

SIDS Postal Leaders Forum

Mahé Declaration

We, the representatives of SIDS' designated operators, endorse this Declaration at the end of the first SIDS Postal Leaders Forum, held in Mahé, Seychelles, from 5 to 7 March 2024, on the theme **“Postal Digitalization, Integration and Innovation: Sustainable Growth Boosters for SIDS”**

Upon the conclusion of the deliberations, we hereby declare that:

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

Accordingly, we hereby pledge to:

- 1 Encourage the involvement of regulatory bodies, governments, industry stakeholders and international organizations to foster a collaborative approach towards enabling full digital and physical connectivity of post offices by 2030;
- 2 Advocate for policies that promote affordable and inclusive access to transport and digital services, thereby facilitating regional integration and driving the expansion of the digital economy;
- 3 Collaborate, share expertise, and undertake capacity-building and knowledge transfer activities to empower postal staff and enhance their digital skills;
- 4 Encourage the uptake of innovative solutions in the postal network to harness added value from connectivity;
- 5 Improve the security and cybersecurity of postal infrastructure, including adoption of the .POST top-level domain and associated secure share services.

- 6 Encourage governments to use the universal service fund to support the Post's contribution to digital infrastructure deployment and the digital economy.

Now, therefore, we, participants in the SIDS Postal Leaders Forum, declare our commitment to the full and rapid implementation of this Declaration. We also pledge to spare no effort in expanding and using the postal network for the sustainable development of digital economies and societies.

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

Done at Mahé on 7 March 2024

