lesson the pandemic taught us is effective digitalisation through efficient provision of reliable services and connectivity is the surest way to survival.

Interestingly, many of the interventions rolled out by government since taking office in 2017 have led to massive improvements in the delivery of services and citizens’ experience. We introduced the national Digital property address system which has re energised our postal and courier services and proved its worth in gold during the pandemic. The mobile money interoperability system also led to exponential growth in the digital financial services sector, and has made Ghana the fastest growing market for mobile money on the continent. All these interventions came in very handy and were pivotal in the amazing successes Government chalked in the management of the pandemic.

## **2. Postal delivery services have remained intact**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the key activities of the postal sector revolve largely around delivery of various kinds of items and this has not changed in any way since the pandemic. The Post has traditionally offered delivery solutions and has continued to render this service and even escalated its offerings despite. Or because of the pandemic. The Post has been delivering a full range of new social and economic services including health related services including the distribution of tests, personal protection equipment, medicines, vaccines, medical equipment and supplies needed for the vaccination process. Postal staff over the world, recognized the magnitude of the pandemic but have been very resolute in their delivery duties because they saw it as a national responsibility and a call to duty to serve their citizenry. The postal service proved indispensable and has helped the world recover normalcy faster.

## **3. People can still rely on Post for verifiable data**

Indeed, one area where postal activities has not changed over the years and within the past two years is the fact that people can still rely on the Post for proper verifiable data. Millions of personal, corporate and even legal documents pass through the postal network all year round. Even in the wake of this deadly pandemic, designated postal operators have used the letter post service to deliver critical documents for example land titles, passports, educational certificates, welfare cheques, affidavits, and many others. Furthermore, in several countries, the citizens have relied almost entirely on the Post for whatever government services that they require: passport acquisitions, birth and death registry, driver licensing, enlistment into the security services, university admissions, certificates of completion of courses, etc.

#### **4. Post is still able to interconnect people**

Mr. Chairman, regardless of the lock downs or isolation, the Post's ability to connect people and help customers connect with their business associates, families and friends has not changed. Proof can be found in statistics on the continued traffic of regular services and products during the pandemic. The physical services of the Post across the world witnessed huge increase in volumes: EMS, Parcels, Registered Mail and Ordinary mail. Most people who turned to e-commerce for their supplies had to rely on the Post to get their items delivered to them or sent to their loved ones.

#### **5. Post has not lost its relevance and resilience**

The relevance and the resilience of the postal system has not changed during this pandemic. This was highlighted by the significant role played by the US Postal Service in the last presidential elections in the US. Without postal ballots, millions of people would not have been able to cast their votes and that would have most likely led to a different outcome in the results. In Ghana, the Post was among the very few organizations allowed to perform essential services to the general populace during the lockdown that was occasioned by a high rise in COVID-19 infections. Many people had to turn to the Post for the delivery of foodstuff to their old folks in the remotest parts of the country. Others relied on Ghana Post for the conveyance of certain local food, herbal and medicinal items that were considered useful in COVID – 19 prevention to their family members abroad. This trend has remained stable and continues to date.

#### **6. Postal philatelic Services still very strong**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is again worthy to note that one area of postal operations that has not changed in the wake of the pandemic is philatelic

services. Stamps have always carried a cultural and historical message, and this has not changed in any way since the pandemic. By issuing stamps on COVID – 19, and the heroic efforts of healthcare workers, member countries of the UPU have demonstrated their solidarity with all those fighting against the pandemic.

According to a publication in Union Postale, the Magazine published by the UPU (Spring 2021), more than 40 UPU member countries generated COVID-19 stamps to commemorate the efforts of both front-line workers and citizens in combatting the pandemic. It is interesting to note that stamps which featured front-line workers and infection fighting tools such as masks, received enthusiastic attention from domestic and foreign customers, even those who do not usually collect stamps. They were sold out within a short period of time.

#### **7. Postal Financial Services still serving a lot of people**

Postal Financial services and other electronic services have continued to be very relevant in the lives of many people in the world. We have witnessed situations where postal staff are able to offer financial services to many people living in the remotest locations. The terrain and the surrounding circumstances, including the risk of COVID – 19 infections did not deter gallant postmen from bringing financial inclusiveness to the doorstep of citizens. Ghana Post is currently in partnership with some leading banks in the country for Agency Banking services. Through this collaboration, the services of the partner banks are made available at various Post Offices across the country thereby enhancing financial inclusion.

#### **8. Ghana’s drive to digitize postal operations has not changed**

Mr. Chairman, what has not changed is the drive to digitize postal operations which has been ongoing in the developed countries many years. Since 2018 government started to digitize Ghana Post operations. The First phase of equipping

50 post offices to convert them into one-stop-shops/ e services centres that provide government services in the community is currently ongoing and the results are evident. The Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation is working on the second phase and envisages that about 200 Post Offices will be digitized. Currently Ghana Post is in collaboration with Customs for electronic payment of customs duty; with this approach Ghana Post can deliver items to customers doorstep. This and many more collaborations is ongoing which is making the post office relevant as an essential service provider.

### **9. Strategies to grow mail volume has not changed**

Given the downward trend of letter mail volumes, Ghana Post adopted some strategies to grow Parcel business which is still being followed despite the pandemic. In the first place there has been a re- branding of the Local Parcel business to gain market share. Through this strategy, Ghana Post has gone into the delivery of spare parts to various parts of the country. Ghana Post has leveraged the GhanaPost GPS addressing system for delivery of various services as well as for directional purposes and this is fast gaining grounds. Moreover, bulk parcel business is also taking shape. Ghana Post has been delivering truckloads of critical medical supplies including intravenous infusion from the production site to various hospitals in the country.

### **10.Addressing Programme has not changed**

Indeed what has not changed is the Ministry's effort to improve upon the signage and addressing system in the country. It is one of the main reasons that Ghana launched the National Digital Property Addressing System (NDPAS) in October 2017 as part of government's effort to enhance G2C, B2C, and C2C transactions particularly in e- services and e- commerce. Using its overlay technology, the

GhanaPostGPS gives precise location i.e., coordinates of a location and these coordinates have been converted to addresses so that apart from the physical address that can be written at a location, application developers particularly focusing on location can develop directional location Apps that can aid fast and easy movement of business and services.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion, even though the pandemic has shaken the very foundation of our existence some aspects of our postal operations have witnessed a high level of stability and may serve as a basis for future improvement in our service delivery efforts. It is a truism that the more things change, the more they stay the same. While we innovate to improve efficiency and effectiveness, our core business of connecting people stays the same. The post is here to stay

Thank you for your kind attention.

Hon Ursula Owusu-Ekuful  
Minister for Communications  
Ghana