

# UNION POSTALE

MOVING THE POSTAL SECTOR FORWARD SINCE 1875 | AUTUMN/WINTER 2024



**COVER STORY**

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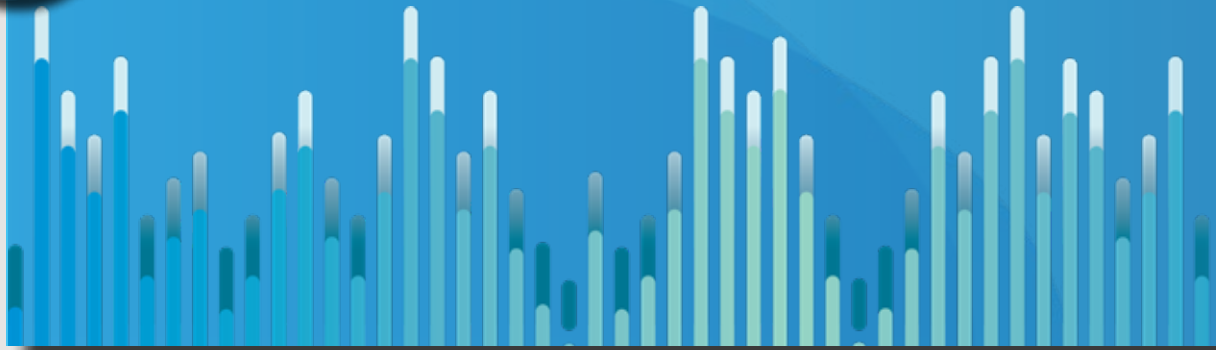
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2024 STATE OF THE  
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**POSTAL MATTERS**





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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.

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To have your postal blog featured, contact us at [communication@upu.int](mailto:communication@upu.int)





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### UPU FORUM

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### UPU FORUM

## EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE POSTAL SECTOR: UPU FELLOWSHIP FUELS LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

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## UPU KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

### 2024 STATE OF THE POSTAL SECTOR REPORT CHARTS ROADMAP FOR LONGEVITY

The 2024 edition of the UPU's flagship report on the development of the postal sector provides a scrutinizing analysis of the sector's past and present, providing an optimistic vision for its successful future.

## 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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*Refers to the season in the country of publication.*

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# CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF ENABLING COMMUNICATION AND EMPOWERING PEOPLES ACROSS NATIONS



**“As the second-oldest international organization, the UPU has steadfastly championed the right to communicate, evolving with the world around it while staying true to its founding mission.”**

**Masahiko Metoki**  
Director General, UPU

This year's World Post Day, 9 October 2024, marked a monumental milestone for the Universal Postal Union as we celebrated 150 years of uniting people everywhere through access to essential communication, trade, financial, social and, now, digital services. As the second-oldest international organization, the UPU has steadfastly championed the right to communicate, evolving with the world around it while staying true to its founding mission.

This milestone was an occasion to reflect on the UPU's journey, from its origins as a gathering of 22 visionary nations in Berne, Switzerland, to today's vibrant postal family of 192 member countries. Together, we have nurtured a universal network that facilitates communication, empowers communities, and provides essential services worldwide.

Our celebration in Berne paid homage to the city and country where the UPU began. Key representatives from local and federal authorities joined us to inaugurate a new sign at the UPU monument – a symbol of the enduring relationship between the UPU and its host nation, Switzerland. In the historic hall where the treaty that created the UPU was signed, we remembered the foresight of our founders and reaffirmed our commitment to the UPU's enduring mission to grow and develop a single postal territory.

As we celebrated our past, we also embraced the present and envisioned the future. Messages from the UN Secretary-General and other international partners highlighted the UPU's indispensable role in fostering multilateral cooperation as one of its very first examples. Member countries underscored the significance

of the UPU in enabling communication in even the most remote corners of the world. The Postal Excellence Awards honoured the achievements of leaders and rising stars in postal development, showcasing the resilience and innovation that power our network.

Our future lies in the hands of the next generation. The winners of the International Letter-Writing Competition, representing Belarus, China, Indonesia, and Cyprus, inspired us with their visions of the world they wish to leave behind for future generations. Their letters were a poignant reminder of the enduring importance of communication in shaping our shared future.

The UPU's 150th anniversary has inspired a year of celebration, reflection, and recommitment. It reminds us that the strength of our Union lies in its ability to adapt and innovate while staying grounded in the ideals of cooperation and inclusivity. As we look ahead, the challenges of digital transformation, climate action, and equitable development await. Yet, the legacy of the past 150 years assures us that, together, we can overcome any obstacle.

Let us honour this legacy by continuing to work together to build a network that not only connects people today but empowers them for generations to come.

**Masahiko Metoki**  
Director General, UPU



**Masahiko Metoki**  
@UPU\_DG

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# A BIRTHDAY TO REMEMBER

## EDITOR'S NOTE

This year has been one of celebration. Those celebrations came to a pinnacle on 9 October – World Post Day – when the UPU celebrated its 150th birthday.

In this edition's cover story, readers will learn more about how the organization celebrated its rich heritage with the international community, member countries and the local authorities of its host country, Switzerland, on this very special day.

This edition takes a look back at the history of communication with the Berne Museum for Communication and co-editors of a special edition of the French academic journal *Monde(s)* centered on the UPU's 150th anniversary.

We also take a look forward at the UPU's future. In conversation with UPU economist, José Anson, *UNION POSTALE* examines the results of the latest State of the Postal Sector report and outlines ways forward for a prosperous postal future. We also take a deep-dive into the results of the UPU's global strategy roadshow, highlighting regional contributions to the organization's strategy for 2026-2029.

Finally, this edition marks my last as *UNION POSTALE*'s editor-in-chief. I would like to take this opportunity to thank readers for their feedback over the past several years – it has been a privilege to share stories from the sector with all of you.

