

UNION POSTALE

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Swiss Post triumphs in UPU's postal development index

Swiss Post has topped the Universal Postal Union's Integrated Index for Postal Development (2IPD) since the first edition of the ranking in 2017.

UNION POSTALE

UNION POSTALE is the Universal Postal Union's flagship magazine, founded in 1875. It is published quarterly in four languages and takes a closer look at UPU activities, featuring international news and developments from the postal sector.

The magazine regularly publishes well researched articles on topical issues facing the industry, as well as interviews with the sector's leading individuals. It is distributed widely to the UPU's 192 member countries, including thousands of decision-makers from governments and Posts, as well as other postal stakeholders. All regard it as an important source of information about the UPU and the postal sector at large.

UNION POSTALE is also published in French, Arabic, and Chinese.

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Winter 2020

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There is a light...

The pandemic is with us and continues to cause suffering and sorrow, but there are vaccines and there is hope for the future. It appears the world can see light on the horizon; however, dim and distant.

As one of the most momentous years in our lives and in the history of the Universal Postal Union closes, it is time for us to take stock, renew ourselves and prepare for a better year ahead. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the entire world – its societies, its businesses, its peoples – to take a gigantic stress test. While the results of that test are still unknown, I remain positive.

At the UPU, like much of the world, we went to our homes to work earlier in the year, and just as we were about to emerge, we were forced to return home as the virus again bit deep into Switzerland and its cantons. We currently stand in a twilight zone. The pandemic is with us and continues to cause suffering and sorrow, but there are vaccines and there is hope for the future. It appears the world can see light on the horizon; however, dim and distant.

For the postal industry, it has been a time of enormous upheavals. Some posts have struggled, while others have forged ahead. The UPU is not an organization for winners and losers in a global postal lottery, we exist to support every post by levelling up the international network. I believe digital transformation is a powerful postal accelerator, but it cannot succeed without knowledge transference and a focus on equity. No post can be left behind; if it is, the entire network is diminished.

Only an organization such as the UPU has the broad mandate and deep experience to prevent this, and to achieve the goal of a global network of highly effective and efficient postal operators dedicated to the needs of consumers and governments. A network galvanized by digitalization and the enormous potential of e-commerce.

I also believe there are opportunities to take the very first steps on the road to greater participation from private businesses in the postal sector. At the UPU, we have been at the crossroads for far too long, it is time to start the journey. The pandemic has been a disaster for the world, but there is now an opportunity to align the very best principles of the search for private profit and the desire for public service. We should seize this moment.

Too often, public service and private profit are viewed as mutually exclusive. In reality, they are both different sides of the same street. We can, if we so choose, harness the very best of these worlds to create a more harmonized global system. The key word, and the bridge between these two worlds, is the phrase “public/private partnerships.”

These relationships founded on good, solid business sense and a dedication to the Universal Service Obligation, can and should be the way forward. To succeed, it will take good, practical sense and a willingness for all sides to negotiate and compromise. As always, the UPU is here to offer its skills and experience in helping to shape the way forward.

Bishar A. Hussein, Director General,
Universal Postal Union

EDITOR'S NOTE

FIRESTORM

During summer 2020, the Western United States faced a series of horrific firestorms that burnt their way across California, Oregon and Washington followed by other fires on the West Coast. These fires killed around 37 people, and ravaged businesses and homes destroying millions of acres of land. Despite the fires, the United States Postal Service (USPS) managed to deliver the mail. "Into the Furnace," the cover article, is USPS's story of how they overcame a fast moving disaster to keep their services running.

David Dadge, Editor-in-chief



UPU's World Leaders Forum highlights postal industry's need to embrace change

Leading figures in the postal industry gathered virtually at the Universal Postal Union's World Leaders Forum held on 12 October—the first day of the UKi Media's annual Parcel and Post Expo 2020.

TEXT: Tara Giroud

The virtual forum followed the decision to postpone the Parcel and Post Expo 2020 in Vienna, Austria due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking at the time of the cancellation, Tony Robinson the CEO of UKi Media and Events, said, "Virtual delivery of the Parcel and Post Expo Conference will enable us to work with UPU to put on content which will be delivered 'live' and subsequently accessible later for on-demand viewing. While no substitute for the real thing, we will be incorporating high visibility options for sponsorship including advertising and commercial breaks to give

"All post operators are focusing on new technologies in electric vehicles in order to reduce the environmental impact,"

visibility to some of the new technologies that would have been on show in Vienna."

The global gathering discussed how to adapt their operations in the face of digitalization, competition, meet consumer needs and confront the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Speaking first in a pre-recorded interview, Bishar A. Hussein, the Director General of the Universal Postal Union, said that postal organizations are leading during the pandemic due to the enormous growth in eCommerce. "I think the postal organizations have always adapted to every situation that they have faced in the past," Hussein said. "The same technologies that have really been a concern for us have helped us actually grow other segments of our business, particularly the packets and parcels."

Mr. Hussein called on postal operators to rise to the challenge. "We need to have innovation, innovation, innovation to be able to meet the expectations of our society," Hussein said.

The UPU's head also outlined the UN specialized agency's priorities for the last quarter of 2020. Priorities such as reforming union member contributions, and a proposal to determine the future model guaranteeing the Union's sustainability. Mr. Hussein said that, after years of discussions, the union was finally beginning to open itself up to the private sector and to promote public/private sector relationships. "That is where the future of the union lies," he said.

During the pandemic, Posts have undergone an evolution evolve rapidly due to declines in letter volumes and exploding package volumes, grounded airlines, and reductions in staff numbers, all while the digital world has transformed consumer expectations.

"With the touch of a button we order a taxi. With the touch of a button we order groceries," says Peter Somers, the CEO of Emirates Post, speaking in a session on posts and the pandemic. "The Customer expects immediate action, delivery, visibility, and transparency," he added.

Evolution at Emirates Post included a new website and application to extend its digital services. The Post has also promoted a souvenir stamp to honor frontline workers with the proceeds going to the Red Crescent.

The CEO of Australia Post, Christine Holgate, outlined how volume trends have accelerated by COVID-19 pandemic. She informed the audience about the massive growth in parcel delivery, and the changes in the way Australia Post is viewed by its biggest customers. Ms. Holgate also underlined the very real need to be aware of the bottom line and the constant need to highlight and to deliver efficiencies.

Community outreach is also advanced by technology, said Khalil Daoud, the Chairman and Managing Director of LibanPost, a

"We need to have innovation, innovation, innovation to be able to meet the expectations of our society"

private postal company in Lebanon, in a session on digital transformation and leading cultural change. The Post used iris scanners while working with the influx of 1.5 million Syrian refugees to verify identities before processing food vouchers in coordination with the World Food Programme.

And, after a deadly explosion rocked Beirut in August, the Post placed mobile post offices in areas affected by the explosions, "to act as a social system in a crisis and to maintain our service," Daoud said.

The pandemic has also highlighted a sustainability question. Charles Brewer, the Chief Operating Officer of Canada Post, in a session summing up the day's discussion, said the spike in total volume reached numbers not expected for another nine years.

This kind of expansion, when overlapping with other delivery networks, is not sustainable environmentally or economically, says Elena Fernández Rodríguez, Director of International Affairs and Sustainability of Correos, the public postal operator in Spain.

"All post operators are focusing on new technologies in electric vehicles in order to reduce the environmental impact," she says. There is also talk, Fernández Rodríguez says, of creating a kind of traffic control system to generate efficiencies in delivery networks.

Still, efficiencies are also reached in data, said Asta Sungailiene, the CEO of Lietuvos pastas in Lithuania. Posts need a culture where decisions are based on data, she said. In Lithuania, data from various sources, including the Post's network of parcel lockers and tablets, allow the Post to plan routes and monitor orders, movement, efficiency and service quality, Sungailiene says.

Underlying all of this is the UPU's role in creating the exchange conditions of the networks and the standards, said Pascal Clivaz, the Deputy Director General of the UPU.

We need to understand that our world will never be the same

"At the end of the day, if you want to make sure we are doing things in a rational and sustainable way," Clivaz notes, "... UPU must make sure we implement the sustainable goals. ... That is one of the rationales behind our strategic approach to opening the UPU. We need to understand that our world will never be the same."

