UNION POSTALE

UPU UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

MOVING THE POSTAL SECTOR FORWARD SINCE 1875 | WINTER 2023/SPRING 2024

8 UPU opens 150th anniversary

10 VIPs talk postal strategy

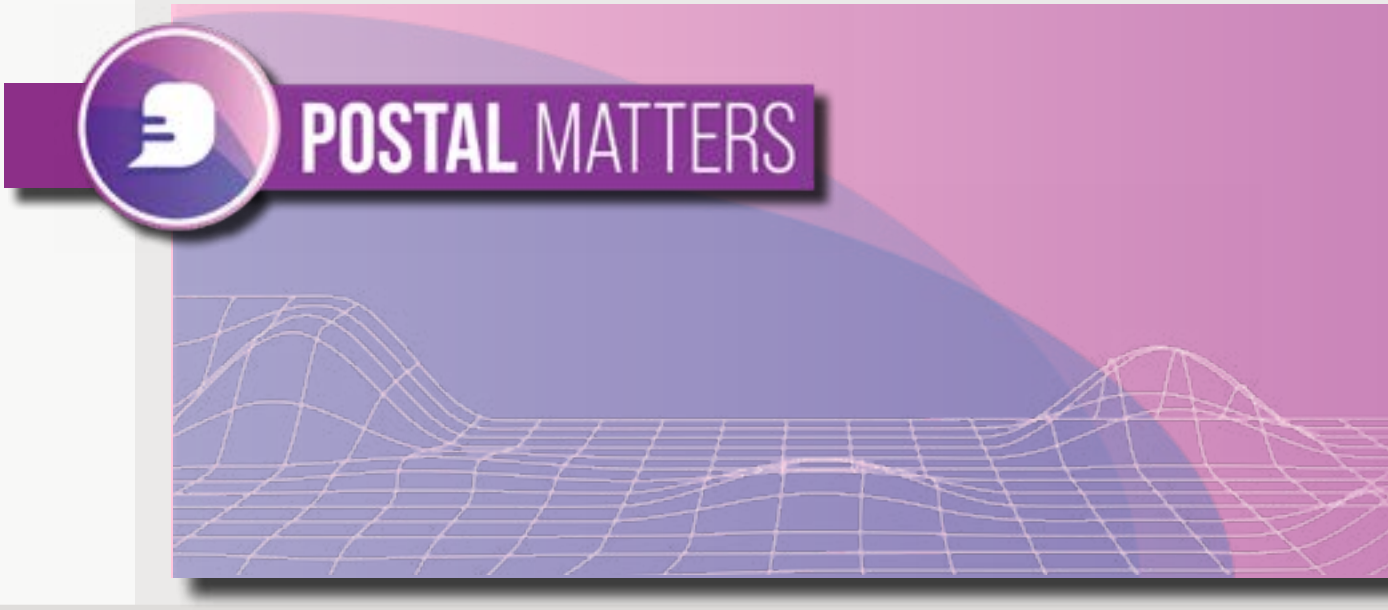
30 NEW: State of the Postal Sector report

COVER STORY

REFLECTIONS ON RIYADH

VOICE MAIL

DIGITAL UNION


POSTAL MATTERS

UPU MEDIA ZONE

"Voice Mail" offers postal stories from around the world. Experienced podcast host Ian Kerr – the founder of Postal Hub Podcast – speaks to the people who deliver the mail, the decision makers that influence the sector, and those who work so hard behind the scenes to help things move from A to B.

Listen and subscribe on your favorite streaming platform: **https://www.upu.int/en/News-Media/Podcast**

"Digital Union" is the Universal Postal Union's monthly newsletter providing news and information on the activities of the UN specialized agency responsible for postal matters.

Subscribe to stay updated on the latest postal developments: **https://www.upu.int/en/News-Media/Newsletter**

The UPU's blog "Postal Matters" offers fresh insights into the international postal sector, as well as its technological advances and latest innovations. Postal operators and other postal sector players are welcome to send us their contributions containing reflections, views and perspectives on the postal future, e-commerce, sustainable development, financial inclusion and other related areas.

Check out the latest articles: **https://www.upu.int/en/News-Media/Blog**

To have your postal blog featured, contact us at **communication@upu.int**

STRATEGY PILLAR 1

STRATEGY PILLAR 2

STRATEGY PILLAR 3

CONTENTS

6

DIRECTOR GENERAL'S FOREWORD

Learning from the past to shape the future

7

EDITOR'S NOTE

Making and embracing history

26

COVER STORY

International Letter-Writing Competition 2023: Winning letter

38

DIGEST

8

UPU FORUM

UPU KICKS OFF 150TH YEAR BY REFLECTING ON ITS HISTORY

The UPU launched its 150th anniversary celebrations with the first-ever Historians' Colloquium for the postal sector, which welcomed some 40 historians, academics and philatelists to explore the theme "Achieving 'a single postal territory': A global promise – Past and present".

10

UPU FORUM

POSTAL LEADERS DISCUSS VISION FOR SECTOR

Chief executives and other high-level representatives from posts and the wider postal sector discussed the industry's future during the UPU's World Leaders Forum held on 24 and 25 October in Amsterdam, as part of the annual Parcel+Post Expo.

14

UPU FORUM

POSTAL CHANGEMAKERS LAUNCH STRATEGY DISCUSSIONS

The 2023 Strategy Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in October brought together more than 30 ministers and vice ministers, more than 150 CEOs and high-level leaders in the postal sector, and more than 1,500 participants from around the world, "the changemakers" who "have driven progress and innovation within this industry," said Saleh Bin Nasser Al Jasser, Minister of Transport and Logistics Services, Saudi Arabia.

20

COVER STORY

REFLECTIONS ON RIYADH

On October 5, 2023, the Universal Postal Union concluded its fourth Extraordinary Congress in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The five-day event, which brought together postal plenipotentiaries from around the world, saw several historic agreements made, including plans to increase the UPU's engagement with wider postal sector players, new climate action targets, the modernization of postal financial services, and increasing the UPU's regular budget ceiling to provide the organization with additional financial resources.

28

UPU TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT: STREAMLINING POSTAL IT WITH UPU-TECHCERT

The Universal Postal Union is launching a new IT program expected to benefit designated postal operators, IT solution vendors, including private companies and non-corporate entities, as well as the UPU itself. A suite of certifications, called UPU-TechCert, is being rolled out to vendors that will lead to verified, streamlined, and uniform interfaces for solutions that postal operators use in conjunction with UPU software.

30

UPU KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

UPU RELEASES FIRST-EVER "STATE OF THE POSTAL SECTOR" REPORT

The postal sector's impact on countries' real gross domestic product (GDP) is far greater than previously understood, according to a new report from the Universal Postal Union, with figures demonstrating for the first time a causal link between well-functioning postal operations and economic development. The report showed that the median postal operator would have a 7 percent contribution to real GDP generated when both direct and indirect activities are accounted for.

35

MARKET FOCUS

A TRUSTED PARTNER: HOW THE POST IS PRIORITIZING CONNECTIVITY, SAFETY, AND THE FUTURE OF THE PLANET

UNION POSTALE

UNION POSTALE is the Universal Postal Union's flagship magazine, founded in 1875. It is published quarterly in five languages (English, French, Arabic, Chinese and Spanish) 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.

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DG FOREWORD:
LEARNING FROM THE PAST TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

The transition from 2023 to 2024 has been one of positive reflection for the Universal Postal Union.

In 2023, UPU member countries ushered in significant changes for the organization. After decades of discussion regarding the UPU's relationship with the wider postal sector, member countries came to an agreement on increasing and deepening their engagement with the organization during the 4th Extraordinary Congress in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. I am pleased member countries have reached a consensus on this important matter – one which has an impact on our ability to provide a truly universal service to everyone, everywhere.

Other important decisions taken at this momentous Congress will help move the UPU and the international postal sector it facilitates forward, in addition to increasing its contribution to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Acknowledging the sector's potential impact towards global climate action efforts, member countries agreed on a set of voluntary emissions reduction targets for the sector to achieve.

I applaud them for considering the impact our actions today can have on leaving behind a greener planet for future generations. At the same time, I urge them to keep the momentum going as we seek donor countries to establish the first-ever UPU climate action facility to benefit the entire sector.

When looking towards the future, we must not forget our past. The opening of 2024 marked a major milestone for the UPU: its 150th anniversary.

Our organization has stood the test of time, adapting to overcome challenges posed by international conflicts, the industrial revolution, and digitalization to maintain its promise to serve billions of people around the world. Our theme for this year's celebrations - "150 years of enabling communication and empowering peoples across nations" – reflects this commitment.

Our first event to open this year – a UPU Historians' Colloquium – celebrated the history of this promise and its evolution over a century and a half. Bringing together academics and historians allowed us an outside perspective on an organization very dear to our hearts, encouraging us an objective lens through which to take stock of the worldwide impact of the UPU, its past short comings, and its potential opportunities ahead.

Through the rest of this year, I hope we can continue to celebrate this history and take its lessons forward to keep our Union strong for another 150 years to come.

Masahiko Metoki
Director General, UPU

Masahiko Metoki
@UPU_DG

Follow

MAKING AND EMBRACING HISTORY

EDITOR'S NOTE

In this issue of Union Postale, we celebrate the UPU's important role in shaping the past, present and future of postal services.