I wish you a happy reading.

**KAYLA REDSTONE**  
*Editor-in-chief*

### **Correction notice**

In the Summer 2024 edition of *Union Postale*, the introduction of "Inclusion delivered in China" (pg. 30) incorrectly states that Zhao Chongjiu joined the State Post Bureau in late 2020. Mr Zhao joined the State Post Bureau in September 2022.

# SHAPING THE FUTURE: REGIONAL STRATEGY FORUMS AND THE UPU'S 2026–2029 STRATEGY

In 2024, the Universal Postal Union convened six Regional Strategy Forums in Grand Cayman (Cayman Islands), Arusha (Tanzania), Bogotá (Colombia), Doha (Qatar), Ankara (Türkiye), and Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia). Held in June and September, these forums provided a unique opportunity to engage governments, regulators, and postal operators from UPU's 192 member countries in shaping the UPU's 2026–2029 strategic cycle.

*Text by* AKSHAYA **SHIVKUMAR**  
*UPU Institutional Strategy Programme Manager*



Member countries actively engaged in Regional Strategy Forums across the globe. The photo above captures the Strategy Forum for the Arab Region.





UPU Deputy Director General Marjan Osvald opened the UPU Regional Strategy Forum for Africa and welcomed all member countries of the region.

Each forum offered a collaborative platform to gain consensus as to where the UPU should direct its efforts over the next four years, and to ensure that every region's unique needs and challenges were captured in the draft strategy.

This collaborative approach reinforced the UPU's commitment to inclusivity, transparency, and accountability, ensuring that its strategic framework is rooted in the priorities of its diverse membership.

### **E-commerce and declining volumes: A shared reality**

The decline in traditional mail volumes has been a long-standing challenge for the postal sector, but its impact has been magnified by the rapid rise of e-commerce. Across all forums, participants expressed concern about the inability of existing postal networks to fully capitalize on the opportunities presented by e-commerce. The Americas, Europe and Central Asia, and Asia-Pacific regions particularly emphasized the need to create competitive offerings in logistics and last-mile delivery to capture e-commerce market share.

The Caribbean region raised concerns about the cost and efficiency of transporting goods across fragmented island networks. Africa stressed the importance of closing infrastructure gaps to ensure that rural and underserved areas can participate in the e-commerce economy. Meanwhile, stakeholders from the Arab region highlighted the need for updated frameworks to support

new business models that reflect the demands of cross-border trade.

It became clear that the postal sector must rethink its role in the e-commerce ecosystem, moving beyond traditional delivery models to become active players in digital trade and logistics.

### **Solutions to combat declining volumes**

To tackle these challenges, stakeholders across all regions proposed a combination of solutions that leverage innovation, diversification, and resilience. These solutions aim to create resilient postal networks that adapt to market changes while meeting the needs of modern consumers.

### **Getting the basics right**

Across all forums, participants emphasized the importance of strengthening fundamental postal service attributes – price, quality of service, and service features. Regions such as Europe and Central Asia, Asia-Pacific, and the Americas highlighted that a strong customer focus, competitive pricing models and consistent quality of service are non-negotiable for retaining relevance in a highly dynamic market. In Africa and the Caribbean, the focus extended to ensuring affordability and accessibility, particularly for underserved and rural communities.

Stakeholders underscored that aligning service offerings with evolving customer expectations – whether through streamlined processes, enhanced reliability, or added

Stakeholders underscored that aligning service offerings with evolving customer expectations – whether through streamlined processes, enhanced reliability, or added convenience – would be critical to positioning the postal sector as a trusted enabler of economic growth.

convenience – would be critical to positioning the postal sector as a trusted enabler of economic growth. By focusing on these foundational elements, the UPU and its member countries can ensure that their networks are primed for both current challenges and future opportunities.

### **Building resilience through infrastructure and services**

Resilience emerged as a guiding principle across all forums, reflecting the need for adaptability in the face of global disruptions. Stakeholders emphasized that resilience was not just about responding to crises but about creating systems capable of thriving amid change.

For many regions, resilience was tied to infrastructure modernization and service diversification. Africa and Asia-Pacific, for instance, emphasized leveraging postal networks to provide financial inclusion and community-based services. In the Americas, stakeholders called for advocacy to raise awareness of the postal sector's role in logistics and its ability to meet broader societal needs.



Ministers and CEOs from Caribbean member countries discuss innovations in the global postal ecosystem at the Regional Strategy Forum for the Caribbean.

**Diversification and value-added services**

Diversification emerged as another key element. Stakeholders stressed the need to expand beyond core postal services to include financial services, government partnerships, and other value-added offerings. Africa and the Caribbean highlighted the importance of financial inclusion, with postal networks playing a role in providing affordable financial services to underserved populations. Similarly, the Asia-Pacific region pointed to the potential of the postal network to act as access points for government services, such as identity verification and benefit distribution.

E-commerce-related services, such as warehousing, fulfillment, and digital storefront solutions, were also seen as opportunities for diversification. These services not only enhance revenue streams but also position postal operators as enablers of economic growth, particularly for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

**Innovation: A catalyst for growth**

Innovation was a central theme that united all regions. From adopting digital tools to integrating e-commerce solutions, stakeholders identified modernization

as critical to ensuring the postal sector remains competitive and responsive to evolving market demands.

The Arab region focused on customer-centric innovations to enhance operational efficiency, while Asia-Pacific emphasized the integration of end-to-end logistics solutions for e-commerce. Europe and Central Asia highlighted the importance of combining large-scale innovations with process optimization to ensure operational excellence. Across all regions, public-private partnerships were seen as vital to

[E-commerce-related services] not only enhance revenue streams but also position postal operators as enablers of economic growth, particularly for small businesses and entrepreneurs.



UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki highlighted the significance of the Americas by inaugurating the UPU Regional Strategy Forum for the region.

diversifying services, overcoming funding challenges, and expanding postal offerings.

Sustainability was woven into these discussions, with regions identifying ways to align innovation with environmental and socio-economic goals. Europe and Central Asia prioritized green logistics and carbon reduction, reflecting growing customer demand for environmentally conscious solutions. In the Caribbean, the focus was on resilience, particularly in response to natural disasters, while Africa highlighted inclusive development and financial inclusion.

Asia-Pacific also touched on sustainability as an emerging priority, focusing on greener logistics and packaging solutions tied to national climate goals. While the approaches and level of priority allocated to sustainability varied, all regions acknowledged its importance in creating a postal sector that aligns with global development priorities.

Investments in digital and physical infrastructure were seen as central to building resilience. Participants highlighted the importance of regional logistical hubs, streamlined customs processes, and improved last-mile delivery to support e-commerce growth.

Infrastructure modernization was central to the discussions. Participants highlighted investments in digital and physical infrastructure as crucial to supporting e-commerce growth, improving last-mile delivery, and strengthening logistical networks. Africa and Asia-Pacific emphasized the development of regional logistics hubs and streamlined customs processes to facilitate cross-border operations. The Caribbean region, on the other hand, focused on building resilience against natural disasters, advocating for enhanced infrastructure capable of withstanding climate-related disruptions.

### Regionalization: Strengthening local presence

Regionalization emerged as a theme throughout the forums, emphasizing the need to adapt the UPU's work to the socio-economic and operational realities of each region. Participants expressed the need for more responsive and impactful support closer to the field. Regionalization was seen as a method to empower regional offices to play a more active role in addressing local priorities and bridging the gap between global frameworks and regional needs.

Stakeholders also emphasized that regionalization should foster stronger partnerships between the UPU and local organizations, including regional postal unions, regulatory bodies, and private sector players. This collaborative approach would ensure that UPU initiatives are both locally relevant and globally aligned, driving progress across diverse operational landscapes. Importantly, regionalization was not viewed as an isolated objective but as a means to amplify the impact of other strategic priorities such as e-commerce growth, diversification, and innovation.

### Leveraging the UPU's global role

The forums also underscored the importance of the UPU's role as a global hub for advocacy, knowledge sharing, and capacity building. Stakeholders emphasized that the UPU must continue to act as a bridge between regions, facilitating collaboration and alignment on shared goals.

Harmonization of regulations was a recurring demand, particularly in customs, security and transport. Regions like the Americas and Arab states highlighted the need for regulatory frameworks that are flexible and adaptable to market



Hosted by Türkiye, the Regional Strategy Forum for Europe and Central Asia enjoyed active participation from member countries.



realities. Europe and Central Asia called for clearer regulatory definitions to address the evolving boundaries between postal and logistics sectors.

The UPU's capacity to mobilize global development funds was also seen as a critical enabler for regions facing infrastructure or funding constraints. Stakeholders across Africa and Asia-Pacific emphasized the need for targeted funding to support technical assistance and training programs that align with national development goals.

**From dialogue to action**

The insights gathered from the Regional Strategy Forums have laid the foundation for a UPU strategy that is both globally cohesive and regionally responsive. By incorporating region-specific demands and fostering regionalization, the UPU aims to build a resilient, innovative, and inclusive postal sector.

As the UPU finalizes its strategy to be approved by the Dubai Congress in 2025, the Regional Strategy Forums serve as a powerful reminder of the value of listening to diverse regional perspectives. Through its inclusive and member country driven strategic framework, the UPU is poised to lead the global postal sector into a dynamic and transformative future. **AS**

As the UPU finalizes its strategy to be approved by the Dubai Congress in 2025, the Regional Strategy Forums serve as a powerful reminder of the value of listening to diverse regional perspectives.



During the Regional Strategy Forum for Latin America, high-level participants discussed the future of the postal sector and the role of the UPU in supporting its growth.



The Asia-Pacific forum was graciously hosted by Mongolia, with the CEO Telmen Gerelt warmly welcoming participants from across the region.



The Regional Strategy Forum for Africa emphasized leveraging postal networks to provide financial inclusion and community-based services, underscoring the importance of resilience through infrastructure modernization and service diversification.



# CONNECT • POST

## CONNECT A POST, CONNECT A COMMUNITY

ADVANCING UNIVERSAL DIGITAL INCLUSION  
THROUGH THE POST BY 2030.





# EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE POSTAL SECTOR: UPU FELLOWSHIP FUELS LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

On 4 November 2024, UPU kicked off the Council of Administration (CA) session at the UPU's headquarters, in Berne, Switzerland. This year, with funding from its capacity building program, the UPU granted fellowships to six women leaders in the postal sector to support their participation in the autumn meeting of the Union's supervisory body. The six fellows represented Nicaragua, Trinidad and Tobago, Yemen, Malawi, Vanuatu, and Kyrgyzstan.

*Text by* LIN LIU

Building on the UPU's commitment to Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW), this programme integrates the UPU GEEW policy into its development cooperation programming for countries, allowing senior women leaders in the postal sector to gain exposure at the international level, including engaging with key international platforms such as the UPU Councils, particularly the CA. This exposure equips them with the tools, networks, and knowledge to champion gender mainstreaming initiatives within their own postal administrations. Through this initiative, women leaders also have the chance to collaborate, share best practices, and mentor each other, creating a supportive network that strengthens both their leadership capabilities and the broader postal sector.

During their time in Berne, the fellows participated in CA committee and plenary meetings, which covered a number of topics including feedback on the UPU strategy for 2026-2029 to be approved at the 2025 Congress in Dubai.

Through exchanges with global decision-makers, industry experts, and international peers, they gained valuable insights into pressing sector challenges and opportunities, from digital transformation to sustainability initiatives. Their active participation was not only meant to enhance their own leadership capabilities but also to contribute fresh perspectives to the ongoing dialogue about creating a more inclusive and dynamic postal sector.