In 2021, the World Leaders Forum will be held in Vienna. **TG**

GREENING THE BLUE REPORT 2020

The UN System's Environmental Footprint
and Efforts to Reduce it



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GREENING THE **BLUE**
REPORT 2020



UPU announces new dates for Universal Postal Congress

I am pleased that the spirit of consensus – the historic cornerstone of UPU’s global efforts – has enabled member countries to reach an agreement on a new Congress date.

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) has rescheduled the 27th Universal Postal Congress to 9-27 August 2021. The event will take place in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire – the original location for the 2020 Congress. The 2020 Congress was cancelled earlier this year due to the global spread of the Covid-19 virus.

The decision to reschedule the event to 2021, rather than hold it virtually, was taken at an exceptional session of the Council of Administration (CA), the body supervising UPU’s work in the four-year period between congresses, held from 26-27 October.

Speaking at the session, UPU Director General, Bishar A Hussein, said, “I am pleased that the spirit of consensus – the historic cornerstone of UPU’s global efforts – has enabled member countries to reach an agreement on a new Congress date.”

According to Mr Hussein, the Covid-19 pandemic has created exceptional circumstances for all international organizations, but the decision to hold Congress in Abidjan in 2021 was “the right one.” The 2021 Congress will allow the Côte d’Ivoire government – the original 2020 host – another opportunity to hold the high-profile event.

Representatives from 41 member countries who sit on the CA attended the meeting at UPU’s headquarters in Bern, Switzerland, either physically or remotely.

During the session, the members also agreed to review progress of the Congress in their forthcoming meetings, including in April 2021. If, on 30 June 2021, the CA concludes that Congress cannot be held in Abidjan due to Covid-19 restrictions then it will be moved to Switzerland.

The UPU’s members had been expecting to adopt the new World Postal Strategy – a roadmap for the new work cycle commencing in 2021 – at Congress in Abidjan in 2020. Hussein concludes, “We are benchmarking on what other organizations in the United Nations system have done to address the pandemic’s effects on their decision-making processes. I am hopeful we will arrive at decisions that will ensure the smooth continuity of the Union’s activities. **HN**”

27th Universal Postal Congress

9-27 August 2021
Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire
For further information,
www.upu.int

If Olena Muravyova had a magic power, it would be to slow time. The communications expert who began working with the UPU in early 2018 says she has so many interests that she would need to slow time to explore them all.

She would learn more languages. She would spend more time traveling and hiking. She would take more photographs and practice belly dancing more often and learn to ride a motorcycle along the Swiss roads.

"That would be paradise," she says.

The native of Kyiv, Ukraine, was 16 when she first traveled abroad, studying in the United States, sparking a lifelong passion for exploring cultures and pushing herself to try new things.

"When you are traveling, somehow you capture the best from this experience, from communication with other people, and the best from their cultures," she says. "Somehow you keep it in your heart. After each of these trips you become a little bit different in a good way."

She received her bachelor's degree in international relations and a double master's in international analytics and translation in Ukraine, and business administration in Austria.

Her introduction to the UPU came as a college student when she wrote a thesis on the organization. Muravyova then worked at the Ukrainian Post "Ukrposhta" for almost nine years in the international affairs department where she discovered how vast the postal industry is. She often traveled for work where she interacted with people from different cultures. This experience prepared her for the UPU.

She continues to expand her language skills. In addition to her native Ukrainian and Russian, she speaks English, German, and Italian, which is her passion, and she is also studying French.

At the UPU, she works for the Communication and Events Programme specializing in digital and social media. She provides content for UPU's online channels and the magazine "Union Postale" writing articles and shooting and editing photos and videos, a self-taught skill.



Name

Olena Muravyova

Position

Communications Expert

Nationality

Ukrainian

Languages

**English, French ,
German, Italian,
Russian and Ukrainian**

She was recently assigned to be project manager and web-editor for the UPU website. She runs the content management system

"When there are new tasks, something new to learn, I'm always happy about that," she says.

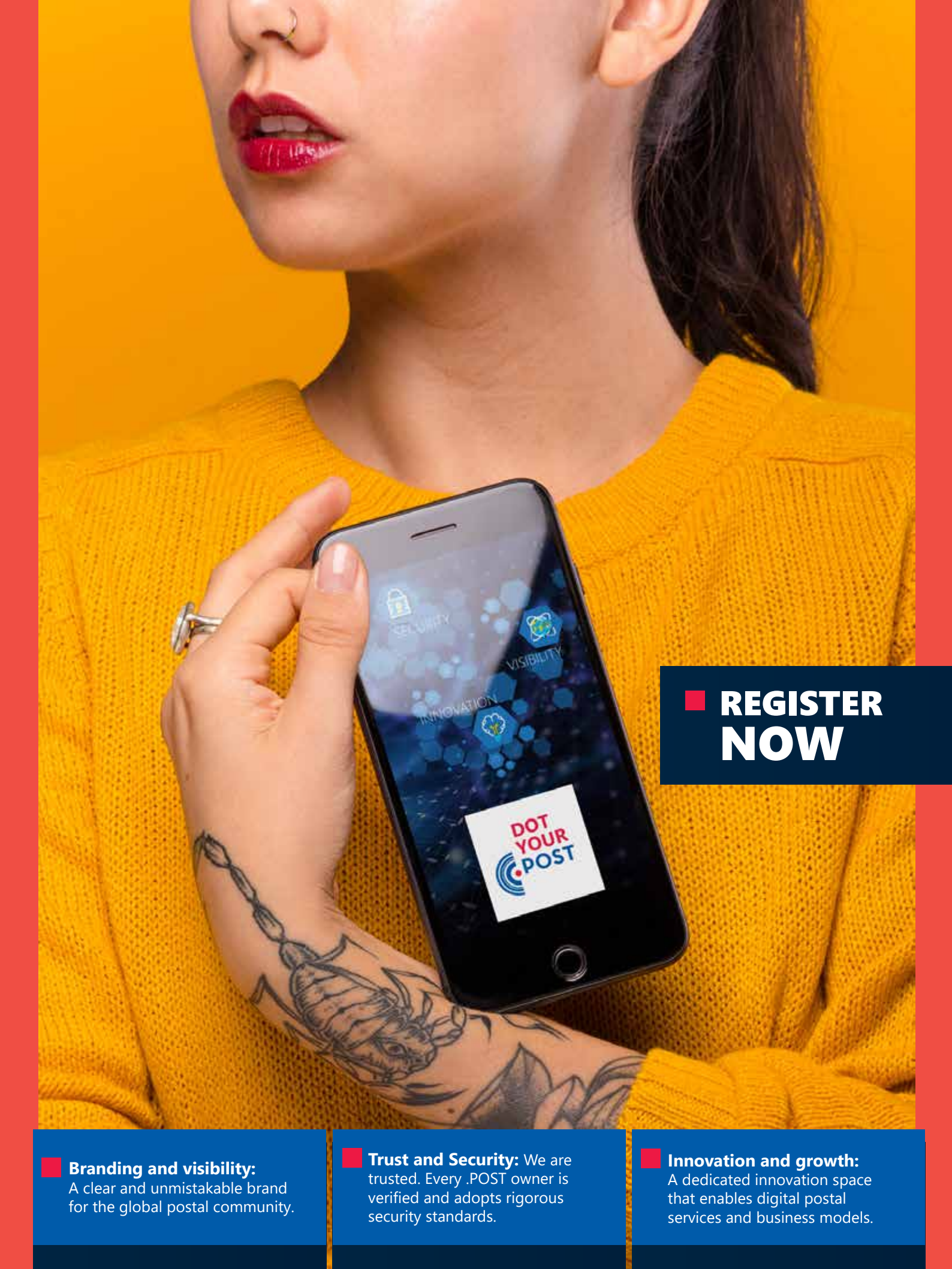
She trains UPU colleagues on how to load content online. With its 250 employees representing 65 nationalities, it is a perfect place for her.

Muravyova says it is an honor to be on a team that supports the UPU knowledge hub; a place for Posts to connect and share knowledge, as well as for other stakeholders, including international organizations and the wider UN family.

"The work is dynamic and creative," she says. "It can be challenging sometimes, too. But I know I have my team's support. We have a lot of fun. This motivates me every day."

Since she cannot slow time, Muravyova plans to continue to stretch herself and to learn new skills.