In our cover story, we look back to the historic decisions taken at the Riyadh Extraordinary Congress last October. We have gathered the perspectives of those working on these topics – increased engagement with the wider postal sector, new targets for climate action in the postal sector, the transformation of postal financial services, and a reinforced UPU budget – to understand what went into reaching consensus and what these decisions will mean for the years to come.

Our Extraordinary Congress also provided an opportunity for members to talk postal strategy at the highest level during a special Strategy Summit gathering ministers and postal CEOs. You can read their points of view on the sector's future in a special feature.

In this edition we are also celebrating the launch of the UPU's 150th anniversary celebrations. As you will read, we have opened our celebrations here in Berne with a special Historians' Colloquium that brought together academics, philatelists and postal experts to review the making and maintaining of the single postal territory envisioned 150 years ago.

As always, we'll also hear about the latest solutions available to UPU member countries and new developments taking place in posts around the world.

I wish you happy reading.

KAYLA **REDSTONE**

Editor-in-chief

UPU KICKS OFF 150TH YEAR BY REFLECTING ON ITS HISTORY

by KAYLA **REDSTONE**

The UPU launched its 150th anniversary celebrations with the first-ever Historians' Colloquium for the postal sector, which welcomed some 40 historians, academics and philatelists to explore the theme "Achieving 'a single postal territory': A global promise – Past and present".

2 February 2024, Group photo with all the speakers of the colloquium.

1 February 2024, Dr Léonard Laborie opens the colloquium sessions with scientific remarks.

The event – co-sponsored by La Poste Group, La Poste Historical Committee (CHP) and SIRICE laboratory – was held at the UPU's Berne, Switzerland, headquarters on 1 and 2 February.

In opening remarks to the Colloquium, UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki highlighted the organization's leadership as one of the very first examples of multilateralism.

"Our organization provides a framework which transcends borders, cultures and political differences to unite us with a shared vision: to deliver to everyone, everywhere," said the Director General.

"I would like to thank our participants for putting a spotlight on the UPU within the academic world … Your views on our past will enrich our present knowledge, and help to shape an even brighter future," he added.

Speaking for La Poste Group, Chair and CEO Philippe Wahl said, "Thanks to the Universal Postal Union we have developed regulations, procedures and standards that have enabled the interconnection of the different postal networks around the world … This worldwide postal forum, the Universal Postal Forum, had to overcome divergences and wars and also enable the posts to face up to competition from new stakeholders. This is why it is interesting to ask why the Universal Postal Union was created."

He added that looking at the history of the global postal sector was necessary as posts ready to reinvent themselves in the face of the digital revolution into the future.

Recalling past commemorations and important moments in UPU history in his opening remarks, Léonard Laborie of the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), UMR SIRICE, said of the presenters, "They will not seek to build a monument to the UPU, nor to destroy existing ones, but to question the apparent evidence."

Over the course of the day-and-a-half, panelists explored eight subthemes covering: reasons behind the formation of the UPU, its impact on imperialism, historical perspectives on philately, archival history, the UPU's impact on national policymaking, the post's impact on politics through time, regional approaches to postal cooperation, and the impact of modern innovations on the post.

Speakers represented more than 16 countries, travelling from as far as Brazil, the United States, South Africa and Japan to attend the event.

Once-in-a-lifetime exhibition

On the sidelines of the Colloquium, the UPU's Philately and International Reply Coupons Programme established a unique, never-before-seen series of philatelic exhibitions.

The first was a lifetime exhibition of the first stamps issued by countries and territories – some of which no longer exist – numbering 10,100 in total and dating back to 1840.

Also on display were stamps celebrating previous UPU anniversaries and a series of artifacts, including original international reply coupons from the past and their original printing plates.

The exhibitions will remain in the International Bureau for a series of events taking place at the International Bureau throughout 2024.

Watch UPU Historian's Colloquium

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ob51zFAubkQ&list=PLqiP-fpT90h37Oye91aJt1qZBqJQXr_vJL

To learn more about the UPU's anniversary events:

https://www.upu.int/en/universal-postal-union/outreach-campaigns/150-years-of-the-upu

POSTAL LEADERS DISCUSS VISION FOR SECTOR

by KAYLA **REDSTONE**

24 October 2023, Opening by Tony Robinson, Founder and CEO, UKI Media & Events

24 October 2023, (From left) Amanda Martinez (moderator); Anef Abanomi, Saudi Post; Marsha Price, Belize Postal Service; Tijs Reumerman, Spring Global Delivery Solutions; Ivana Vrviščar, Posta Slovenije

Chief executives and other high-level representatives from posts and the wider postal sector discussed the industry's future during the UPU's World Leaders Forum held on 24 and 25 October in Amsterdam, as part of the annual Parcel+Post Expo.

Speaking during the Forum, UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki noted that the event had "become an essential platform for postal and logistics leaders from all continents and markets to share ideas and strategies."

Guided by the theme "Across borders and beyond limits: Blueprints for lasting innovation," panellists focused on four key areas: logistics and cross-border e-commerce, diversification strategies, sustainability and trust and security. In a first round, CEOs and heads of restricted postal unions defined a vision for each topic, while, in a second round, high-level industry experts discussed tangible ways in which posts, the wider sector and the UPU could work together to achieve these visions.

Logistics & cross-border e-commerce

The Forum's first topic gathered leaders from Saudi Post, Belize Postal Service, Spring Global Delivery Solutions and PostNL, and Posta Slovenije, as well as experts from Zonos, Cainiao Network and the UPU.

Speakers focused on the importance of cross-sector partnerships to deliver effectively on customers' changing and increasing expectations for e-commerce services – particularly concerning the reliability and quality of those services.

"Thinking as a traditional postal operator is not going to allow us to achieve our vision of becoming sustainable," said Saudi Post President Anef Abanomi. "Don't try to do everything on your own – look to partners … Join forces to create incremental value that will be shared," he added.

For her part, Belize Post Postmaster General Marsha Price highlighted that her organization's sights were set on acquiring digital tools to have a strong platform to deliver e-commerce and assist entrepreneurs. The post is working with the UPU's top-level domain, .POST, to establish the needed digital infrastructure.

Speaking on improving customer experience, Posta Slovenije Executive Management Member Ivana Vrviščar emphasized that postal operators should focus on soft skills related to customer experience and avoid an approach that gives too much precedence to technology and tools alone.

Tijs Reumerman, CEO, Spring Global Delivery Solutions and Member of the Executive Committee PostNL, underlined the importance of partnerships between postal providers. He noted that the UPU was a platform for this. "I hope you will all remember that if the UPU, if our cross border international network, wants to sustain for another 30 years, we all need to see how we work together," he said.

On improving trust with customers, speakers indicated that partnerships would be critical for ensuring that all parties in the supply chain had the right data required to provide

25 October 2023 - (From left) Charles Brewer, Pos Malaysia; João Bento, Correios de Portugal; Elena Fernández-Rodríguez, Correos and PostEurop

a seamless experience for customers. They noted that the UPU played a significant role in facilitating the exchange of data, interoperability between partners and development of standards.

Diversification strategies

Leaders from the South African Post Office, Seychelles Postal Services, Postal Union for the Mediterranean (PUMed) and Kazpost JSC, as well as experts from Geomain, e-Boks and the UPU, provided their insights on how postal services could balance their portfolios to become a one-stop-shop for customers.

Panellists discouraged postal operators from resting on their laurels by solely focusing on traditional postal services, but instead finding ways to use their expansive physical and growing digital networks to connect customers with new services and e-commerce partners. They again underlined the importance of reliability of services to maintain customer trust when diversifying.

"If we do not diversify and keep up with the environmental changes in the market, we will not be there tomorrow," said South African Post Office CEO Nomkhita Mona. She noted that, despite the challenges associated with delivering to a large customer base living in poverty and in rural areas, the company was working to move away from a traditional postal operator to a modern integrated services and logistics provider.

As an example, Semyon Pak, Kazpost's Managing Director for International Business and Member of the Management Board, highlighted how the company was shifting focus to social, financial and cargo services, as well as positioning itself as a leader for intraregional logistics. He noted that the company had just become profitable for the first time in five years.

While agreeing on the importance of diversification amidst changing market conditions, Nermin Hassan, who chairs PUMed and heads international cooperation at Egypt Post, added that postal regulation must set the conditions to enable innovation.

The panel highlighted the UPU's role in providing its members with an overview of possibilities for diversification.

"The UPU provides the platform for postal operators to unite together and provides information about what's going on in other parts of the world," said Seychelles Postal Services CEO Mariella Buisson, who added that, without the research and support of the UPU, small postal operators as in Seychelles would not be able to tap into new opportunities.

Sustainability

To outline the sector's vision for sustainability, the Forum gathered leaders from PosMalaysia, CTT Correios de Portugal, and PostEurop as well as strategists from Omniva, Austrian Post, Posten Bring and the UPU.

They focused on the need to move away from viewing sustainability as a separate programme towards integrating it into a postal operator's overall business plan.

"There is no sustainability strategy because the (organization's) strategy in itself needs to be sustainable," said João Bento, CEO of Portugal's CTT.

Elena Fernández-Rodríguez, Chairwoman of PostEurop's Board of Directors and Deputy Director for International Affairs and ESG with Spain's Correos, underscored how attitudes towards investing in sustainability have shifted among European postal operators, adding its worth is now more widely accepted.