"This initiative is part of our capacity development strategy for this cycle. It has grown from three fellowships in 2023 to six in 2024 and includes all regions," said UPU Capacity Development Expert Pooran Parampath. He added, "The overall aim was to integrate the GEEW policy into our programming at the UPU secretariat level while providing benefits to our member countries through a realistic leadership training approach centered on high-performing women from the Post."

Speaking to Union Postale, the fellows shared their diverse insights on postal innovation, women's empowerment, and sector development. They discussed their expectations from the fellowship program, offered recommendations for strengthening postal services, and highlighted initiatives for advancing women's leadership in their respective countries. From ICT modernization to financial literacy, from regulatory reforms to human resource development, each fellow brought unique perspectives shaped by their professional expertise and national contexts.

Speaking on the empowerment of women in leadership, Angel Banda, Postmaster General of Malawi Posts Corporation, stated, "Who can motivate a woman better than another woman?" She believed that women possess unique strengths that, when combined with those of men, can drive synergies that propel businesses forward. Furthermore, she advocated for transformative power of collaboration, emphasizing how the fellowship offers

"The overall aim was to integrate the GEEW policy into our programming at the UPU secretariat level while providing benefits to our member countries through a realistic leadership training approach centered on high-performing women from the Post."

#### Pooran Parampath

UPU Capacity Development Expert

valuable opportunities for both individual and organizational growth. "There is a lot of collaboration... it is a benefit to me as well as to my organization," she remarked, highlighting the potential to introduce new programmes and innovations at Malawi Posts Corporation. Banda expressed her eagerness to learn and integrate the insights gained into her work, stressing the importance of forming partnerships with technical solution providers to enhance service delivery. Drawing from her background in information technology, Banda also underscored the critical role of technological innovation in driving growth. "ICT is the way to visibility. ICT is the way that allows us to grow," she asserted, explaining how technological integration is fundamental to improving parcel tracking, ensuring data integrity, and building customer confidence in the postal sector.

Analyzing the case of Kyrgyzstan, Uulzhan Masiianova, Deputy Director at Kyrgyzstan's International Postal Exchange and Logistics Center, shared insights from her 18 years

Representatives from Nicaragua, Trinidad and Tobago, Yemen, Malawi, Vanuatu, and Kyrgyzstan gathered to share fresh perspectives on fostering a more inclusive global postal sector.



Through exchanges with global decision-makers, industry experts, and international peers, [the UPU GEEW fellowship participants] gained valuable insights into pressing sector challenges and opportunities, from digital transformation to sustainability initiatives.

of experience in the postal sector. She emphasized efforts to enhance operational efficiency at Kyrgyz Post, including the development of a local system for Kyrgyz Post in collaboration with developers. This system was integrated with the UPU's platform, enabling smoother international operations. Masiianova also highlighted the creation of an account for the State Customs Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, which streamlined customs procedures and improved the efficiency of cross-border postal services.

Adding her perspective, Angella Manuella Ben, Senior Accountant and Compliance Officer at Vanuatu Post Ltd, offered unique insights from a small island nation context. When discussing the challenges facing small postal services, she pointed to two critical needs: financial support and technical expertise. Drawing from her banking experience, Ben spoke about the importance of financial literacy programs for women. "Women usually have lower financial literacy in terms of understanding and being able to manage their own finance," she said. Talking about her first experience at UPU headquarters, Ben expressed enthusiasm about gaining deeper insights into international postal regulations and financial management practices.

Turning to human resources perspectives, Suintia Cindy Lemet, Director and Chair of the Human Resources Committee at Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation, outlined her vision for postal sector development. Speaking from her extensive experience in talent management, she advocated for promoting the postal sector as a dynamic career path and establishing international exchange programs. On the topic of women's empowerment, Lemet called for targeted leadership development programs, negotiation skills training, and initiatives supporting work-life balance.

Adding her voice to the discussion, Dalal Taher Al-Kaff, Director General of Postal Affairs in Yemen, shared insights into her country's initiatives for women's advancement in the postal sector. Speaking with pride about Yemen Post's vision, she detailed their commitment to placing women in leadership positions through structured support and development opportunities. For Al-Kaff, the fellowship represented not just a learning opportunity but a chance to inspire other women in Yemen's postal sector.

Addressing regulatory challenges, Verónica Virginia Miranda Vaca, Deputy Director General of Nicaragua's TELCOR, highlighted the pressing need for modernization in postal frameworks. Speaking candidly about the limitations of Nicaragua's postal law, she pointed out its inadequacy in addressing the rise of e-commerce, which now accounts for roughly 87% of purchases. On a more positive note, Miranda Vaca spoke enthusiastically about Nicaragua's progressive gender equity policies, including their groundbreaking "50-50 Law." Looking to the future, she advocated for expanding UPU's training programs regionally, particularly in specialized areas like regulatory accounting.

In the new cycle, the UPU will expand its capacity-building program with more workshops, forums, and e-learning opportunities aimed at furthering gender equality and empowering women in postal services worldwide. These activities will provide additional platforms for women leaders to deepen their engagement with the UPU and continue advocating for inclusive practices and policies in the postal industry. **LL**



**UULZHAN MASHANOVA**  
Deputy Director at Kyrgyzstan's  
International Postal Exchange  
and Logistics Center

**As Deputy Director at Kyrgyzstan's International Postal Exchange and Logistics Center, what practices have you implemented to enhance Kyrgyzstan's postal services?**

I have been with Kyrgyz Post for over 18 years, and my work primarily focuses on production operations. I oversee production-related matters and have actively contributed to the development of a local system for OJSC "Kyrgyz Post" in collaboration with the developer. This involved conducting analytical work to support the creation of a system that is integrated with the Universal Postal Union's platform. Additionally, I facilitated the development of an account for the State Customs Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, enabling them to streamline and manage customs procedures effectively.