"I've realized there is nothing I can't learn how to do," she says, "so there is no reason to be afraid to pursue your dreams, to set goals, and to go for them." **TG**



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INTO THE FURNACE

TEXT: Helen Norman
PHOTO: Matt Gush / Shutterstock.com



Thanks to an extensive emergency preparedness and disaster recovery plan, the United States Postal Service has kept workers safe during one of the worst fire seasons the American west has ever seen

Between May and October every year, the United States Postal Service (USPS) is faced with a recurring life-threatening challenge. A challenge that needs to be carefully managed to ensure, first and foremost, its workers' lives are protected and to minimize impact to operations.

In 2020, this challenge was the biggest it has ever been. The 2020 wildfire season was a record-breaking one for the US as a whole. According to the National Interagency Fire Center, as of 27 November, 52,113 wildfires burned 8,889,297 acres in 2020. This is approximately 2.3 million more acres burned than the 10-year average and almost double the average burned in the 2019 season.



Photo: Alex Gakos / Shutterstock.com

“The postal service has a long history of preparing for and responding to natural disasters, such as, wildfires, tornados and hurricanes, and those experiences have helped us to respond to the 2020 wildfires”

The western United States was the hardest hit area. Severe thunderstorms ignited wildfires across California, Oregon and Washington in August and September. Due to strong winds and hot dry terrains, these fires turned into record-breaking megafires, which killed around 40 people. These fires are one of nature’s most destructive forces, capable of moving as fast as 14 miles per hour.

Due to climate change, the risk of wildfires continues to rise. In fact, according to NASA, the fire season in the US is now stretching from early spring through to late autumn, with fires igniting as late as 2 December, 2020, in Orange County.

USPS is obviously not alone in tackling wildfire challenges. Postal operators in Europe, South America, Canada, India, and other parts of the world, also face yearly disruption as a result of fires that ravage regions. But USPS’s approach to tackling these natural disasters is one that can help all postal operators. According to USPS senior director for the office of the postmaster general and chief executive officer in the US, Patrick Mendonca, “it pays to plan!”

“The postal service has a long history of preparing for and responding to natural disasters, such as, wildfires, tornados and hurricanes, and those experiences have helped us to respond to the 2020 wildfires quickly to ensure that the mail and our employees are safe,” he says. “In addition, postal officials always work diligently to try to resume operations as quickly, safely and efficiently as possible. Resuming mail delivery after a disaster impacts a community often brings back a sense of normalcy to our customers.”

Responding to the crisis

During the 2020 wildfires, a number of USPS's post offices were damaged and others were closed due to evacuation orders from the local governmental authorities. "In any instance where a post office is closed either due to an evacuation or damage to the facility, the customer's mail is made available for pick up at another postal location," Mendonca continues. "We provide the information regarding disruption in service for our residential customers via a dedicated page on our website."

Aside from ensuring operational continuity during wildfire season, USPS makes sure its staff are prepared for any eventuality through extensive preparedness and response plans and guides, which have been developed alongside the Universal Postal Union's *Building resilience: A guide to disaster risk management for the postal sector* guide. "These plans and guides include a set of actions for wildfire events and checklists to help workers and management prepare," notes Mendonca.

"They are used by regional and local Emergency Management Teams, which oversee the preparation and response to any hazard. In addition, each facility manager is responsible for managing incidents that affect their facility. These facility managers are supported by the Emergency Management Teams, which receive training on an annual basis to ensure they are well informed," he continues.

"Each facility has a standardized Emergency Plan, which is updated and certified on an annual basis, or more frequently if needed. The plan is comprised of a concept of operations for how emergency preparation and response is organized and orchestrated; an emergency action plan that covers evacuation procedures; and a continuity of operations plan that identifies which operations will be transferred to what alternate site(s) if the affected facility cannot continue operations onsite," adds Mendonca.

Prior to wildfire season, USPS identifies at-risk facilities and ensures that evacuation needs are understood by local management. It also makes sure that water

and N95 respirator masks are placed and logged in designated supply hubs, and recommends that a master key stock and log is created for all facilities.

During the season, the postal operator uses information from national weather providers to assess risk in its locations. "The USPS issues a weather report to all operations managers that highlights the risks of elevated or critical fire weather conditions

"We have an extensive communications package, which includes items for posting on bulletin boards, as well as stand-up talks to be given to employees regarding wildfires and air quality protection"

for that day based on information from the United States National Weather Service. Additionally, the USPS uses Airnow.gov to monitor local air quality conditions during wildfires," explains Mendonca.

According to USPS, communication is key during wildfire season. "We have an extensive communications package, which includes items for posting on bulletin boards, as well as stand-up talks to be given to employees regarding wildfires and air quality protection. The Emergency Management Teams use these materials when there is a threat of a wildfire. We also have a National Employee Emergency Hotline, which workers can use to notify other employees and management of the situation," notes Mendonca.

Supporting others

Alongside USPS's role to support its workers during wildfire season, it also participates in the United States National Response Framework, which is a guide to how the nation responds to all types of disasters and emergencies. As a vital part of the nation's emergency response structure, the postal service ensures that mail operations – a lifeline for impacted communities needing

access to medications and essential items – are restored after an emergency or natural disaster.

Looking at how other postal operators can best prepare for natural disasters Mendonca concludes, "We recommend that all posts look at the UPU's *Building resilience: A guide to disaster risk management for the postal sector* guide. The guide is available on the UPU website here. As recommended in the guide the organizing framework of the '3P's – People, Property and Product', can be applied to any threat to help ensure that in preparedness and response posts are prioritizing the welfare of their employees, that they understand what is critical in terms of their assets and those that they rely upon, and how the overall effect of a disaster has impacted the posts ability to provide postal services.

"Posts should also identify and evaluate risks and implement mitigation/preparedness activities, including adopting the emergency

"Posts should also identify and evaluate risks and implement mitigation/preparedness activities, including adopting the emergency response checklists for natural disasters"

response checklists for natural disasters that are part of the UPU's disaster risk management guide. Posts should be familiar with their pertinent national emergency authority and its resources, and establish relationships when possible to leverage the extensive knowledge the post has of the community it serves," Mendonca concludes.

USPS key message during any disaster, including a wildfire, is to, "Think, prepare and act to protect your personal safety and those around you." **HN**



Photo: USPS

On the front line in the Santa Rosa wildfires

When fast-moving wildfires roared into parts of Santa Rosa, California, in late September 2020, residents and workers were asked to evacuate immediately. This time the region was well prepared, as lessons had been learnt from the devastating firestorm that hit Santa Rosa in 2017, which killed dozens of people and destroyed thousands of homes.

The 2020 fires caused two weeks of mandatory evacuations in the region and it was almost a month before the fires were completely contained. Postmaster Roosevelt Sargent III from the Santa Rosa post office, which acted as a lifeline for many local residents, shares his story of the event.

How were you first made aware of the wildfires?

I was made aware via a Nixle alert about midnight the night the fire was approaching our area. A Nixle alert is an emergency system that sends messages to resident's cell phones from the local fire and police departments. Another resource for fire alerts is the SoCo Emergency preparedness site, which monitors fires, provides live heat maps and gives updates to the communities. After that, I received calls from my supervisor and neighboring post offices about the growing fire and mandatory evacuation. The next morning I had a meeting with the USPS Emergency Preparedness Team to go over the logistics about how we were going to safely proceed with mail operations.

How did the wildfires impact the post office?

The closest the fires got to the Santa Rosa Post Office was about five miles away. One day the sun never came out in many parts of the bay area due to the smoke and ash in the air. It looked like nighttime all day. Also, there was longer than usual lines at our retail counters for customers picking up their mail

that was on hold due to the fires. We also had to get extra equipment sent to our post office to store the mail that was not being delivered because of the fires.

How did the wildfires impact your day-to-day job?

The fires impacted mail operations in many ways. Even though there was a natural disaster happening all around us, everyone in the community still depended on USPS to provide a much-needed service and we are proud to be part of the fabric of the community. It's been that way for 245 years. As the postmaster, I did not get a lot of sleep during these fires. I had letter carriers delivering mail and the wind could change at any moment, moving those fires in a different direction, possibly near our employees, putting them in harm's way. I spent a lot of time monitoring the wildfires and working on a contingency plan if needed. The fires became the most important thing regarding how they could impact mail delivery operations.

How important is the local postal service during extreme events like this?

We are business as usual no matter what goes on around us. We know the customers depend on the postal service; I like to use the term "3M" – Money, Medication, and Merchandise. All the important things that get delivered in the US mail. It's always all hands on deck approach during a crisis or pandemic with the postal service. Even as the ash falls from the sky like snowflakes, the men and women of the USPS will always suite up and hit the streets.