24 October 2023 - (From left) Amanda Martinez (moderator); Semyon Pak, Kazpost JSC; Nomkhita Mona, South African Post Office; Mariella Buisson, Seychelles Postal Services; Nermin Hassan and PUMed

Speaking on Pos Malaysia's push to position sustainability as part of its purpose, Group CEO Charles Brewer noted that leaders must make this vision clear to employees so that they understand and perpetuate their organization's purpose and cultural transformation, while employees should be encouraged to express their sustainability expectations to their leadership. Communication with a post's board of directors, as well as its customers, is also key.

While they noted younger customers and employees joining the postal workforce had an increased interest in sustainability, they recognized there remained a gap in encouraging customers to select greener product and service options if they came with an increased cost or reduced convenience. They underlined the importance of focusing first on increasing a sustainability shift in B2B services and working with partners on reverse logistics.

"We can make the green network pay for itself many times over by making it work for other services," said UPU Sustainability Services Expert James Hale.

Trust & security

To discuss trust and security in an increasingly digital environment, leaders from the Pan African Postal Union (PAPU), Cpost International and the Asia Pacific Post Cooperative (APPC) gathered, followed by a panel of experts from Omniva, Amazon Web Services, Escher and the UPU.

Acknowledging the potential of digitization for enhancing security initiatives within postal services, such as limiting illegal goods from entering the postal stream, they oriented their discussion towards ensuring that customers would be protected and included in the transformation process.

While digital tools could build trust by facilitating and simplifying processes, customers' needs should be a driving force in their development.

"As an industry, our historic approach of one-size-fits-all is probably at an end," said APPC Managing Director Sid Hart.

Panellists also reinforced the message that tailored services must be supported by a foundation of honesty, transparency on data use, and, as always, a reliable and high-quality service in order to maintain trust in the digital transition.

"Today, customers have access to information on their item through the whole process, so there needs to be more transparency from the post," said PAPU Secretary General Sifundo Chief Moyo.

They highlighted specific customer groups where posts may need to work to address the digital divide, again underlining the need to ensure and communicate the protection of personal privacy in data collection. Meanwhile, the UPU could support by translating physical to digital trust and security through standards and technical solutions. This could help support retailers and other wider postal sector players who also rely on the postal network to serve customers.

"If these companies didn't have trust in us, then why would they be knocking at the door of the UPU?," said Cpost International CEO Jervhes Josephia.

To watch the full recording of the 2023 World Leaders Forum, please visit the UPU's YouTube channel. KR

https://www.youtube.com/user/UniversalPostalUnion

POSTAL CHANGEMAKERS LAUNCH STRATEGY DISCUSSIONS

by TARA **GIROUD**

The 2023 Strategy Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in October brought together more than 30 ministers and vice ministers, more than 150 CEOs and high-level leaders in the postal sector, and more than 1,500 participants from around the world, "the changemakers" who "have driven progress and innovation within this industry," said Saleh Bin Nasser Al Jasser, Minister of Transport and Logistics Services, Saudi Arabia.

The summit was part of the fourth Extraordinary Congress, themed "People, purpose, progress – The next chapter for the postal sector."

UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki opened the two-day exchange of ideas by saying that the postal sector had proven its resilience during times of significant change, and it will continue to do so to remain relevant for the 21st Century, with rapid innovation during the digital age. The postal sector, he said, stands as a "core enabler of global trade and e-commerce."

Both traditional and new services must meet the evolving expectations of citizens and businesses and posts must gain insight into what the future holds, Metoki said, as he outlined priorities for the sector.

"We need to reduce our impact on the planet, to minimize our carbon footprint, to be efficient, and to optimize resources in our work, to be inclusive in our approach, to leave no one behind in services we provide, … and to leave a better planet for future generations," Metoki said.

Host country Saudi Arabia has stood as a leader of what postal transformation can look like. By 2030 the country plans to become one of the top ten nations in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index by creating 59 logistics zones, increasing port capacity to more than 40 million containers and accommodating 330 million airline passengers and 4.5 million tons of air cargo, annually, Al Jasser shared, a strategy that will help double the sector's contribution to the national GDP.

"We stand at the crossroads of the postal sector," he said. "Our future depends on the choices we make now. Let us work together to find more real solutions to any problems facing the sector and move forward with … courage."

The hope of a strong postal sector is not without its challenges. In a panel discussion on the single postal territory for economic and social growth, Dr Aminata Zerbo/Sabane, Minister of Digital Transition, Posts & Electronic Communications of Burkina Faso called on all UPU members to help generate solutions for states like Burkina Faso facing severe risks while also expanding services for its citizens.

"All states must come together around this common ideal," she said. "We need to call all countries to reach basic performance indicators to provide access to postal services for all people."

In April, a postal bank was launched to reach people in rural areas, women, and young people, so they can access additional financial services and develop income-generating activities, Zerbo/Sabane said. Additionally, the government is undergoing a massive digitalization project. But it risks excluding parts of the population. Zerbo/Sabane said posts must reach these people by establishing access to digitalization.

5 October 2023 - UPU Strategy Summit 2023 - (From left) Alex Taylor (moderator); Anef Bin Ahmed Abanomai, Saudi Post Corporation; Minister Minette Libom Li Likeng, Cameroon; Vineet Pandey, Postal Services Board, India; Spyros Pantelis, Hellenic Telecommunications & Post Commission

However, postal operations face big challenges. Declining postal volume makes profitability difficult and terrorism threats create a safety risk for operators as well as mass displacement of people and closing of offices.

Burkina Faso is not the only country in this position, she said, so she encouraged thoughtful discussions to help countries facing such threats to develop agile solutions.

"The post remains a formidable tool for financial, social, and digital inclusion that we must preserve at all costs," she said.

During a panel discussion on co-creating value for citizens, businesses, and governments, Anef Bin Ahmed Abanomai, President and Chief Executive Officer of Saudi Post Corporation, said the nation's focus on logistics illuminated the shifting needs of the post.

Services for traditional letters as a source of communication was diminishing requiring a shift toward parcels and logistics. This led the government to transfer supervision of the postal sector from the ministry of communications and information technology to the logistics sector.

The post now focuses on three pillars: to be customer-centric, to create culture and leadership for the new direction, and to build a philosophy of working with partners.

"We truly believe that most anything is going to be better when we work together not in silos," Abanomai said. "We are focusing on becoming a logistics player, moving from manual operations to automation and digitization, and being a data-driven organization in everything that we do."

The post has doubled its revenue in the last four years, improved employee productivity by more than 110 percent, and was recognized by the UPU as the leading star in the region in 2022, he said.

Cameroon has also undergone a transition. Since 2016, the government directed CAMPOST to modernize and rise to meet international standards, said Minette Libom Li Likeng, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications of Cameroon.

While the pandemic brought the modernization efforts to a standstill, she said, efforts continued in 2022 and that year, CAMPOST was recognized as the champion of Africa in four criteria: accessibility, relevance, resilience, and reliability.

"Everything we did then, pushes us to consider and give a lot of thought to Cameroon of the future with this new digitalization," Likeng said. "Several digital platforms were established, our post had the obligation to offer new services. So, with this distinction, we no longer have the right to make mistakes. Cameroon stands ready to continue these activities to build capacity in order not to disappear."

During a panel on multi-dimensional change for development, diversity, and dynamism to create a sustainable postal sector, Rafael Navarrine, President, Correo Uruguayo, shared a new model for inclusive practices. One program created to reach the 14 percent of Uruguay's population that lives in remote areas, some in villages that may have only 100 residents.

"They're quite remote and perhaps a little bit removed from the possibilities for modern communication technologies so it's up to the post, to an extent, to make sure that these rural populations do have access to public services," he said.

The post created "Closeness Centres," in partnership with municipal authorities to open small offices that provide any postal service that is available in cities. The local authorities provide the facilities, the staff, and the premises. Customers can send and collect parcels and letters, make money transfer withdrawals of small amounts of money. There are currently 49 centres and they expect to grow to 60 by the end of the year.

"It's a practical, flexible solution," he said, that gives customers greater financial and economic possibilities. "We believe it is something that really provides a great deal for people who live in these remote communities."

As the summit closed, UPU Deputy Director General Marjan Osvald made a plea to the member representatives: the organization needs their data.