## ANGEL BANDA

Postmaster General of  
Malawi Posts Corporation

### What do you hope to gain from this fellowship that will support your strategic goals for Malawi Posts Corporation and the broader advancement of postal standards and services?

From this fellowship program, I hope to gain exposure for myself as well as the Malawi Posts Corporation and the rest of the women at Malawi Posts Corporation. For this fellowship there has been a lot of collaboration. It is a benefit to me as well as to my organization because we will use the collaboration to introduce some programmes that we did not have at Malawi Posts Corporation. There are a lot of issues being discussed, there are a lot of innovations being discussed, and we will gain the knowledge and therefore implement what others are implementing.

I have also noted that, through these meetings, there are some technical partners or solution providers that are available to us. We are

meeting these technical partners and also forming partnerships so that we can deliver better.

With this programme I am ready to learn so that, in turn, I can also try as much as possible to motivate women to go into leadership positions. Who can motivate a woman better than another woman? We understand each other, we have our own strengths that we can bring to the team. Men have their own strengths. Women also have own strengths and if we combine these strengths, we can make some synergies. These synergies will move our business going forward.

### In what ways do you think the UPU's emphasis on ICT innovation could support Malawi's postal sector, especially given your background in Information Technology?

There is nothing that can foster better growth than ICT innovation. The organizations that have done very well have been driven by ICT. For the post to improve, for the post to grow, for the post to be vibrant, and for the post to be visible, we need ICT innovation. We are in the business of traditional post and without ICT we cannot manage to trace our parcels. Without ICT, we cannot manage to account for what we need and we need data integrity. We need ICT to trace the parcels and the mails that we are transmitting from one point to another. ICT innovation should be key in the strategies of all postal operators, ministries, and even regulators because we cannot make it without ICT. We need ICT to help us achieve customer confidence. We need ICT to help us achieve the efficiency that is required. ICT is the way to growth, ICT is the way to visibility.



## DALAL TAHER AL-KAFF

Director General of Postal  
Affairs in Yemen

### What in Yemen Post doing to support women in the post?

I have been with Kyrgyz Post for Yemen Post has a vision in empowering Yemeni women, as well as the clear support from the Yemeni government to make women at the forefront of the ranks and place them in leadership positions. The goal is to qualify them by providing support, participation in workshops, and opportunities to make them able to be productive and contribute in potential and meaningful work.

### What do you hope to achieve from this fellowship or visit to UPU headquarters?

This is a great chance to learn from professional experiences that will help in business development, and I hope to get ideas and new ways to develop and improve the Postal Service. I'm proud to represent Yemeni women and to be an inspiration to many of the women of Yemen.



## ANGELLA MANUELLA BEN

Senior Accountant and  
Compliance Officer at  
Vanuatu Post Ltd

**Given your involvement in the Operational Readiness for E-Commerce (ORE) project for Vanuatu, what insights/recommendations can you share on how the UPU can support small postal services in adopting e-commerce capabilities?**

I only have two recommendations. I think the first one is in terms of finance. Since our operation is small, we are usually facing a tight budget, so finance is always a limitation to actually implement most of the projects in our ORE project. Secondly, the UPU can support us by providing some sort of expertise in implementing the project. For example, one of the projects that we haven't been able to proceed with is the National Addressing System. I know it's a national issue which will involve the government, but we could benefit from some sort of assistance to guide us on how to proceed with achieving the project.

**As someone who has worked extensively in financial oversight within Vanuatu's postal sector, what do you believe are the most effective ways for the UPU to strengthen financial compliance and integrity among its member states?**

In terms of our context, we are a small island state. In terms of financial compliance, as I've mentioned earlier, we normally have smaller operations, so we usually run on a tight budget. Most of the projects we need to implement, such as those under the Operational Readiness for E-Commerce (ORE) program, are supported by the UPU. We need funding from the UPU.

**How do you think the UPU can best support initiatives like the ones you've led in financial literacy for women, especially in the context of promoting leadership opportunities for women in the postal industry?**

I previously worked for Vanwods, which is a small institution. We usually encouraged women and provided training in financial literacy because women often have lower financial literacy in terms of understanding and managing their own finances than men do. So, we used to offer small training sessions focused on business, helping women start small businesses and become more independent.

**Through the UPU fellowship, what specific skills or knowledge are you hoping to acquire that will support your role in ensuring Vanuatu Post's compliance with international postal regulations?**

I was so fortunate to be part of this programme for women's empowerment and I would like to commend UPU for this project and ideas allow us to have a fellowship to be part of the CA meetings. It's a new experience for me. I want to ask that, in the future, the UPU continues with this programme. We came to learn about what is happening in these meetings. When we go back to our countries, we are able to understand what the International Bureau is, and what the programme is. I've been in the meeting this morning and I've learned about the voting and financial statement. It is quite interesting to know how the finances are managed by the UPU.



## SUNTIA CINDY LEMET

**Director and Chair of the Human Resources Committee at the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation**

### **Given your recent role as Director and Chair of the Human Resources Committee at Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation, how do you see the UPU fellowship supporting your goals for enhancing HR practices within the postal sector?**

As Director and Chair of the Human Resources Committee at the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation, I believe the UPU fellowship can significantly support my goals in enhancing the HR practices within the postal sector.

First, the fellowship provides access to best practices and innovative strategies from a global network and enables us to benchmark and implement effective HR-tailored solutions to our unique context. The opportunity for collaboration and knowledge exchange with peers from other postal services will also allow us to address common challenges, share insights, and develop a more agile and responsive HR framework that aligns with the evolving needs of our workforce and the sector as a whole.