With this in mind, I would like to thank my carriers, clerks, maintenance team, supervisors, surrounding postmasters, and all the employees in our region who helped during the wildfires. Managing people during these events really helps me focus on decisions that will be best for the team. The mail and packages do not stop coming to the facility during these times. Each day, as the postmaster, I walked into the facility and tried to show and promote confidence to everyone in the building. Even if at times the deck might seem stacked against us, as the postmaster, I have to maintain the composure and focus necessary to provide support for the employees and get the mail delivered. I'm very grateful for the employees of the Santa Rosa Post Office. **HN**

USPS OPERATIONAL ACTIONS FOR WILDFIRES, including but not limited to:



IF YOU SEE A WILDFIRE:

CALL 911 if you have not received evacuation orders yet. Don't assume that someone else has already called

INFORM employees via appropriate communication methods

Notify higher level management

Notify the Emergency Preparedness Team

REVIEW the facilities Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP) to ensure items are prepared for immediate evacuation if needed



OPERATIONAL ACTIONS – PROPERTY:

ACTIVATE COOP, if necessary

SECURE the facility and ensure all keys are accounted for

ASSESS the extent of damage and what main systems (water, power, gasoline/fuel oil in aboveground storage tanks) need to be secured

REASSESS as to whether postal operations can/should continue at this location. If evacuated, do not attempt to re-occupy the building until safe to do so

POST A NOTICE on the front door informing customers and employees of the facility closure



IF IMMEDIATE EVACUATION NEEDED:

EVACUATE and **SECURE** the facility

Notify all USPS personnel who are responsible for the delivery and pickup of mail in the vicinity that a wildfire is present

If some personnel cannot be contacted, **NOTIFY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES** of their possible locations

ENSURE an accurate **HEADCOUNT** of all affected employees has been completed and remains ongoing

Review the facilities Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP) to **ENSURE ITEMS ARE PREPARED** for immediate evacuation if needed



OPERATIONAL ACTIONS – PRODUCT:

REMOVE THE MAIL from the PO boxes, HCR/RR routes, accountable mail and account book. Take the mail, account book, etc. to the nearest secure post office

PLACE STAMP STOCK, MONEY ORDERS AND MONEY ORDER MACHINE IN THE SAFE. Work with the Inspection Service, if necessary, in securing Accountable items

DETERMINE whether mail delivery and pickup operations can/should continue in areas affected by the wildfire. If necessary, temporarily suspend delivery and pickup operations in areas that may be potentially affected by the fire and could threaten the health and welfare of USPS personnel

Work with Corporate Communications to **PREPARE MESSAGES** for the public regarding mail delivery

If mail delivery is affected, **COORDINATE** with higher level management to identify a location where customers can pick up their mail

If a large population has been affected, **PREPARE FOR THE PROCESS** of manual PS Form 3575, Change of Address Orders

LOCs and DMS can be used at District/Area/HQ level to **TRACK AND MONITOR DELIVERY LOCATIONS**



OPERATIONAL ACTIONS – PEOPLE:

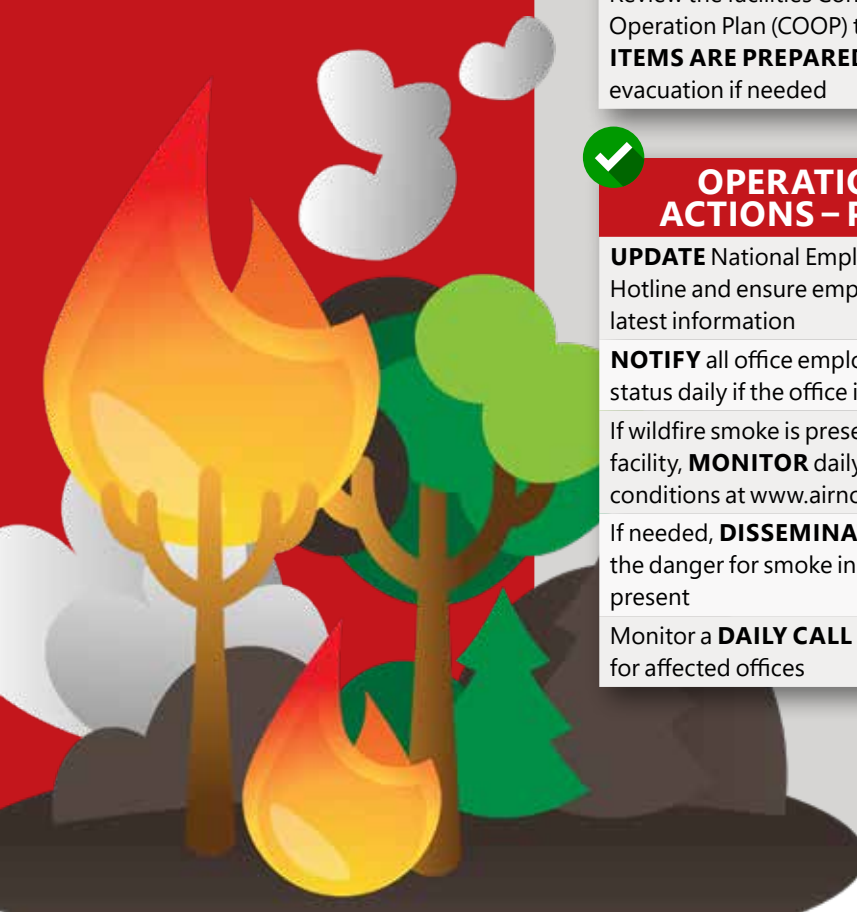
UPDATE National Employee Emergency Hotline and ensure employees receive latest information

NOTIFY all office employees of current status daily if the office is evacuated

If wildfire smoke is present near the facility, **MONITOR** daily local air quality conditions at www.airnow.gov

If needed, **DISSEMINATE MASKS** if the danger for smoke inhalation is present

Monitor a **DAILY CALL IN/CHECK IN** for affected offices



A virtual leap into the new normal



In the Spring of 2020, as COVID-19 crossed borders and transformed the postal industry, organizers of the Parcel and Post Expo and the UPU's World Leaders Forum weighed the feasibility of its event planned for October in Vienna, Austria.

TEXT: Tara Giroud

Conferences were being cancelled around the globe but there was hope that in summer the world would be in a better position, and that the fall gathering of the postal industry would go forward, in person.

By August, however, the picture had changed. UKI Media & Events, which runs the Parcel and Post Expo and supports the UPU's World Leaders Form, asked its participants what they wanted to do. Were they happy to cancel 2020's event and plan for next year? Would they like to hold it virtually?

Overwhelmingly, the answer was to go virtual, says UKI's Matthew Gunn, who is the managing director of the Parcel and Post Expo.

"There was a real thirst, a real need for information about what is happening around the world in the sector, particularly with our industry, with parcel volumes peaking during the pandemic," Gunn says.

Like many event planners, UKI had never hosted a virtual conference let alone pulled one together in a handful of weeks. Gunn says he was cautious. He saw, early in the pandemic, virtual shows that were poorly planned, poorly attended. He wanted to avoid that.

But the organizers couldn't simply put an in-person event online. There were dozens of considerations and unknowns, from speakers and content to time limitations and technology.

"I wondered, if we did a virtual conference, we would still have the same level of participation," says Gisèle Coron, the UPU's events coordinator. "How would we tackle problems of time zones for our stakeholders globally? What was the speakers' readiness to talk behind a camera?"

The coordinators worked quickly to confirm speakers while making sure they maintained

both a gender balance and broad regional representation. Some speakers who were scheduled to present in Vienna could not participate in the virtual event. Content had to be winnowed down to fit into smaller time slots while still addressing the subjects on everyone's mind: COVID responses and the rollout of new technologies like AI and robotics.

There were new technologies to learn for the organizers as well. UKI had to identify an online platform for the event that was both functional and professional.

For instance, participants could watch a video and simultaneously navigate to sponsor pages without losing their place on the platform. They could connect with other delegates in side chats. To avoid issues with internet connections, some sessions were pre-recorded. And, in the days before the event, speakers and organizers were online rehearsing.

“There was a real thirst, a real need for information about what is happening around the world in the sector, particularly with our industry”

The effort paid off, says Derek Osborn, who coordinated and moderated the World Leaders Forum. In normal times, the forum is important for the UPU as a chance for the organization to engage with the wider postal, parcel and logistics sector and share knowledge and experience as an industry leader. In the pandemic, there was vital information to share.