"Artificial intelligence should be our ally, an ally that can help us navigate market challenges optimize operations, and provide unparalleled services to citizens businesses and governments," he said. "Without the data that our members countries provide we would have no analysis, we would have no insights, and we would have no stories to tell ... We would not be able to show the impact on our work." TG

4 October 2023 - UPU Strategy Summit 2023 (From left) Rocío Bárcena Molina, Correos de México; Abdulla Mohammed Alashram, Emirates Post Group; Minister Aminata Zerbo/Sabane, Burkina Faso

HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF POSTAL SERVICES, WHEN IT COMES TO FACILITATING SOCIOECONOMIC GROWTH, EVOLVE OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

Dr Dana Morris Dixon,

Minister without Portfolio (Skills and Digital Transformation) in the Office of the Prime Minister, Jamaica

"I think there's going to be a lot of changes in the next 5 to 10 years. Technology, including AI is going to have such an important role when we think about the sustainability of posts. We've been challenged quite a lot over the last few decades. And we've been trying to figure out what's that future and our future is constantly evolving. With new technologies, we are also going to see posts changing dramatically. The question is: are we ready for that change? I think that UPU conferences and the UPU in general is going to be extremely central in guiding us to figure what new technology is while maintaining sustainability. And as postal entities addressing sustainable development goals and climate protection, it's going to be so important that we use these emerging technologies to assist us in moving forward to progress towards sustainability and still remain relevant for our people all over the world." MH

HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF POSTAL SERVICES, WHEN IT COMES TO FACILITATING SOCIOECONOMIC GROWTH, EVOLVE OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

Dr Tobias Meyer,

CEO of Deutsche Post/ DHL Group

"We had DHL and as a universal service provider in Germany, very much focused on sustainability such as CO2 reductions, I think we, as a transport-intensive business, have to keep that in focus. We are inherently difficult to abate carbon in transportation, which is more challenging than in some other industries. So we put a lot of effort into electrifying our last-mile fleet and ensuring the electricity we buy is green. We also invest in solar panels, which are increasingly viable. With our significant real estate holdings, it's an opportunity. Moreover, we're increasingly using biofuel in our line haul operations, such as bio methane, with several hundred trucks now running on it. We are also actively seeking sustainable aviation fuel partnerships for our flying operations. The environmental aspect is extremely important for us, but we also prioritize being a sustainable employer, ensuring social responsibility to our employees with safe working conditions. These are the other various aspects to being sustainable and responsible as a provider." MH

HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF POSTAL SERVICES, WHEN IT COMES TO FACILITATING SOCIOECONOMIC GROWTH, EVOLVE OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

Li Yu,

CEO International, Singapore Post

"I think that postal services has been a fundamental national service for many countries. During the pandemic, we experienced tremendous disruption in all of our social services. Postal companies in the future can help with telemedicine and delivering healthcare products, especially to those remotely staying at home without access to healthcare resources. Additionally, postal services can leverage infrastructure for fast responses to future natural disasters and humanitarian efforts. On the growth side, E-commerce is booming and will continue to be a significant pillar in the next few years. Postal companies are well-positioned to capitalize on this growth with existing infrastructure and networks already covered. As long as we collaborate to diversify product portfolios for ecommerce platforms, it will ensure us with continued growth. Despite current challenges, I think the future is quite bright. I believe postal companies will emerge stronger, contributing to both social services and the commercial world through partnerships and collaboration." MH

HOW DOES JAPAN SEE THE ROLE OF POSTAL SERVICES IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT EVOLVE OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

Yoshiaki Takeuchi,

Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination at the Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC)

"Since the postal privatization in Japan, a range of services has been introduced to meet the needs of the people, particularly addressing barriers to community basic services. This includes elderly watching care services provided by post office employees and shopping support. Additionally, the post office offers investment trust funds and engages in real estate businesses. To ensure that postal services are maintained all across Japan, even in depopulated areas facing a decline in mail volume, advanced technologies such as digital logistics transformation, drone delivery, and self-driving cars have been utilized. And Japan, with its island geography and mountainous terrain, we are confident to say that we have accumulated significant knowledge and expertise in the postal sector. Demonstrations of drone delivery in remote areas have been successful, showcasing Japan's capabilities.

Given such experiences, I propose hosting a special session with UPU delegates to discuss advancing postal services through data technology, facilitating the sharing of meaningful information with private sector partners. We also aim to support sustainable development globally, through initiatives voluntarily funded since 2010 (Japan Fund), including disaster preparedness of the postal sector and efforts for digital transformation and carbon neutrality. I have high expectations for the UPU under Director General Metoki's leadership, to usher in a new era of postal services." MH

HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF POSTAL SERVICES, WHEN IT COMES TO CREATING VALUE FOR CITIZENS, GOVERNMENTS, AND BUSINESSES, EVOLVE OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

Minette Libom Li Likeng,

Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, Cameroon

"In the ever-changing world, digitalization is pervasive. However, the postal sector still lacks sufficient digitalization, posing a risk of posts to be irrelevant in the modern world. In the next five to ten years, I envision the posts placing greater emphasis on citizens. Globalization erases borders, and digitalization reshapes our interactions and communications. While the Post is an old institution, it remains a vital universal service present in all national territories regardless of profitability.

Therefore, it must evolve into an intermediary between government, businesses, and citizens, attentive to their needs and facilitating communication between men and women. To survive, the Post must adapt to citizens' evolving preferences. I foresee a future where the postal sector delivers excellent service and adds value by leveraging digitalization and ICT to enhance the lives of citizens. This entails posts being accessible, responsive, safe and trustworthy, especially as people rely more on others for errands. Therefore, in the coming years, the postal sector will undergo digitalization and embrace technological advancements." MH

HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF POSTAL SERVICES, WHEN IT COMES TO CREATING VALUE FOR CITIZENS, GOVERNMENTS, AND BUSINESSES, EVOLVE OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

Aminata Zerbo-Sabane,

Minister for Aminata Zerbo-Sabane of Digital Transition, Posts & Electronic Communications, Burkina Faso

"The postal network fosters connections nationally and globally, connecting people and businesses worldwide. However, realizing these benefits necessitates expedited reforms and investments to transform and modernize the postal infrastructure for enhanced regional performance. My country, Burkina Faso is committed to this. We recognize the important role of the Poste in reaching citizens effectively and it plays a major role in initiatives benefiting its people. One significant example is financial inclusion, with La Post Burkina Faso spearheading efforts for over a decade. And today, with the operationalization of La Banque Postale, it further enhances access to financial services, particularly in rural areas, stimulating economic activities.

Additionally, the government endeavors to modernize services by digitizing procedures. However, as a large proportion of the population risks exclusion due to digital literacy gaps, it is collaborating with the Post to establish citizen access and support centers to increase access to services. Moreover, the Post plays an obvious role in e-commerce development, facilitating global market access for national products. Acting as a trusted intermediary, it will foster citizens' confidence, supporting e-commerce growth domestically. Lastly, the Post contributes immensely to social cohesion, a role worth preserving. Leveraging technology, we can propel postal sector development, enhancing welfare of our citizens and their well-being." MH

REFLECTIONS ON RIYADH

1 October 2023 - Plenary on the opening of the UPU to increase engagement with wider postal sector players (WPSPs).

On October 5, 2023, the Universal Postal Union concluded its fourth Extraordinary Congress in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The five-day event, which brought together postal plenipotentiaries from around the world, saw several historic agreements made, including plans to increase the UPU's engagement with wider postal sector players, new climate action targets, the modernization of postal financial services, and increasing the UPU's regular budget ceiling to provide the organization with additional financial resources.

UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki said, "[In Riyadh] we witnessed the extraordinary power of international collaboration and the enduring importance of the postal sector in connecting people, businesses and nations."

The decisions have been hailed as groundbreaking and ones that are set to accelerate sustainability, inclusion, and modernization in the global postal sector. As the relevant teams at the organization's secretariat in Berne begin the hard work of putting the agreements into action, the UPU reflects on the big decisions made in Riyadh, looking at the challenges faced, the changes being made, and how the adopted proposals could help level the postal playing field around the world.

Wider postal sector engagement

One of the headline agreements adopted in Riyadh will see deeper engagement of the UPU with wider postal sector players (WPSPs) – a topic which has been under discussion at the UN specialized agency for many years now. WPSPs refer to postal supply chain companies and partners outside the UPU network of government-designated postal operators. The suite of proposals adopted in relation to this aim to bolster the development of a truly interconnected, efficient, and universal postal service for all.

The UPU will now work on expanding and formalizing its relationship with WPSPs, including private sector companies. The decisions made in Riyadh introduce changes in three areas. First, they amend and better define the UPU's institutional framework to encourage the participation of WPSPs in UPU discussions and decision-making processes through the organization's Consultative Committee.

Second, they enable WPSPs' eventual access to specific sets of UPU products and services to encourage seamless network interconnection and improve the global quality of postal services.

Following the decision, the UPU will work to establish the operational, technical, legal and policy frameworks needed to facilitate

the exchange of postal items between national postal operators and WPSPs. It will also push forward the development of a solution that will bring together the demand and supply of UPU-certified international postal transport services, as well as an interface allowing WPSPs to easily capture and generate postal data required to ship items through the UPU's universal postal network.

Finally, the approval of these proposals provides a roadmap to ensure the organization's continued modernization amidst rapid market changes and increasing competition.

"There are some that say the proposals adopted for engagement with wider postal sector players are modest, but I believe the decisions made in Riyadh were extremely important," said Stuart Smith, Chief of International Postal Affairs at the US Department of State, who co-chaired the work on this congress topic. "The first step is always the most important one, and now we have crossed the threshold hopefully we can travel on a glidepath into the future."

Smith believes that the biggest benefit of working closer with WPSPs will be within the area of products and services. "This will open new possibilities for cooperation and for building on things that are already happening commercially in the market. Hopefully this will enable more UPU operators to benefit from them," he said. "Ultimately, working closer with WPSPs not only benefits designated operators, but it also benefits consumers and the citizens who use our services."

Smith's co-chair, Samir Zouaoui, Deputy Director for the Development of Postal Activities at Algeria's Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, believes that the WPSPs congress decision will help the UPU stay up to date with the rapidly changing market and put partnerships at the core of the postal sector's evolution.