### **With your experience in talent acquisition and employee development across various industries, what strategies do you think the UPU can implement to attract and retain talented individuals in the global postal sector?**

With my experience in talent acquisition and employee development across various industries, I believe that UPU can implement several key strategies to attract and retain talented individuals in the global postal sector.

One – employer branding. UPU should promote the postal sector as a dynamic and rewarding career path, highlighting opportunities for growth, innovation, and community impact.

Two – global talent exchange programmes. Facilitating an international exchange or internship within member countries can broaden candidates' experiences and strengthen the skills necessary for the workforce and landscape.

Three – comprehensive training and development. Offer robust training programmes that focus on both technical and soft skills, and help employees grow and adapt, ensuring they feel valued and invested in their roles.

Finally – mentorship and career progression pathways. Establishing mentorship programmes and clear career progression pathways that help employees envision long-term careers in the postal sector.

### **As someone with extensive experience in training and performance management, what specific programs or training initiatives would you suggest for empowering women in the postal sector?**

To empower women in the postal sector, I would suggest a few programmes and training initiatives.

One – leadership development programmes. Create tailored programmes that focus on leadership skills, negotiation and decision-making aimed specifically at women to prepare them for leadership roles within the organization.

Two – skill-building workshops. Offer workshops on essential skills such as project management, digital literacy, and customer service, ensuring women have the tools needed to excel in various roles.

And also work-life balance training. Implement training that addresses work-life balance strategies, helping women manage professional responsibilities alongside personal commitments.

### **From an HR perspective, what are you hoping to achieve through this fellowship that will support your HR objectives and the modernization of the postal industry?**

Through this fellowship, I aim to achieve several key objectives that will support my HR initiatives and modernization of the postal industry.

One – access to best practices. I hope to gain insights into innovative HR practices from other postal services globally, allowing us to adopt successful strategies that enhance our operations.

Two – network building. Establishing connections with fellow leaders will facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing, enabling us to tackle common challenges and drive change collectively.

Three – leadership development. I aim to strengthen my leadership skills and those of my team, ensuring well equipped to implement modern HR practices that align with industry trends



## VERÓNICA VIRGINIA MIRANDA VACA

Director General of the  
Nicaraguan Institute of  
Telecommunications and Posts

### **As the Deputy Director General of the Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and Posts (TELCOR), what are your expectations for cooperation and support from the UPU to strengthen the development and modernization of the postal sector in your country?**

Although it is true that as a regulatory entity, we clearly have defined functions and powers to carry out our work, it is also true that at times we face financial restrictions to execute projects. In this regard, the work of the UPU is fundamental and essential, as it provides us with the opportunity to access financing projects and technical assistance from experts on various issues. Key areas I could mention are that for us, it is of vital importance to develop and push the postal sector and the training aspect.

Continuous improvement for quality issues is key. This allows us to provide better services for our users, as we all know the postal sector is highly competitive. The designated postal operator is state-run, and it has to compete with private operators,

many of which are multinational companies with a regional presence. Therefore, these are highly dynamic, highly competitive sectors and our challenge is to train ourselves and have the necessary logistics to provide quality services to users, protect their rights, and, above all, the challenge is to provide services in an affordable manner.

Another area that is of vital importance to us is the modernization of our regulatory framework. The postal sector has a law dating back to 2011, which is outdated today. At the time, it served its purpose, but the modernization of this regulatory framework is now necessary. We believe it is the starting point, the cornerstone for the rest of the transformations and improvements in the sector.

If we have outdated laws and regulations, we cannot be competitive, we cannot be efficient. For example, Nicaraguan law clearly exempts the entire area of Internet purchases, which is now the largest segment of the Nicaraguan sector. Currently, it is estimated that 87% of purchases are made online and fall outside of our regulatory framework.

### **What are your expectations, and what benefits do you think you can gain from this UPU-sponsored scholarship?**

I believe that the scholarship being offered and the fellowship for the empowerment of women in the postal sector will allow me to observe how the Council of Administration works. We will be able to gain a deeper understanding of the functioning of the UPU, exchange success stories and also experiences of failure because we learn from all experiences. We, the various women participating in this scholarship, come from different regions and cultures.

So, I think it will be a very enriching experience. I would like this type of experience to be replicated in the region, perhaps through UPU, since for reasons of location we share the same language and time zones. I believe it could be replicated and brought to our countries so that large-scale training could be carried out for all the women in positions of responsibility in the postal sector and who could benefit. Perhaps in areas like regulatory accounting and other aspects.

### **What training programs or initiatives would you recommend to empower women in the postal sector and promote their leadership?**

I would like to start by sharing that, in my country, my government has gender equity and women's empowerment as public policies. A demonstration of this public policy is that in 2008, a Law of Equal Rights and Opportunities was issued, which is popularly known as the "50-50 Law". This law aims precisely to empower and ensure that women have real and effective access to leadership positions, to positions of responsibility in all areas, from the branches of government, municipalities, state institutions, in all areas where women can develop, as long as we have the qualifications and abilities to apply for those positions. I believe it would be a good policy that through UPU, training, scholarships, or courses could be provided for women leaders – women in positions of responsibility in the postal sector – to help them strengthen their skills and learn from the experiences of other regulators and other operators.

# PIONEERING THE FUTURE OF POSTAL SERVICES: UPU CONFERENCES OUTLINE BLUEPRINT FOR INNOVATION AND DATA EXCELLENCE



As part of the 2024 fall Council sessions, the UPU hosted two key forums – its Postal Innovation Forum 2024 and the UPU Conference on Postal Regulation 2024 – in Berne. High-level representatives, industry leaders, experts, and policymakers from postal services came together to discuss strategies for using innovative technology and data to advance postal services worldwide, while addressing regulatory frameworks necessary to safeguard privacy and foster trust.

*Text by LIN LIU*

## **Postal Innovation Forum: Envisioning an AI-driven, customer-centered future**

On 31 October, the Postal Innovation Forum opened with remarks from UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki, who emphasized that AI has the potential to foster a more inclusive, efficient and trustworthy postal ecosystem.