This year’s theme was “Rethinking postal operations during a crisis.” A key moment was the prerecorded interview with UPU Director General, Bishar Hussein. His presence was important because it was the first opportunity to speak publicly since COVID and to be questioned about key topics of interest, Osborn says.

Hussein told participants that Posts have to be driven by the demands of customers and clients.

“Particularly in this pandemic, the health and other protocols must be observed,” Hussein says. “Therefore, we need to have innovation, innovation, innovation to be able to meet the expectations of our society.”

Additionally, delegates heard from CEOs of several Posts. The CEO of Emirates Post, Peter Somers, and the CEO of Australia Post, Christine Holgate, discussed how they reacted to COVID. While Khalil Daoud, the Chairman and Managing Director of LibanPost, a private postal company in Lebanon, and Asta Sungailiene, the CEO of Lietuvos pastas in Lithuania talked about digital transformation during the pandemic.

Osborn then moderated panel discussions with the CEOs, which presented new challenges as a moderator. He had to strictly manage questions and time. Live panel discussions are often free-flowing, with speakers sometimes talking together at the same time. But during video conferences, he says, if speakers talk together, the sound can

be cut off. Osborn also had to stick to a strict time limit, which left little room for follow-up questions.

He says one thing he missed about in-person events was not having audience participation. It was difficult to achieve with the virtual platform, he says.

“What we did manage in the end was a fantastic event,” Osborn says. “Organizing it was a little bit parallel to the way the postal sector has reacted to COVID altogether: having to adapt and to be flexible to changing circumstances.”

For other virtual events, Coron says she would like to explore a way to create more intimate interaction among participants. As an example, rather than leaving it up to delegates to initiate side chats, organizers could schedule virtual workshops for delegates to discuss case studies.

“In normal times, the forum is important for the UPU as a chance for the organization to engage with the wider postal, parcel and logistics sector and share knowledge and experience as an industry leader”

The virtual event offered benefits that a live event cannot, however: expanded participation. Gunn says Canada Post, for example, normally sends just a couple of people to the live event, but for the virtual expo, 20 delegates from Canada Post took part. During a normal year, places such as the Pacific Islands or some parts of Africa cannot always send a delegation to Europe.

Some 1,600 hundred people from more than 100 countries joined in the virtual event over the four days, including 533 who signed in for the World Leaders Forum. And those numbers continue to grow. Gunn says every day since, people have logged into the event platform to watch videos and explore material.

Coron says it was important to carry on with a virtual event, otherwise there would be missed opportunities to raise awareness about what the UPU is doing for its stakeholders in the postal sector.

Despite the virtual conference’s success, however, Osborn says they will not replace in-person events. Participants miss the networking.

There’s a “sort of synchronicity that sometimes happens when you meet somebody new, introduce yourself and you suddenly find you’ve got something in common and you can make a very serious contact,” Osborn says.

Plans for Vienna 2021 are already underway with the World Leaders Forum scheduled for October 11 and the following three days for the Parcel and Post Expo.

“A year late, but we will be back,” Gunn says. Organizers are talking about combining the benefits of in-person events with some online recorded sessions to maintain that expanded access.

The virtual event’s success has led organizers to plan another one for the spring, which Gunn says will be announced soon.

“An awful lot is going to happen and change, particularly in our industry, between now and [the next expo] as we hopefully ease out of the COVID pandemic,” Gunn says. A spring forum will allow delegates to keep up in this fast-changing environment. “It’ll be interesting to see what happens when the world starts to get back to normal, what effect that has on parcel volume, on ecommerce, on the parcel industry.” **TG**

“Organizing it was a little bit parallel to the way the postal sector has reacted to COVID altogether: having to adapt and to be flexible to changing circumstances.”

Diversification fundamental to global postal sector's growth

According to official Universal Postal Union (UPU) statistics from the Directorate of the Cabinet (DIRCAB), the global postal sector grew by 11 per cent over a five year period between 2014 and 2018. This growth trend is expected to continue in 2019 and 2020, mainly due to growth in parcel volumes and diversification.

TEXT: Helen Norman

"There is a perception that the postal sector is old fashioned and dying, and that major e-commerce companies such as Amazon, eBay and Alibaba, are taking over the market," says Paul Donohoe, manager of the Digital Economy and Trade program at the UPU. "But that is just not true. If we look at the total value of the postal sector between 2011 and 2018, it has grown year-on-year."

Donohoe notes that this growth is mainly due to the posts' ability to diversify in challenging market conditions. "The postal sector is still in transition," he says. "It's not just about letters and parcels delivery anymore. It is a multi-faceted sector and there are a lot of opportunities for growth and further diversification. In the developing world, for example, posts are offering a growing number of financial and e-government services. LibanPost is a great example of a post generating a significant proportion of revenue out of e-government services."

Letters and parcels

While overall revenues in the postal sector have grown, letter mail volumes have continued to decline. "2018 and 2019 had marked contractions in both domestic and international letter-post flows," notes Mauro Boffa, economist, research and strategy programme, Executive Office (DIRCAB), UPU. "The volume of domestic letter-post items shrank by approximately 4.9 per cent in 2018. A rate of decline that exceeds the 10-year trend of -2.8 per cent per year. In 2019, we expect to see additional losses of 10 billion items every year. The fate of international letter-post items is similar. In 2018 and 2019, they continued to decline in line with their 10-year trend of -3 per cent per year."

In contrast, volumes of parcel-post continue to rise. From 2008 to 2018 the total revenues of postal operators' parcels and logistics business jumped from 16.3 per cent to 27.2 per cent. In 2018, domestic parcel-post

growth once again exceeded the 10-year trend (i.e. 8.3 per cent vs. 7.5 per cent). "Further expansion is likely in the future, with the number of items per year in this segment predicted to exceed 16 billion in 2020, despite the impact of Covid-19," Boffa adds.

According to Boffa, it remains to be seen

"It's not just about letters and parcels delivery anymore. It is a multi-faceted sector and there are a lot of opportunities for growth and further diversification."

whether the increase in demand for parcels and logistics will compensate for letter volume decline and for the general slowdown of the economy as a result of Covid-19. "In 2021, it is likely that posts will be forced to operate within a context of low investment and increased operating costs," he says.

Diversify to survive

Although overall industry operating revenue is growing, there are some regions that have experienced a decline, most notably in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa. According to Boffa, it is important to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to developing a resilient business model. "Different countries face different needs from citizens and businesses," he says. "Global estimates do not reveal all the disparities in the business models adopted in the different regions of the world."

Postal operators in the industrialized countries, Latin America and the Caribbean, and in Asia-Pacific have considerably increased their reliance on parcels and logistics, for example. In Asia-Pacific, the share of letter-post in total revenues of designated postal operators has dropped below the 30% mark, making parcels and logistics the core business (36.6 per cent). Meanwhile, in the Arab region posts heavily rely on financial services as a core income.

The UPU continues to work closely with the posts in the developing countries to help them grow their businesses. "We have



“Global estimates do not reveal all the disparities in the business models adopted in the different regions of the world.”

recently launched a regional project in Africa, Asia and Latin America, which focuses on giving posts in developing countries the tools needed for digital transformation and product diversification,” says Donohoe. “Many posts in these regions haven’t diversified as much as the industrialized countries have.”

According to Donohoe it is the strength of diversification that has enhanced the value of the post and strengthened economic performance. “The Digital Transformation and Diversification of Postal Services program aims to bring tools to these posts and the governments to help them unlock this value,” he continues. “It helps support posts to develop e-government and e-commerce services, away from the more traditional letters and parcels products.”

Future growth

Donohoe also believes there are still plenty of other opportunities for postal growth. “Our Operational Readiness for E-commerce project, for example, shows posts how they can support SMEs to help them go online,” he says. “Many posts are now developing national platforms for SMEs to sell on. The posts are providing the business onboarding services and then the logistics and delivery solutions. These are helping countries and their governments build their local economy.”

The UPU has provided strategic support to posts in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Zimbabwe, among others, to help them develop SME platforms. “In Costa Rica, the post launched a national e-commerce marketplace during the pandemic to help SMEs sell online,” adds Donohoe. “They are now also looking at providing payment services as an extension to this service.”