"The approval of these proposals has left a big mark on the history of UPU," he said. "In the future, the UPU and wider postal sector players will not necessarily be considered the competitors of designated operators, but instead they will be considered partners, and the postal sector will be built on the efforts of all."

Postal financial services

One area set to benefit from deeper engagement with WPSPs is postal financial services. In Riyadh, several proposals were adopted in this area, with a focus on ambitious modernization and interconnection with wider postal financial service players (WPFSPs).

Proposals passed will bring about changes to postal financial services on two fronts. First, they will usher in improvements to the UPU's legal framework for postal payments, known as the Postal Payments Services Agreement (PPSA). These changes are directed at increasing the interoperability of the postal payments network, including the establishment of conditions for interconnection with WPSPs; prevention of money laundering, terrorist financing and financial crime; PPS*Clearing; remuneration and the global adoption of a trusted trademark, PosTransfer.

The resolution also lays the groundwork for further broader changes to the UPU's legal frameworks associated with postal payments and other postal financial services to identify opportunities related to diversification, the removal of outdated elements and the adoption of a more flexible approach to defining products and services, technologies, channels, and interoperability rules. This again includes rules for further engagement with WPFSPs.

To promote the continued evolution of postal financial services worldwide, member countries have also agreed to start work towards establishing an advisory knowledge centre, subject to extrabudgetary funding.

Prannoy Sharma, Deputy Director General (International Relations and Global Business), Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications, India, and co-chair of the UPU Congress topic on postal financial services, believes that a new knowledge centre for postal financial services will be especially beneficial for developing countries.

"The knowledge centre will provide member countries with best practices, knowledge sharing, technical assistance, help with financial literacy, information on regulatory frameworks, and promote financial inclusion and gender equality," he said. "Once we secure extra funding and develop the centre, it will become a vital resource for postal financial services."

Speaking about the postal financial services proposals adopted in Riyadh in general, Sharma's co-chair, M'hamed EL Moussaoui, Managing Director, and member of the Executive Board of Al Barid Bank, Poste Maroc, added: "Regarding the future of financial services, we have taken a significant step forward during this Congress with the adoption of these reforms."

Prannoy Sharma, India, Co-chair on postal financial services

M'hamed EL Moussaoui, Poste Maroc, Co-chair on postal financial services

Jehan Al Saeed, Saudi Arabia Ministry of Transport and Logistic Services, Congress Chair

A second part of the postal financial services reforms will be presented at the Dubai Universal Postal Congress in 2025.

Climate action

Alongside the agreements for opening the UPU and the modernization of postal financial services, the Extraordinary Congress also approved proposals for a historic Green Package, which outlines voluntary climate action targets for the industry aimed at reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and established a framework for climate action, focusing on mitigation, adaptation, and climate finance, supported by a dedicated Climate Facility.

The Green Package sets forth a voluntary tiered approach to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the postal sector, recommended based on posts' capacity to measure emissions and take action. First tier countries would strive to reduce emissions by 30 percent by 2030, with all three tiers working towards a collective 85 percent reduction by 2050.

3 October 2023 - (From right) Oliver Kaliski, Austrian Post; Siva Somasundram, UPU

The new Climate Facility, meanwhile, will be established pending voluntary contributions. The United Arab Emirates and Germany pledged their partial financial support during the plenary meeting. Furthermore, the adoption of the Green Package also provides a mechanism for posts to make their green commitments and ambitions more visible, by signing the Postal Climate Transparency Action statement.

Oliver Kaliski, Head of International Relations, Mail and Finance Network Division at Austrian Post, led the postal climate action work at the Extraordinary Congress in Riyadh on behalf of Austria. "The adopted Green Package is just the starting point," he said. "We now have a common goal for the entire UPU membership to reduce emissions. There is now a lot of work to be done, especially in getting the Climate Facility up and running, and for that we need some more voluntary funding. We have crossed the starting line but there is still a lot to do before we can cross the finish line."

Financing of UPU

Another historic decision made in Riyadh concerned the UPU's budget. For the first time in more than 25 years, the UPU member countries decided to increase the organization's regular budget ceiling to provide the organization with additional financial resources, approving a budget increase of 1.6%.

"This has broken the 26th yearly tradition of zero nominal growth for the UPU, which is very important," said Germán Vázquez, General Sub-directorate of Postal Regime, Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, Spain, and co-chair of the Congress topic on the UPU finance matters. "What is also important is not the amount of money, but the message from the countries to the IB (International Bureau) about the trust they have in our activities."

The extra money will be extremely beneficial for the union and its projects.

Co-chair, Matano Ndaro, Director of Competition, Tariffs and Market Analysis at Kenya's Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy, said: "The extra funding will focus on two major projects that the International Bureau will be undertaking. These concern cyber security and the Emergency and Solidarity Fund. We were informed that in the past 10

years, out of the 70 emergencies that were reported the UPU has only been able to deal with about 22."

The Emergency and Solidarity Fund provides emergency assistance to revive postal activity in affected areas following a disaster. UPU member countries often donate expertise, money and equipment, while others donate financial credits from their Quality of Service Fund resources for specific projects.

Meanwhile, for cyber security the UPU has developed several tools to help posts tackle cybercrime. Its .POST top-level domain, for example, provides a secure and trusted Internet space to serve the needs of the global postal community in the digital economy. Furthermore, the cybertrack.post solution, launched in May 2022, is a fully automated, web-based dashboard tool, which provides real-time monitoring of .POST domains' technical compliance with approved cybersecurity policies, and provides access to the .POST Learning Platform where cybersecurity training and capacity building activities are held.

"The new funding resources will make it possible for the UPU to react and respond with more agility and in a timely manner, to help countries that are faced by disasters and to respond very quickly in rebuilding the postal infrastructure to serve the global community," Ndaro added.

Matano Ndaro, Kenya, Co-chair on UPU finance matters

Germán Vázquez, Spain, Co-chair on UPU finance matters

1 October 2023 - Samir Zouaoui, Algeria's Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Co-chair on expanding the UPU's engagement with wider postal sector players.

State of the Postal Sector

The UPU also took the opportunity at the Extraordinary Congress to launch its first State of the Postal Sector report, which identified a clear causal link between countries' postal development and national economic growth, particularly in times of economic shocks and crises.

The report compared postal development scores with the growth in real GDP and found a strong correlation between the levels of postal development and the intensity of post-pandemic economic recovery, meaning a well-functioning postal network led to greater economic recovery after the global health crisis.

A calculation presented in the report clearly shows that, without postal services, a country's GDP would fall by nearly 7%, highlighting postal services' essential role in sustainable national economic performance.

The UPU Director General said that the report's findings should "serve as a clarion call for governments and other stakeholders to partner with and invest in the growth of the postal sector." He added: "Like many threads coming together to form a strong and resilient fabric, collaboration and partnerships will weave the fabric of our postal future."

The report also provided a comprehensive overview of the postal sector's existing landscape, challenges, innovations, and potential avenues for the future. In Riyadh, the UPU recognized the countries that showed the most promising development over the previous year during a dedicated awards ceremony.

Achieving the highest of 10 postal development levels in the UPU's Integrated Index for Postal Development (2IPD) were Austria, France, Germany, Japan, and Switzerland, with the Swiss postal service achieving the highest 2IPD score for the seventh consecutive year in 2022. Acknowledged as rising stars for their stand-out, year-on-year postal development level increase were Oman, Slovenia, and Uzbekistan. Brazil, China, Estonia, Ethiopia and Morocco were acknowledged as postal development leaders in their respective regions.

The Extraordinary Congress also provided a platform for the UPU's Strategy Summit, which convened ministers, heads of postal regulators and postal CEOs to discuss the UPU's strategy for 2026-2029 under the theme: "People, Progress and Purpose: The Next Chapter for the Postal Sector.

Claire Gakii, 13 years old, takes first prize in the 52nd International Letter Writing Competition.

Letter writing competition

Furthermore, the winners of the UPU's 52nd International Letter Writing Competition were celebrated in Riyadh. For this, children were invited to write a letter to someone explaining the superpowers that they would need to achieve their mission of making roads safe for all children. The competition was organized in cooperation with the United Nations Road Safety Fund.

Claire Gakii, 13, from Kenya, received the gold medal for her letter, which she read before the delegates during the closing plenary of the Congress. The silver medal was awarded to Matilde Magalhães Da Silva, 11, from Portugal, with 12-year-old Dao Khuong Duy from Viet Nam winning the bronze prize.

View to 2025

On the closing of the Congress, the UPU Director General reflected on the effect the decisions made in Riyadh would have on the organization's future.

"The Universal Postal Union, which will celebrate its 150th anniversary next year, was created with a simple yet profound mission: to connect the world through postal services. Over the decades, our organization has continuously evolved to meet the changing needs of our global community," he said.

"In Riyadh, we have paved the way towards an even more profound transformation, making pivotal and important decisions that will shape the future of our organization.

The next regular Congress is set to be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in 2025. HN

5 October 2023 - Winners of the international letter writing competition. (From letf) Claire Gakii; Matilde Magalhães Da Silva; Dao Khuong Duy; Marjan Osvald, Deputy Director General of the UPU

52nd International Letter-Writing Competition for Young People: "Imagine you are a super hero and your mission is to make all roads around the world safer for children. Write a letter to someone explaining which super powers you would need to achieve your mission.