“The UPU is a network of networks, uniquely positioned to drive innovation,” the Director General said, highlighting, “By working as one, we can create a postal ecosystem that

UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki opened the forum in Bern, focusing on innovation and regulation in global postal services.



In Panel One, experts engaged in a dynamic discussion on how AI can enhance postal experiences by balancing technological innovation with the human touch.

is more efficient, inclusive, and trusted by our customers all over the world.”

To further echo the vision shared by the UPU Director General, Martin Debusmann, Partner at EY, emphasized the value of AI-driven accessibility and inclusivity. “Rather than viewing AI solely as a democratizing force,” he said, “we should focus on its potential to improve access to knowledge and expertise, bridging gaps across diverse regions.”

Debusmann encouraged the exploration of a shared AI library among postal operators, using advanced expertise to benefit all UPU members.

The Forum’s first panel convened under the theme “AI meets human touch: elevating experiences for postal customers and employees,” gathering industry leaders from EY, DHL, Fraunhofer-Institut, ETH and Unjam, as well as Poste Italiane. Panelists explored the role of AI in making postal interactions more accessible and personalized, especially for underserved communities.

Discussions on hybrid AI-human models underscored the importance of balancing

technological advancements with the human touch. Debusmann highlighted a projected shift, with AI expected to handle over 20 percent of consumer interactions by 2026. While this brings immense efficiency, he emphasized the importance of maintaining the human engagement that customers still value. He noted that 55 percent of consumers express hesitance to trust AI-generated recommendations.

“To build trust, hybrid AI-human models must prioritize transparency and empathy,” he said. Debusmann also called on the UPU to work towards a unified AI strategy and to share solutions that could help bridge the digital divide between the most and least developed countries.

Carolina Deutschbein, Senior AI Product Owner at DHL, focused on AI’s ability to optimize operations and support employees in delivering a better customer experience. She described a DHL project that uses AI-driven voice bots to assist logistics teams.

“By integrating AI with real-time data, we can reduce response times and improve service precision while freeing up our staff to handle more nuanced or critical tasks,” she noted.

“By integrating AI with real-time data, we can reduce response times and improve service precision while freeing up our staff to handle more nuanced or critical tasks.”

**Carolina Deutschbein**  
Senior AI Product Owner, DHL

**“[The Gen Z] generation doesn’t just expect fast delivery – they want to track every step, from dispatch to doorstep.”**

**Olivia Lina André**  
University of Fribourg

Katharina Weitz of the Fraunhofer-Institut emphasized the interdisciplinary applications of AI.

“AI shouldn’t operate in isolation – it must integrate with real-world applications like disaster management and healthcare,” she explained.

Weitz also highlighted the risks of “over-trusting” AI systems, particularly those designed to mimic human-like behaviour.

“We must ensure that trust in AI is based on its capabilities, not its appearance,” she said.

Alberto Padoan, Senior Scientist at ETH and Unjam, delved into the computational advancements enabling AI to address complex challenges. He highlighted the use of AI to predict logistics demand and streamline postal workflows.

“The key lies in pairing computational power with adaptive learning,” Padoan remarked. “This approach enables AI systems to evolve with changing customer needs and operational complexities.”

From Poste Italiane, Cosimo Birtolo shared a successful case study of deploying voice-enabled AI systems for customer interactions.

“We found that customers appreciated the convenience of AI for simple tasks, but complex inquiries still demanded human intervention,” Birtolo explained, emphasizing the need for human-AI collaboration.

### Engaging next-gen customers

During the second panel, experts from University of Fribourg, University of Antwerp and International Labour Organization provided their insights

on AI’s role in engaging younger, digitally-native customers.

Olivia Lina André from the University of Fribourg highlighted how Gen Z’s preference for personalization and transparency is reshaping service models.

“This generation doesn’t just expect fast delivery—they want to track every step, from dispatch to doorstep,” André remarked, stressing the importance of seamless omnichannel experiences.

Serhat Yüksel of the University of Antwerp pointed out the growing emphasis on sustainability among younger consumers.

“Postal operators must align with eco-conscious values, offering greener delivery options and transparent carbon footprint tracking,” Yüksel said.

Stijn Michielsens of the University of Antwerp emphasized AI’s role in bridging generational and skill-based divides within postal operations. “The integration of AI must be paired with robust training programs to empower staff across all age groups,” Michielsens noted.

He highlighted how these programs could support employees in adapting to

AI-driven workflows, mitigating concerns about job displacement. “Rather than replacing jobs, AI adoption can create new roles centered on value-added tasks, enhancing both operational efficiency and employee satisfaction,” he added.

Michielsens also underscored the need for AI applications that align with workforce dynamics, ensuring that technology complements rather than disrupts human expertise. “By involving employees in the design and implementation of AI systems, postal services can foster a sense of collaboration and trust in the technology,” he concluded.

From the International Labour Organization, Pawel Gmyrek highlighted the importance of using AI to augment postal jobs rather than replace them, maximizing the value added by the human touch in postal services.

“AI provides an opportunity to enhance human capabilities and reimagine roles within the postal workforce,” he explained, underscoring the importance of using AI to complement the skills of postal employees. He called for training programs to equip existing staff with the necessary competencies to work alongside advanced technologies.



In Panel Two, experts discussed leveraging AI to engage younger, digitally-native customers while empowering the postal workforce of the future.

“This isn’t just about efficiency – it’s about creating meaningful, value-added tasks for employees,” Gmyrek added.

Additionally, he highlighted the need to attract younger, digitally native workers to the sector, proposing initiatives that integrate AI tools with workplace culture. “For the next generation, seamless interaction with digital tools is a given. We need to meet them on their terms and create an environment that feels innovative and relevant,” he said.