Although the years ahead are uncertain for the postal sector, and for the global economy as a whole, Boffa believes that posts are well-positioned to support countries as they emerge from the pandemic. “Covid-19 will undoubtedly have made a dent in postal operators’ revenue by the end of 2020,” he says. “However, the postal sector remains one of the largest and most seamlessly connected networks in the world. Its ‘light

logistics’ nature makes it particularly well suited to fulfil the needs of economies whose pace of digitization will most likely accelerate as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.

“As policymakers start preparing their economies for the new world that will emerge from this crisis, giving a central place to the postal sector should be high on their socio-economic agenda.”

“As policymakers start preparing their economies for the new world that will emerge from this crisis, giving a central place to the postal sector should be high on their socio-economic agenda. Postal operators should continue adapting their business model to the long-term transformations that were in place before the crisis, while still focusing, in the short-run, on the new needs of citizens and businesses generated by the pandemic,” Boffa concludes. **HN**

On World Post Day UPU praises postal sector

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) celebrated World Post Day with a series of high-profile events dedicated to the bravery of postal workers, and the winners of the UPU's International Letter-Writing Competition, and the Integrated Index for Postal Development (IIPD).

TEXT: David Dadge



World Post Day, held on 9 October, was agreed during the 1969 Universal Postal Congress in Tokyo. The day marks the anniversary of the Universal Postal Union's creation in 1874 and celebrates posts' role in the everyday lives of people and its contribution to social and economic development.

Commemorating the courage of postal workers

UPU's celebrations began with the unveiling of a special plaque dedicated to the postal workers who lost their lives during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Today is the day – World Post Day – when we should commemorate their bravery and courageousness, and in doing so, recognize them for what they are: heroes. I offer my sincere condolences to their families, friends and loved ones. I am proud on behalf of the Universal Postal Union to dedicate a plaque to postal workers," said Bishar A. Hussein, Director General of the Universal Postal Union in his remarks at the ceremony.

"I offer my sincere condolences to their families, friends and loved ones. I am proud on behalf of the Universal Postal Union to dedicate a plaque to postal workers"

The plaque will hang in the Heinrich Von Stephan Hall at the UPU's headquarters and reads: "In memory of all those postal workers who lost their lives while performing essential services in their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will never forget your bravery and courageousness."



UPU's International Letter Writing Competition

Later, at a virtual event held on UPU television in the Heinrich Von Stephan Hall, Mr. Hussein, and Pascal Clivaz, the UPU's Deputy Director General, announced the winner of the International Letter-Writing Competition.

The ILWC encourages children aged 9-15 to write a letter on an agreed theme. Each year, the competition seeks to improve children's literacy and encourage their creativity. This year's theme was "write a message to an adult about the world we live in."

Volha Valchkevich, aged 11 from Belarus, won the gold medal for a letter reflecting on the lessons learnt from her late grandfather. Volha, who lives in the city of Grodno, explained in her letter how it has been six months since her grandfather died, and how, when sad and confused about life, she returns to his words of wisdom.

In the letter, Volha shares her grandfather's advice, "Granddaughter, do you remember that a medal usually has two sides? Do you remember that the side of the medal that you are wiping shines more?" She continues, "My dear grandfather, you have taught me to believe in miracles, and even now, after you have gone, I am learning from you to love this world!"

The young Belarusian's letter was one of more than 1.2 million entries in the ILWC competition this year. "Today I am proud to have represented our country, and I succeeded," Volha said.

"Granddaughter, do you remember that a medal usually has two sides? Do you remember that the side of the medal that you are wiping shines more?"

Judges awarded silver and bronze medals to Jana Popovska, aged 12 from North Macedonia, and to Phan Hoang Phuong Nhi, aged 13 from Vietnam, respectively. Special mentions also went to letters from Bangladesh, Central Africa, the Czech Republic, Montenegro and Slovakia.

Speaking about the winners, Mr. Hussein said, "Each one of the letters contains a bright spark of innovation and creativity, which I believe exists in every child and the way he or she sees the world," Hussein adds. "A spark inviting us to listen closely and to pay attention."

In 2021 the UPU celebrates 50 years of the ILWC and to mark the occasion it hopes to hold a special celebration to promote the competition and more importantly, to promote literacy among the world's children. Hussein adds, "It would be wonderful if [next year] every one of our 192 member countries took part."

The Integrated Index for Postal Development—ZIPD

Switzerland maintained its position at the top of the Universal Postal Union's annual ranking of 170 countries in its Postal Development Report 2020.

The Swiss postal operator – Swiss Post – scored a maximum 100 points with the report outlining its balanced and superior performance in every dimension of postal development. According to the report, in 2019, Swiss Post made further progress in reliability and relevance, while retaining its extraordinary performance in reach and resilience.

“My sincere congratulations to Swiss Post. They are a bright beacon for the rest of the international postal sector and an outlier for innovation and creativity.”

Speaking about Swiss Post's success, the Director General of the Universal Postal Union, Bishar A. Hussein, said, “My sincere congratulations to Swiss Post. They are a bright beacon for the rest of the international postal sector and an outlier for innovation and creativity.”



Austria and Austria Post have moved up four positions to take the second spot with a total score of 95.3. This was achieved, the report says, through significant improvements in reach, relevance and resilience, in addition to high performance in the area of reliability.

Maintaining its third place, Germany and Deutsche Post DHL Group scored 94.2 points. The report states that Germany has managed to consolidate its position, and offers a balanced performance and a slight improvement in reliability.

The Integrated Index for Postal Development draws on a wide range of postal “big” data – nearly 23 billion records since 2013 – to create a detailed picture of postal development globally. Each country is assessed on four key pillars: Reliability, Reach, Relevance and Resilience. Inputs are integrated into an algorithm delivering a general score between 0-100 for each country.

World Post Day ends on multilateral note

At the closing ceremony, Mr. Pascal Clivaz's remarks focused on the UPU's relationship with the wider UN system. He stressed the UN's important role within the UN family and pledged that the UPU would continue to uphold the UN's fundamental values.

“As we celebrate our birthday today, I want to say how proud I am that we are part of the UN family and how – in the best spirit of the United Nations – we will continue to add our voices to the UN for the cause of multilateral solutions to all global problems. Let me end by wishing you all, a very happy World Post Day.” **DD**

“We will continue to add our voices to the UN for the cause of multilateral solutions to all global problems”

Hello, my dear grandfather Mikhail!

Six months has already passed since your death, but I am still missing you. I need your wise eyes, strong and safe hands, and your affectionate embrace. I miss your long stories about people, life, truth...

You have taught me to believe in miracles, my beloved grandfather! And now I am writing a letter to you hoping that you will magically read it...

You know, I'm very upset today...

Ah, if you were alive, grandfather, I would come to you, sit knee by knee and tell you everything. And perhaps you would stroke me on the head and whisper: "Olenka, you are living in a happy time, living in love and peace, in abundance and joy. Cheer up! Things will get better. Look at the world: it is wonderful!"

~

"But what do you know, grandfather, about the present, about today's world? - I would stubbornly object and continue: - I met a homeless kitten on the way to school today. In fact, someone has betrayed it. It is hungry and unlucky. And there are plenty of other abandoned animals. People are cruel and unfair.

During the break I accidentally stepped on a classmate's foot and he pushes me and calls me names. I am sad and hurt. I started to cry. How can it be possible? I have stepped on his foot by accident!

Then, when I am coming back from music school, I am scolded by a woman on the bus for not giving away my seat. But that has happened because I have been falling asleep due to fatigue and I just have not noticed her.

And in the evening, I quarrel with my friends because I do not want to sit outside on the bench and play on the phone like them but want to play snowballs. "You are like out of this world", - my friends tell me. I walk by myself outside enjoying the long-awaited snow and having a lot of thoughts in my mind... Yes, they are right... I am out of this world... But what is it, "this world"?

It's complicated! People are not able to listen and hear each other. Everybody cares only about himself and his interests. The world is ruled by greed and thirst for profit. People are enslaved by gadgets. They no longer appreciate painting, music, books... The nature is being indefinitely destroyed. The fight of people against terrible diseases has almost lost. It is enough to mention the number of COVID-19 victims."

~

I would start to cry then. And at that very moment you would wisely notice, as it is been before: "Granddaughter, do you remember that a medal usually has two sides? Do you remember that the side of the medal that you are wiping shines more?" And then you would tricky wink and snap your fingers, "Turn it over!"

I would dry my tears and gather my thoughts and "having turned the medal over" continue the monologue:

"Is the Peace complicated?"

Do people not understand or love each other? Are people not able to listen and hear each other?