1st prize letter written by Claire Gakii, 13, Kenya

THE INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR
WORLD BANK PROJECTS
P.O. BOX 12629
HATFIELD 0028 PRETORIA
SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Sir,

My name is Claire Gakii from Lions Junior Secondary School in Embu County. I am a superhero and a campaigner on road safety. As a superhero, my mission is making all roads around the world safer for children. I believe that I would need super powers in order to achieve this goal. I write to inform you of my mission and request your support.

Children are the most helpless road users. They require the guidance of adults in their day-to-day lives. To begin my journey of making our roads safer, I will first need the power of persuasion and publicity. This will help me reach the world within the shortest time possible. I will make posters with bold letters reading SLOW DOWN AND SAVE OUR CHILDREN'S LIVES, and circulate them to schools, churches and on road sides to help educate children and raise awareness of the dangers associated with crossing the road carelessly. I will also engage parents and teachers to help me circulate on social media platforms cautionary messages to sensitize road users, children and drivers on the dangers of using the road carelessly, for example DRIVE SAFELY AND SAVE LIVES, STOP, LOOK AND CROSS. I will ensure these posters are placed strategically for all road users to see and are legible to all children.

Social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WeChat, TikTok, Facebook Messenger, Douyin, Telegram and Snapchat) are very effective, efficient and fast. I will be able to sensitize the whole world within a very short period of time and deliver first-hand information. I will request schools and institutions to sensitize all road users during parents' meetings, public gatherings and holidays on how to make roads safe for children and how to assist children on the roads.

Secondly, I will need the power of super speed. This will allow me to quickly and easily travel to different parts of the world to assess the situation and implement changes where necessary. Super speed will allow me to monitor road conditions and terrains, and try to understand why and how often accidents occur. It will also help me to interact with different communities in different countries and get to know the major causes of road accidents and take cautionary measures. I will try to work with the governments in other countries and see how the roads can be improved to cater for children and what measures should be put in place to safeguard children. Speed is a major risk factor for road traffic injuries. High speed results in greater impact at the time of a crash, which leads to more severe injuries and fatalities.

I will design SAFE MOBILE SOLAR ROBOTS WITH RECORDERS TO ENHANCE THE POWER OF VISIBILITY. Robots are expected to work continuously, yielding a precise desired response around the clock. A robot will need a power source to continue to work. This would allow me to observe the actions of drivers and ensure that they are following traffic rules and regulations. This would allow me to identify areas where accidents are likely to occur so that I can take steps to prevent them. This would allow me to control the speed of vehicles and prevent them from over-speeding. This would allow me to redirect traffic if necessary to avoid any accidents from occurring. To reduce speed, I will be enforcing a maximum speed limit of 30 km/h on roads used by many pedestrians and children by installing road features that limit speed, such as traffic lights, roundabouts and speed bumps.

Protective super power is another measure I will employ to ensure children are safe on the roads. I will put emphasis on use of helmets for children who ride bicycles and on motorcycles. Wearing a helmet is the single most effective strategy for reducing the risk of head injury while riding bicycles or on motorcycles. I will work hand in hand with the road safety officers to train children on road usage and the purposes of pedestrian walkways. I will develop policies to protect children and ensure that these policies are properly publicized and implemented. I will also make sure that children are educated on their rights and what to do in case of an accident. I will teach children road safety through simple animations and cartoons which will entertain and assist in attracting their attention. I will teach about signs and traffic lights, identify and discuss places where it is safe to cross the road, teach children how to cross the road using the stop, look, listen and think process, i.e. stop, look and listen for traffic

Additionally, I would need super strength. This would allow to move around and find out how children are ferried to or from schools, and whether the use of seatbelts is emphasized and seats mounted correctly, along with child safety seats, use of child safety locks and booster seats that are appropriate for children of all ages and weight. I will also use my power of strength to tow broken-down cars faster in order to avoid causing traffic jams. I will talk to authorities, give advice, intervene in accidents and also help protect children. I will also move vehicles and other obstacles out of the way to ensure that the road is clear for children.

With these powers, I am confident that I can make all roads around the world safer for children. I believe that if we all work together, we can make a difference in the lives of children and help to prevent accidents on the road. Thank you very much for taking the time to read my letter. I look forward to a positive response from you.

Sincerely,

Claire

SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT: STREAMLINING POSTAL IT WITH UPU-TECHCERT

Text by TARA **GIROUD**

The Universal Postal Union is launching a new IT program expected to benefit designated postal operators, IT solution vendors, including private companies and non-corporate entities, as well as the UPU itself. A suite of certifications, called UPU-TechCert, is being rolled out to vendors that will lead to verified, streamlined, and uniform interfaces for solutions that postal operators use in conjunction with UPU software

"The real target is to help our members, the designated operators, and of course we want to have a win-win-win situation—we want every party between the UPU, the post, and the software vendors to benefit from this program," said David Avsec, Account Relationship Coordinator with the UPU's Postal Technology Center.

The suite of certifications would create smoother working processes with the UPU's software solutions for all areas of the UPU portfolio of IT systems, including mail and logistics, postal payments, and big data and business intelligence tools.

Posts require many and varied technology solutions to fulfil their missions, and those solutions can become webs of complex data flows. When postal operators utilize the UPU's software, such as IPS (International Postal System) or CDS (Customs Declaration System) software, they integrate this software into their IT landscape with other solutions they have developed themselves or from third party vendors, Avsec said. It is likely that even mid-sized postal operators without a complex IT system may interface 10 to 20 technologies that communicate with the UPU's software.

For example, terminals used by postal staff to collect sender information needs to connect properly with UPU software, which helps the post to collect accurate customs data.

"It's a very good thing that posts do this integration because then UPU software fits into their global IT landscape," Avsec said, "but at the same time, until now, we didn't have a formal process to validate that those integrations were done properly."

FEWER TECH SUPPORT NEEDS

This can lead to confusing technical problems and a heavier call volume to the UPU's technology support. Many support calls that posts believed had originated with UPU software were found to stem from outside vendors' interfaces, Avsec explained, some of which the UPU had been unaware were interfacing with the UPU's software entirely.

"Every time we are going to validate and give this certification, then we will have some knowledge of the IT solutions (from third party vendors), what they do, why they speak with our system, and we'll be better prepared for providing Technical Support to our users," Avsec said.

Additionally, these certifications signal to the outside world that the UPU is moving away from its traditionally closed ecosystem and is opening to the outside world. As the UPU communicates its interest in building relationships with the wider postal sector players, software vendors are among those players.

"It was the right time to come with this, to show (software vendors) that they can obtain something from the UPU," Avsec said. "It's not only coming and listening to the meetings and participating in some of the meetings, but it's also applying to the certification and in return getting this token from the UPU that they can use commercially."

The UPU-TechCert certification will provide vendors with a marketing tool that will elevate them in the field of solution providers. Additionally, as vendors highlight their seal of approval from the UPU, postal operators may then be exposed to new innovative solutions they hadn't known existed.

All in all, Avsec said, posts will be able to select with more confidence the solutions that are peripheral to the to the UPU systems.

THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The certifications, a voluntary step from the IT vendors, will stand as a testament to posts that a vendor meets the UPU's requirements.

The process will be standardized and mostly automated. Software vendors will perform a series of technical tests sending data from the company or organization to the UPU. When the results of the test meet UPU standards, and data was shown to be transmitted and stored correctly, the vendor will receive its certification.

This certification does not address the functionality of the service being offered to postal operators but indicates that the vendor's interface functions with UPU software. The vendor is then permitted to include the UPU-TechCert logo in its marketing materials.

The certification would be valid for two years, with recertifications available on a two-year cycle. Recertification would allow for updates in inevitable software evolutions, on both sides (UPU and the vendors technologies).

The first certification has been developed for postal payments. For postal operators, there has been a demand to accelerate innovation in this area, Avsec said, adding that applications for this certification can begin now. As demand is expressed for certifications in other areas, such as logistics or customs data, the UPU will begin taking applications those certifications as well. But posts interested in UPU-TechCert for other areas are encouraged to connect through the portal online.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

As these certifications are rolled out and implemented, Avsec said efficiencies created by UPU-TechCert may trickle down to customers and customer satisfaction. For example, in the chain of of remittances, from the sending country to the destination country, with UPU systems in the middle, there are third-party technologies involved in nearly all countries. Issues with quality of service may leave countries criticizing one another, but very often, he said, the trigger was an integration problem and not necessarily first or last mile technology failures.

"Those hiccups have a direct impact on the postal customers because it means they cannot be paid on time or they have to go come back to the post office if at the first time something didn't work at all," Avsec said. "In terms of quality of service for the end customers, we expect to have an impact with the UPU-TechCert."

There are currently no specified benchmarks of success for the certifications, Avsec said. The proof of concept will lie in interest in the program: are vendors signing up, are questions coming in and building trends toward other certifications. Most important will be the experience of the posts once they begin working with certified vendors.

"If posts come back in a year or two to tell me: 'Thank you for the certification program because, thanks to that, I made the right choice,' that would be success, because it means that we have created value for the post." TG

UPU-TechCert
Your gateway to reliable integration

UPU RELEASES FIRST-EVER "STATE OF THE POSTAL SECTOR" REPORT

Text by TARA **GIROUD**

The postal sector's impact on countries' real gross domestic product (GDP) is far greater than previously understood, according to a new report from the Universal Postal Union, with figures demonstrating for the first time a causal link between well-functioning postal operations and economic development. The report showed that the median postal operator would have a 7 percent contribution to real GDP generated when both direct and indirect activities are accounted for.