But, for example, I have not tried to explain. What if I told that boy who pushes me and calls me names that I have stepped on his foot by accident, if I apologize to him. Maybe our conflict would end in different way?

And what about the woman in the bus? What if I told that I have not noticed her because I have been falling asleep due to fatigue, would she not understand me? Since she is someone's mother, wife, daughter... Probably, she has just been very tired. It never even occurs to me.

And what about the poor kitten? Brutal people have left him homeless without food? But what about me? I will find him tomorrow and will take him home. It will be a good start...

And what about my friends with gadgets? I am angry at them... But after all, the scientific and technical progress, moving forward with seven league steps, helps people easily get the right information, provides the opportunity to communicate with people from different parts of the world, helps to make our life easier, make the world better!

Medicine is developing! I agree that sometimes it is quite difficult to find the vaccine to cure new diseases, emerging and attacking mankind. But there are many intelligent, brave people, fighting for our health! After all, I see how selflessly and hard my parents are working as doctors. How much they are happy for each recovering person, how they are worried when they are not able to help someone.

What about the environment? I agree that from time to time man unwisely uses wealth and gifts of nature. However, there are plenty of environmental communities, volunteers and just involved people, promoting by actions, as well as by words a protective approach to the nature. For instance, every spring my friends and I plant a tree in our neighborhood...

Guys are good now...

And most of them appreciate art. Many guys go to music schools, like I do; many go to art schools, read, sing, dance... Not all, but many of them!..

Ah, grandfather! So, our world isn't so bad! It's complicated, but how wonderful it is in its diversity! And if you look at the world with the eyes of a man in love, it's easy to see how wonderful it is!!!"

~

You would give a cunning smile, grandfather, and might say: "Miracles are always surrounding us! The main thing is to be able to feel and see them!"

And then I would become silent being excited...

My dear grandfather, you have taught me to believe in miracles, and even now, after you have gone, I am learning from you to love this world! Is it not a miracle?

With love,

Your granddaughter Olya.

February 28, 2020



VOLHA VALCHKEVICH

*Winner of the International
Letter-Writing Competition*

Swiss Post triumphs in UPU's postal development index



Swiss Post has topped the Universal Postal Union's Integrated Index for Postal Development (2IPD) since the first edition of the ranking in 2017. This year the post held the top spot thanks to its superior performance in all dimensions of postal development, including in the four key pillars of the index – reliability, reach, relevance and resilience.

TEXT: Helen Norman

"To top the index this year is extraordinary," says Roberto Cirillo, CEO of Swiss Post. "We've had a very turbulent year, but the crisis has highlighted that it is Swiss Post's employees who set the company apart and it's down to them that we have once again topped the ranking."

In the 2020 edition of the 2IPD, Swiss Post made further progress in reliability and relevance, while retaining its performance in reach and resilience. To improve in the area of reliability, the post invested CHF 60 million in expanding its major parcel centres in

Dailens, Härkingen, and Frauenfeld. These investments have helped the post handle growing parcel volumes, which increased by 20 per cent between January and September 2020 when compared to 2019 levels.

In addition, as part of its parcel strategy, the post invested a total of CHF 190 million in new regional sorting centres, including in Ostermundigen, Cadenazzo, Vétroz and Untervaz. "Each regional centre can process 40,000 parcels a day," says Cirillo. "This gives us an additional capacity of 160,000 parcels a day."

Despite cross border delivery challenges because of the pandemic, Swiss Post has also invested in improving its international reach. "We have recently put a focus on growing our international e-commerce business," says Cirillo. "We have developed new products that ease the customs clearance process into Switzerland. At the point of purchase, e-shoppers now know what they have to pay

including customs clearance and taxes. We have also invested in a new mixed-mail sorting solution at our International Exchange Office in Mülligen. This will allow us to handle increasing volumes in a highly efficient way."

Another key strength area for Swiss Post is resilience, which has been particularly important throughout 2020. "The financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic on Swiss Post has been considerable," Cirillo says. "However, the crisis has also highlighted how important Swiss Post is in providing services for Switzerland and its people. We are building on this and using our post offices and workers to offer more than just the traditional postal services."

As an example, Swiss Post has teamed up with local bakeries to offer a subscription service, where customers can order fresh bread or other specialities from the local bakery. "The bread is produced by the regional bakery, delivered to the respective delivery points early in the morning and placed in the mailbox by postal workers on their regular delivery routes," Cirillo adds.

Investments like this have helped Swiss Post go from strength to strength, but Cirillo is keen to note that a company-wide teamwork approach is what sets the post apart. "It would be wrong to reduce the excellent 2IPD result to a simple investment," he notes. "We believe that our success is thanks to our daily work, a shared willingness of everyone to constantly question ourselves, and our aim to improve day after day for our customers." **HN**



LATIN AMERICA

Argentina

CORREO ARGENTINO launched a virtual e-commerce store *Correo Compra* on 16 October 2020. This online platform offers more than 1,700 products from about 187 brands in such sectors as food, cleaning, personal care, and technology. So far, more than 11,000 sales have been successfully made. *Correo Argentino* has also signed an agreement with *Radio y Televisión Argentina* to advertise its postal products, logistics, and communication services for the community.

Ecuador

CORREOS DEL ECUADOR has launched the initiative “*Misión Navidad sin Mendicidad*” (Christmas Mission Without Begging), which is part of the National strategy for the prevention, care, and protection of people facing poverty, child labour, street dwelling, and other human rights issues. The idea behind the initiative is to prevent child labour and begging in the long-term and especially around Christmas time by delivering food, toiletry, medicine, and entertainment kits to children, adolescents, elderly, homeless, and displaced people, in Ecuador.

Mexico

CORREOS DE MÉXICO commemorated the postal workers who lost their lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic on a special day celebrating postal workers. Secretary of Communications and Transportation of Mexico Jorge Arganis Díaz Leal praised the dedication of the postal employees in fulfilling their duties for the community. At the ceremony, the cancellation of the special postage stamps “*Homenaje a empleados postales COVID-19*” (Tribute to postal employees COVID-19) took place.

Costa Rica

CORREOS DE COSTA RICA has been recognized by the UPU for its cooperation with government institutions and private companies in their joint efforts to combat COVID-19. Together with the Costa Rican Social Security Fund, the postal operator has been delivering medicine to patients at high risk for free, selling the antiseptic alcoholic solution *FANAL* online, and providing a home collection service for domestic mail. Other initiatives include personal deliveries of university certificates and the facilitation of services for small and medium-sized enterprises to sustain their businesses during the crisis.

ASIA

Viet Nam

VIETNAM POST (VNPOST) has signed the Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement and the Service Provision Contract with *VietinBank*, which regulates collection, payment, and money transfer services in the country. This way, *VNPost* will benefit from the IT resources of *VietinBank*, which, in turn, will use the postal network and postal labour forces for its future business development. On 1 November 2020, the postal operator launched a pilot payment service by scanning *VNPAY* – QR code. This simple and secure solution is based on the existing mobile banking application, and will diversify payment services, especially non-cash payments.

Malaysia

POS MALAYSIA Berhad’s transformation is progressing as the Post recorded 0.1 million MYR (approx. 24,725 USD) profit from its operations in the third quarter of 2020. This result was reached due to the installation of new semi-automated processing systems in five distribution centres and a total work capacity of 31 semi-automated distribution centres. Now, the postal operator will be able to handle more parcels and to ensure timely deliveries. The COVID-19 pandemic has enabled *Pos Malaysia* to strengthen its position on the market and to create opportunities for local e-commerce players.

Indonesia

PT POS INDONESIA (PERSERO), in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs, has launched a Basic Food Assistance Programme to help almost 500,000 beneficiary families in Papua and West Papua provinces, allocating 200,000 IDR (approx. 14.24 USD) per family. The first food delivery took place in *Tanahmerah*, followed by other towns in the region. The programme lies in the framework of the President’s instructions to take extraordinary steps to accelerate the provision of necessities for households in need amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Philippines

THE PHILIPPINE POSTAL CORPORATION (PHLPOST) has entered into a partnership with the Local Government Units (LGU) to set up Postal Stations in social places such as public markets. In return, the postal operator has provided marketing equipment and training for LGU personnel for them to work at these postal facilities. As a result, it has become more convenient for customers to use local government services in the country.

Japan

The red DeliRo robot developed by ZMP Inc. is a self-driving delivery robot that **JAPAN POST Co., Ltd.** aims to use in the year 2021. It is capable of carrying packages weighing up to 30 kilograms at a speed of 6 kilometers per hour. The unveiling of this type of postal innovation highlights the need for minimizing human contact amid the coronavirus pandemic. Using built-in cameras and sensors, the robot, which is the size of a wheelchair, operated on a sidewalk in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward, and managed to dodge obstacles. One of the tests involves the robot travelling 700 meters from a convenience store in a hospital to a local post office in about 25 minutes.

AFRICA

Ghana

GHANA POST has increased its revenue by 43 per cent in the last three years. From an analogue network of 360 offices with only 30 offices digitized in February 2017, Ghana Post now boasts 320 digitized offices nationwide. The postal operator has started using the state of the art Enterprise Postal System, new services, a payment application known as Ghpostpay and a modern call centre. In October 2020, Ghana Post was recognized as the best placed African postal operator in UPU's Integrated Index for Postal Development 2020 (also known as 2IPD).

Nigeria

NIPOST (the Nigerian Postal Service) has inaugurated surveillance teams to improve mail security and curb mail fraud in major post offices. The postal operator will oversee the processing, bagging and dispatching of both local and international mail items. The Minister of Communications and Digital Economy Isa Pantami emphasized the Rule Making Process as the first step in stakeholders' engagement, which is lacking in most government agencies.

EUROPE

Poland

By 2022 **POCZTA POLSKA** (Polish Post) plans to launch 2,000 parcel machines with the number of collection points in the "click and collect" network to reach over 20,000. Polish Post, as the country's biggest network of pickup points, will place the new machines near existing postal branches, markets, and shopping centres, close to state institutions and local government offices, as well as in parish premises and at housing cooperatives, among other locations. According to Tomasz Zdzikot, the CEO and Chairman of the Board of Polish Post, the e-commerce market might reach as much as 100-120 billion PLN (approx. 27-32 billion USD) annually in the coming years.

The Netherlands

POSTNL expects its full-year 2020 normalized earnings, before interest and taxes (EBIT), to be at least 175 million EUR (approx. 213 million USD). Due to the commitment and hard work of its employees, the postal operator will discuss with parcel delivery partners, and the sheltered workplace companies, how appreciation can be shown to its employees. An extra payment of 250 EUR (approx. 304 USD) net to its full-time staff is planned in the future.

All items by Tanja Neufeld

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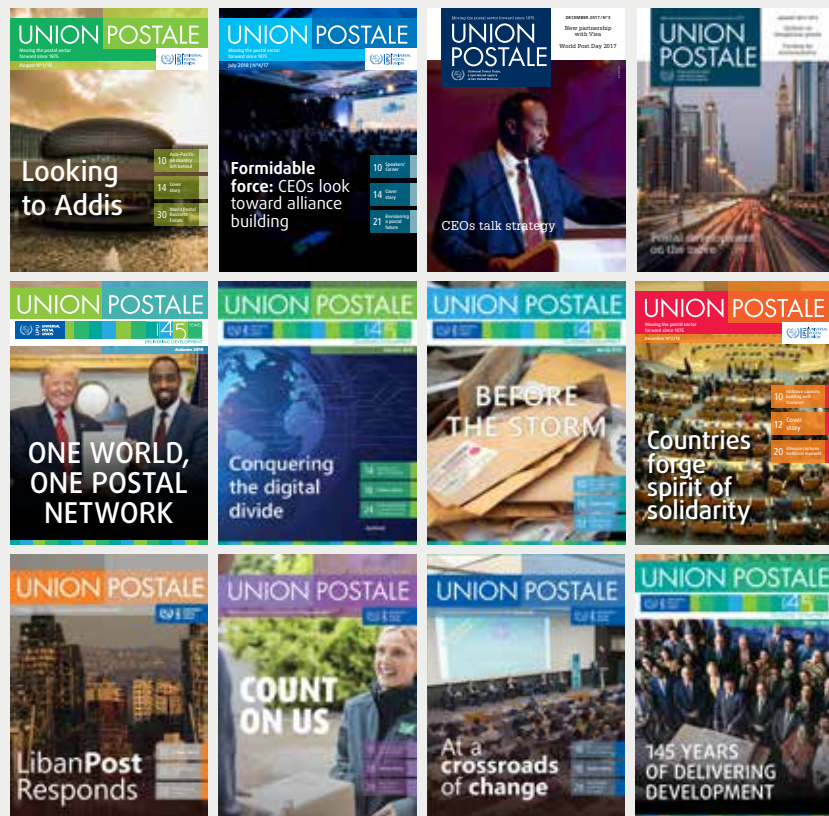
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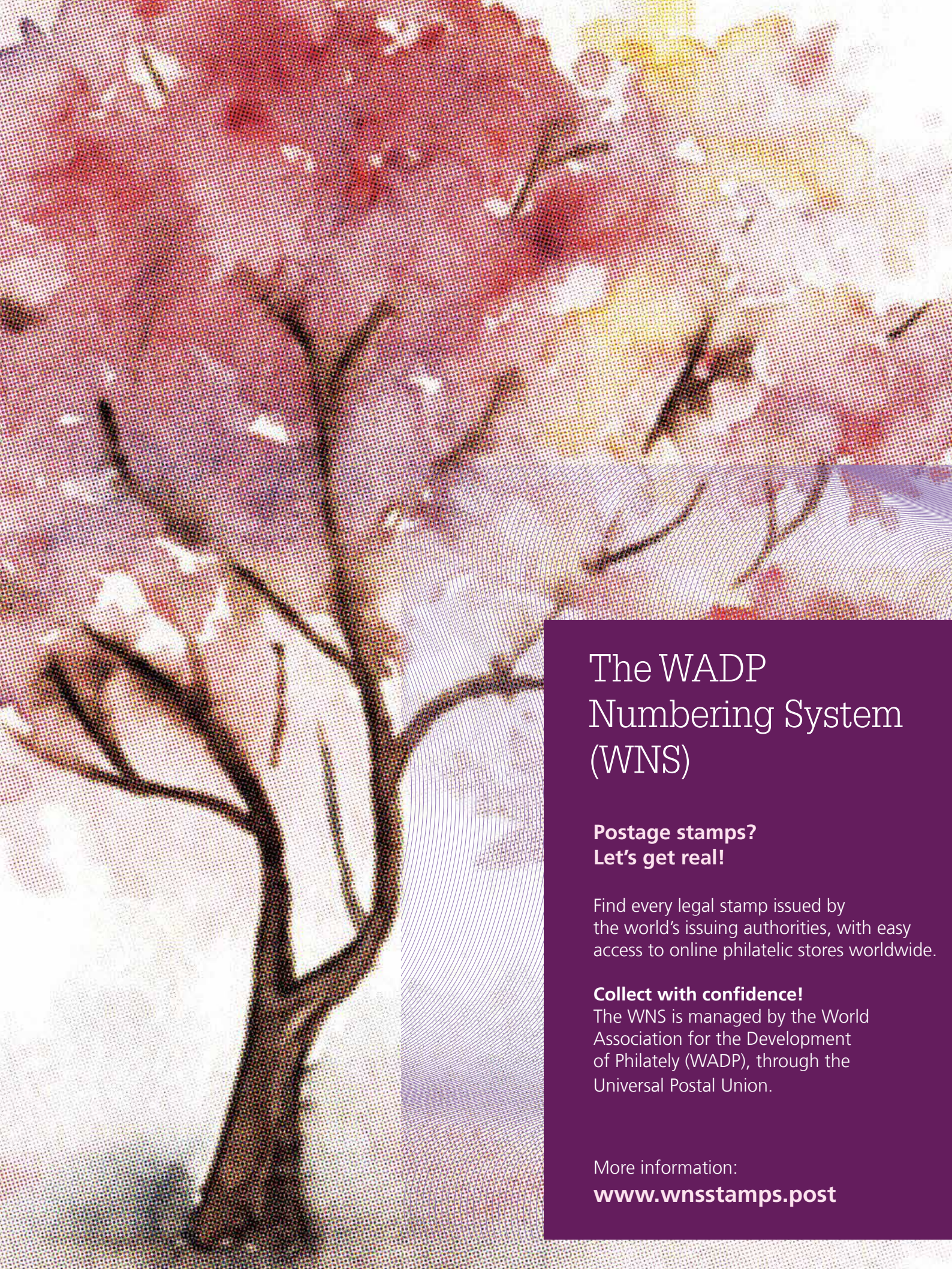
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