"It's a very strong causality link between the level of postal development in the country and the economic development and resilience," said UPU Economist José Ansón. "This is a message to governments that even in the digital age, the postal infrastructure is absolutely critical to economic growth and economic resilience."

To gain this insight, 172 posts were studied utilizing the Integrated Index for Postal Development metric, or 2IPD, which categorizes posts into 10 levels of development using components that demonstrate a post's reliability, reach, relevance, and resilience. This was then studied with countries' GDP per capita before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2IPD has been used for years as a more accurate metric for understanding postal development than, for example, letter volume or number of post offices. However, this is the first time the 2IPD was used to link postal development with economic development. The pandemic provided economists with data from an unprecedented disruption to economies bringing the postal sector's value into stark relief.

"From an economic modelling perspective, we could rigorously study for the first time the impact of postal services on the economic development," Ansón said.

A Sector in Flux

The economic impact demonstrated in this study comes at a time when posts are looking for ways to remain relevant in a changing world. Posts emerged from the pandemic in the midst of continued decline of traditional mail delivery and continued consumer demand for home delivery of online purchases.

"They are shifting from a from a segment of activity, letter post, that they were dominating to another segment, the parcels segment, that is growing, indeed, but is a segment where there are more alternatives," Ansón said. "Posts have to find the right business model, and this is not easy to find."

This is vital not only to the survival of the posts themselves but to the countries in which they operate. The UPU's research found that countries that benefited from high levels of postal development saw greater economic recovery after the pandemic.

5 October 2023 - Winners (from left, Japan, Austria, Switzerland, Germany and France) of the Postal Excellence Awards.

However, this was not evident at all levels. Postal impact on economies tended to be less pronounced in least developed posts and tended to climb but then decline in the highest developed posts. Posts in the upper mid-range of development saw the greatest impact on their economic recoveries.

A call for investment

It has been widely accepted that the direct impact to real GDP stands at between 0.5 percent and 1.0 percent, Ansón explained. However, when indirect influence was considered, the median postal operator demonstrated a 7 percent contribution to economic recovery."It's a huge contribution as a sector," Ansón said.

Such stark numbers should highlight for governments that the postal service is not an infrastructure of the past, it is more than written communication, Ansón said.

"It's a true trade and economic facilitator for the success of many businesses and particularly for the success of micro, small, and medium sized enterprises," Ansón said. He emphasized the necessary regulatory environments and investing in the next generation of postal services.

"They have to upgrade these postal services for the future," he said. "If the posts get the necessary support, they can help move a lot of people out of poverty."

Post and AI together

The critical factor for posts' future success is what Ansón called 'hyper collaboration'. Traditionally, posts have preferred to develop everything on their own, he said, but posts need to move away from this mindset and become a hub of facilitation, 'the heart of an ecosystem that provides the services that the 21st century citizens and consumers and enterprises need'.

Hyper collaboration would help the sector to remain relevant in a high-tech world by collaborating with other partners never before considered, such as other sectors, countries, even those at different stages of development, and even different cultures. These unlikely partnerships could be identified by AI by analyzing data and searching for complementary skill sets or past projects.

All of this could help level the playing field of postal development. This could be particularly important as the report showed continued disparity in postal development between advanced and developing nations.

"Technology, particularly AI, can help identify partners for posts to work with, as well as the right ways of working with these partners," Ansón said, "so that together we can better serve citizens and enterprises and governments." TG

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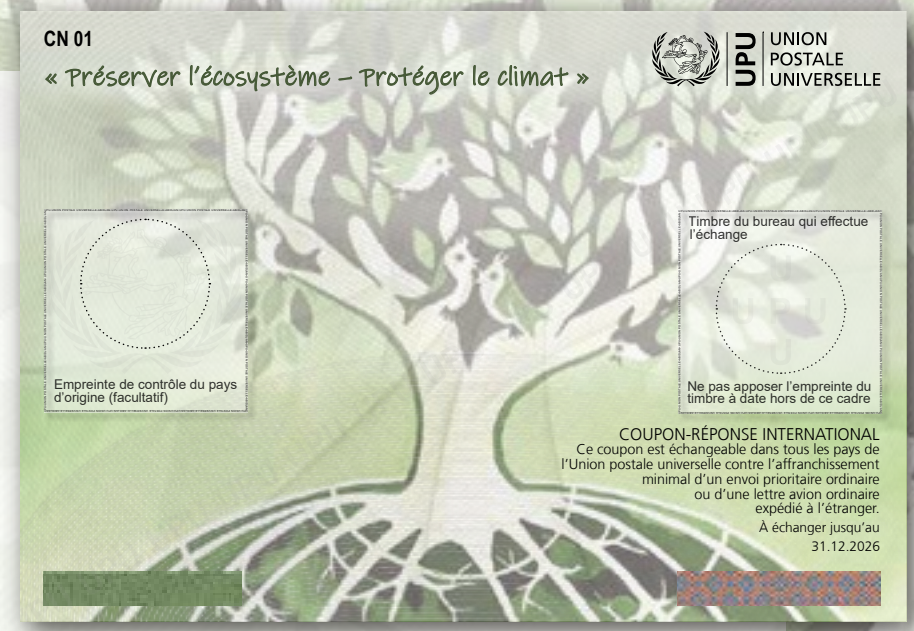

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A TRUSTED PARTNER: HOW THE POST IS PRIORITIZING CONNECTIVITY, SAFETY, AND THE FUTURE OF THE PLANET

by MAKIKO **HAYASHI**

Photo: Austrian Post/Katharina Rinnhofer

Each 9 October, the postal sector celebrates World Post Day, a United Nations awareness day established to mark the anniversary of the UPU's creation in 1874. The theme for World Post Day 2023 was "Together for Trust: collaborating for a safe and connected future", which spoke to the importance of trust as a foundation of postal services delivery, especially in an increasingly digital world. In his annual World Post Day address, UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki said, "The foundation of the Post's success as a service provider lies in the trust it has earned from people across the globe down the centuries. Today, more than five million postal employees are entrusted with a variety of essential and personal items, from messages, gifts and goods to money and medicines."
In recognition of the theme, the UPU highlights how posts are working on innovative, transformative and modern initiatives to connect and build trust with communities.

Austrian Post

One of the key innovations enhancing community trust is Austrian Post's reusable packaging initiative as part of its action on climate change. Since July 2023, Austrian Post has been offering a new standard service for all business stakeholders that allows them to send out the products sold in their online shops in reusable packaging. With the name Post Loop, the sustainable packaging solution means customers can fold up the packaging their goods came in and return it via different return points, such as mailboxes and post offices, instead of throwing the empty packaging away.

The initiative also comes with an incentive for customers. When they use a special application (the RE-ZIP app) upon returning the packaging and scan a QR code at the return point, they receive a voucher from the online store. The app has so far proven user friendly in that people of all levels of digital literacy can operate it easily.

The initiative has also proven a remarkable success with the public, according to Katharina Rinnhofer from Austrian Post. "In a 2022 survey, 75% of the respondents emphasized the importance of this initiative. In a separate assessment, they valued the opportunity to reduce packaging waste, and moreover expressed a preference for online retailers that offer reusable packaging over their competitors," she said.

The project, still in its start-up phase, has gained significant media attention, receiving six awards for its outstanding sustainable, innovative accomplishments, and thereby encouraging more business customers to integrate this new service into their business models and better serve their clients.

Belposhta

Belposhta, the Belarusian postal service, is also using digitalization, with the aim of increasing efficiency and connectedness. A digital payment service implemented in March 2022 has replaced paper prepayment books and provided multiple benefits, such as securing digital services and increasing competition, as well as enhancing inclusion and connectivity in remote areas. According to Belposhta, by the end of 2023, 70 percent of customers are expected to transfer to this digital service, suggesting that there is increased customer confidence in Belposhta's ability to meet customer needs within a short timespan competitors,"she said.

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Correos (Spain)

The needs of the customer are also a focus for Correos, the Spanish designated postal operator. With over 20 years of work in the field of cybersecurity, in June 2023, Correos was awarded a new certification under the Spanish National Security Scheme (Esquema Nacional de Seguridad or ENS) by ensuring increased cybersecurity. Customer awareness of and demand for the security and safety of information has increased immensely over recent years, thus Correos is taking steps to put the new ENS certification in place.

"Correos has always identified customer needs, and the cross-cutting feature of cybersecurity is becoming a key point of interest for customers ... (Having) ENS in place will continue to generate customer trust, reinforce cybersecurity strategy and enhance the brand image of Correos as deeply committed to tackling cybersecurity," says Raul Gomez-Alvarez, Head of Cyber Culture at Correos. MH.

Canada Post

Like Austrian Post, Canada Post is focused on providing customers with more sustainable products and services. Since March 2023, Canada Post's domestic regular and expedited parcel ground shipping services, as well as its flat-rate box shipping, have been carbon neutral. To provide these services, Canada Post is purchasing carbon offsets to neutralize the environmental impacts of emissions generated from ground shipping. Canada Post prioritizes Indigenous-owned or led, Canadian nature-based offset projects that are listed under recognized carbon registries and are verified by an independent, accredited third party. The carbon offsets do not count towards Canada Post's emissions reduction targets and are a complement to

Photo: Canada Post/Andrew Williamson

Photo: Canada Post/Andrew Williamson

actions being taken to transition to a zero-carbon last-mile fleet.

"Sustainability is becoming increasingly important for all our stakeholders, including our employees. Our goal is to engage employees to take action on reducing environmental impacts. We are seeking ways to empower our employees with the tools and resources they need to help Canada Post meet its goal of leadership on environmental sustainability," says Farah Moghal, Director of Corporate Sustainability & Environmental Policy from Canada Post.

In parallel, Canada Post is actively addressing climate change by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within and across its operations and value chain. For instance, work is underway to electrify 100 percent of its last-mile fleet by 2040, with the successful roll out of 100 fully electric delivery vans on track for the end of 2023. In September 2023, Canada Post's largest parcel sorting facility (the Albert Jackson Processing Centre) officially opened. This facility is its first net-zero carbon building and the largest industrial project in Canada to meet the Canada Green

Swiss Post

Back in Europe, Swiss Post is leveraging digital technology to enhance trust among its customers. Underpinned by its current strategy put in place in 2020, titled Swiss Post of Tomorrow (2021–2024), Swiss Post has been exploring connections between the physical and digital worlds to deliver new digital services to its customers that will play a significant role in its future operations. The first step in bridging the gap between digital and physical postal services was turning around 800 of Swiss Post's company-operated branches into regional service centers. Additionally, Swiss Post developed a Swiss e-voting system. Its rollout took place in three cantons during local and federal votes held in June and federal elections held in October 2023.

Swiss Post's strength lies in its 175-year history of building reliability and trustworthiness with customers, especially when it comes to the confidential handling of data and information.

According to Nicole Burth, Member of Executive Management at Swiss Post and Head of Communications Services Unit, "The need for mail secrecy also exists in the digital world and by turning this vision into reality, we want to reach the next generation of customers and cover their current and future needs. We are all aware that today, we communicate differently than we did in the past."

MARKET DIGEST

by MAKIKO **HAYASHI**

ARGENTINA

Geopost has joined TASA Logistica, a company specializing in comprehensive logistics solutions for mass consumption, and expanded to Argentina to offer last-mile logistics solutions through DPD Argentina. TASA Logistica, founded in 1936, also operates in Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. Geopost, a leading parcel operator in Europe, aims to seize the opportunities of Argentina's last-mile delivery sector, characterized by dynamic e-commerce growth, by offering robust solutions to the region's customers. DPD Argentina's goal is to become the top last-mile player in country in the next five years.

(Source: Post and Parcel Info.)

AUSTRALIA

Australia Post has transformed its historic Orange Post Office into its first Community Hub @ Post in Orange, New South Wales. The Community Hub @ Post in Orange, currently managed as a pilot site, is a modern retail space that serves as a central hub for various new products and services tailored to the needs of the local community to support retail customers, business operators and local merchants. Some of the innovative features include changing rooms for customers to try on their online purchases, allowing them the convenience of returning the products on the spot while they are still in the post office.

(Source: news.com.au/)

AUSTRIA

The Austrian Post and TEMU, a global e-commerce platform, have established strategic cooperation to ensure first-class delivery for Austrian customers. The collaboration features a shared vision between the two actors regarding sustainability, quality, and on-time delivery, whereby the Austrian Post will act as a service provider for TEMU in Austria. This collaboration offers TEMU with the highest quality of carbon neutral delivery but at the same time, ensuring the reliability of online orders to reach Austrians in time for Christmas.

(Source: Post and Parcel Info.)

BELGIUM

Bpost, the Belgian Post Group, has installed a new national sorting system at its Antwerp X terminal, with more than a twofold increase in its sorting capacity from 9,000 to 20,000 parcels per hour. Originally a regional terminal to include parcels bound for addresses only in the Antwerp region, the new sorting system can handle larger volumes that include parcels also addressed outside the region. With this ambitious investment, Bpost is keen to become the preferred partner for e-commerce logistics.

(Source: Post and Parcel Info.)

FINLAND

Posti, with the most extensive network in the industry, including approximately 1,000 service points and 2,200 parcel lockers, will update its service points to offer personal services in phases starting in 2024. While post offices offer all services, Posti Service Points are operated to offer the most-used services according to local demands of customers. For instance, Posti Service Points will focus on parcels and less on letter services, which will be centralized to post offices.

(Source: posti.com)

IRELAND

An Post is marking another milestone in the company's sustainability journey by adding new electric vehicles to its delivery fleet. These efforts are in line with the company's goal to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030, with a 50% reduction by 2025. During the festive season, it is estimated that over 10 million packages will be delivered nationwide. It is estimated that as 30% of delivery routes are covered by EVs and this number is soon expected to increase to 32% (1,250 EVs out of the total 3,600 of available vehicles at An Post). Postal drivers welcomed this initiative just ahead of the busy Christmas season.

(Source: limerickleader.ie)

LITHUANIA

Starting March 2024, LP Express, operated by Lithuanian Post as a parcel delivery network, will begin parcel operations in Latvia and Estonia. Currently, 300 parcel lockers will be installed in Latvia and Estonia. However, the development of the LP Express network in all three Baltic countries will eventually comprise more than 700 parcel lockers. The e-commerce market is growing each year in the Baltic region, with forecasts of annual growth of 11% from 2023 to 2027. More than half of all postal parcels in Lithuania were delivered via parcel lockers.

(Source: Parcel and Postal Technology International.)

NEW ZEALAND

A new zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell-powered truck of New Zealand Post (NZ Post) is currently being assessed for use in parcel and freight operations between Auckland and Hamilton. While the project has been ongoing for two years, this initiative will form the basis of evaluating the vehicle's sustainability on freights and routes. The further network development of hydrogen refueling sites will enable longer routes and 24/7 operations with expansion for use in urban settings.

(Source: Parcel and Postal Technology International.)

PAKISTAN

In collaboration with NADRA (National Database and Registration Authority of Pakistan), Pakistan Post is now able to provide its customers with computerized national identity cards (CNIC) at post office counters nationwide. This is a new type of service offered by Pakistan Post as part of the 'move one step forward' initiative aiming to provide citizens with more accessible and efficient services via post office counters.

(Source: Pakistan Post, newsguru.pk)

QATAR

Qatar Post and China's Gallery Five Group have signed a pioneering pact to foster an international cross-border-e-commerce platform. Leveraging Qatar's advantageous geographical position and robust infrastructural support, this collaboration between the two countries sets the stage for enhanced trade dynamics, encompassing Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and the neighboring Gulf countries. Thanks to Qatar Post's robust infrastructure, boasting expansive storage facilities, independent custom services, and cutting-edge flow-type distribution mechanisms, the streamlined, comprehensive distribution services offered by Qatar Post Office and its overseas warehouses will introduce an array of Chinese products into the Middle East market.

(Source: Qatar Tribune.com)

TUNISIA

Tunisia Post has selected ISITEC International's intelligent inbound and outbound parcel sorting solution to equip its international e-commerce logistics platform, Ecom@Africa. It will be located in the outskirts of Tunis-Carthage Airport and is expected to be operational in January 2024. Launched in 2016 by the UPU, the Ecom@Africa project aims to develop intra-African and international e-commerce through the postal network in each of the five major African regions and Tunisia is among the first countries to experiment with this initiative. It aims to become the e-commerce hub for the North African region under an ambitious IT and logistics project roadmap.

(Source: logisticsbusiness.com)

UNITED KINGDOM

Royal Mail and its Parcel Collect service will enter into a strategic partnership with ZigZag Global retail returns solution to offer customers a convenient home collection service. The service includes the added convenience of having posties print and bring return labels to customers' doorsteps. According to Royal Mail, up until now, the Parcel Collect service has been an incredible success as the services prove to be of great convenience for customers at the time of parcel collection to be sent out or even when they need to be returned.

(Source: Post and Parcel Info.)

ZIMBABWE

Zimpost is diversifying its services as part of its digitalization strategy to meet the needs and demands of an ever-changing digitalized world. Zimpost launched the Zimbabwe.Mall.post (2020), an online shop, for the UPU's Postal Strategy of promoting e-commerce and Postmoney (2021), a mobile financial wallet to ensure financial inclusion. At Zimpost's workshop held in November, the Minister of ICT, Postal and Courier Services in her keynote address urged the company to establish collaboration with big players in e-commerce. The Ministry also proposed that the post use community information centers as hubs for "smart" post offices to change the lives of communities by bridging the digital divide between urban and rural areas through digitally transformed business processes and products.

(Source: bmetro.co.zw.)

MailAmericas

ABOUT US

MailAmericas, founded in 2002, provides cross-border mail solutions to Latin America. Through a network of 17 Designated Postal Operators, we have improved service performance by reducing transit times and increasing delivery efficiency.

Since 2012, we have empowered international sellers and marketplaces by offering e-commerce solutions that allow them to compete on par with domestic players.

Today, MailAmericas offers cutting-edge package tracking, information processing, and Alternative Delivery Solutions (ADS). Our success in the international E-commerce ecosystem is driven by our unique public-private matrix of DPOs and private players.

UPU CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

MailAmericas actively participates as a prominent Gold member of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) Consultative Committee, fostering hyper-collaboration between public and private operators.

Tomas H. Miguens & Masahiko Metoki
(UPU Director General)

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