Concluding the forum, Jean-Paul Forceville, who represents France as Chair of the UPU Postal Operations Council, emphasized the UPU’s critical role in democratizing access to AI and ensuring that member countries can implement technology that aligns with the human elements vital for maintaining customer trust.

“The UPU is committed to facilitating the accessibility of AI solutions to all member countries, regardless of their stage of technological development,” he explained.

He further emphasized that this effort would help ensure that even the least developed countries could benefit from AI advancements while maintaining

the human touch essential to customer trust. “By creating shared resources, like an AI library, the UPU can help countries adapt and implement these solutions, fostering a global, inclusive transformation in postal services.”

## Conference on Postal Regulation: Challenges and innovations in data utilization

The following week, under the auspices of the UPU’s Council of Administration, postal industry leaders and regulatory experts from Pos Malaysia, Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd, PostEurop and the UPU gathered at the Conference on Postal Regulation to discuss key challenges and opportunities associated with data utilization, security, and regulatory practices across the sector. With an emphasis on data-driven strategies, the conference explored leveraging data to enhance postal services and improve regulatory practices, while addressing challenges in regulatory governance, fostering innovation, and ensuring cybersecurity.

In opening remarks to the conference, the UPU Director General highlighted data’s transformative impact on the postal sector.

“In this era, data has emerged as a cornerstone of growth and innovation across all sectors,” he said, noting that while data opens doors to operational efficiencies, it also presents complex challenges that require strategic, collaborative solutions.

### Seizing opportunities

In the first panel, guided by the theme “Seizing Opportunities Through Data Utilization,” industry leaders from Pos Malaysia and Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd provided their insights on using data

“AI provides an opportunity to enhance human capabilities and reimagine roles within the postal workforce.”

**Pawel Gmyrek**

International Labour Organization



UPU Deputy Director General Marjan Osvald highlighted data management, privacy, and strategic solutions as key takeaways from the Conference on Postal Regulation.





Fay Dunkerley shared insights on future-proofing EU postal legislation, emphasizing the need for long-term adaptability and consistent data indicators.

to enhance postal services, improve customer satisfaction, and make regulatory actions more proactive and targeted.

A case study was provided by Amit Mehta, Head of Product and Customer Experience, Pos Malaysia. "All our data was in silos... there is nothing really done with it. So, there is absence of a centralized, and scalable data infrastructure," he noted.

Mehta then detailed Post Malaysia's journey in data-driven transformation, including centralizing data, enhancing customer service through predictive analytics, and using data to optimize operational efficiency. Over the past 30 months, Pos Malaysia has centralized its data infrastructure, improving predictive analytics, and shipment tracking accuracy. Notable initiatives include the "Address Autofill" service, which has processed 90 million entries in 6 months.

Fay Dunkerley, Principal Consultant at Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd, shared insights from a study conducted in collaboration with Rand Europe for DG Grow. She emphasized the importance of forward-looking legislation, noting, "If you are thinking about changing legislation, it needs to be fit for purpose over a long period of time."

The study examined the future of the EU postal sector by developing scenarios through 2040, identifying key challenges, and assessing the availability and utility of data. Dunkerley highlighted the difficulty of obtaining comprehensive data due to "inconsistent assessments" of different trends

and data. She further proposed a possible solution: "to have a set of indicators or variables that would characterize the sector."

### Data security and privacy

To discuss "Evolving Regulatory Landscape of Data Protection and Security in the Postal Sector," the second panel brought together panelists from PostEurop and the UPU, who explored emerging regulatory trends and strategies for adapting to these evolving demands from the unique perspective of the postal industry.

Sarah Gallagher, Chair of Data Protection Working Group, PostEurop, began by emphasizing that the protection of privacy in the postal sector is not a new concept. "There's always been rights in relation to the privacy of the mail," she noted, underscoring the historical roots of data protection within postal operations. She further pointed out the GDPR as a cornerstone of the EU's approach, describing it as a regime that "imposes a very stringent framework of obligations and responsibilities on operators." This includes principles such as data minimization, fairness, and accountability, all of which aim to protect the fundamental rights of individuals.

Gallagher acknowledged the challenges of cross-border data transfers, particularly when dealing with jurisdictions that adopt different regulatory standards.

"We tend to consider these standards in terms of privacy and data protection, but there's also a lot of criticism regarding their practicality and workability," she observed. Despite these criticisms, she stressed the importance of the EU's fundamental rights approach, which ensures that any infringement of privacy must be justified, proportionate, and necessary.

Lati Matata, Director of the UPU's Postal Technology Centre, focused on the operational and technological dimensions of data governance. He described postal data as a vital resource, noting that "postal data is essentially all data generated by postal operators in the process of fulfilling their services." This encompasses a wide range of data, spanning not only UPU solutions but also all commercial solutions available, covering both physical and digital dimensions. Matata underscored the growing significance of such data,

**"In this era, data has emerged as a cornerstone of growth and innovation across all sectors."**

**Masahiko Metoki**  
UPU Director General

stating that "data is a valuable resource for training AI," while emphasizing the importance of ensuring that innovation and regulation evolve in tandem.

To address the balance between innovation and compliance, Matata proposed that the UPU play a role in establishing a regulatory space, such as regulatory sandboxes.

"A regulatory space (sandbox) would allow postal operators to experiment with postal data within a controlled and compliant environment," he explained.

He also highlighted the importance of cybersecurity, referencing the UPU's adoption of ISO standards to safeguard sensitive data and enhance the resilience of postal networks. "The security of the digital network depends on the strength of its weakest link," he noted, advocating for a collaborative and harmonized approach to cybersecurity.

At the conference closed, UPU Deputy Director General Marjan Osvald joined the moderators in summarizing the key takeaways, emphasizing the critical challenges and opportunities in data management for the postal sector. They highlighted the need for improved data collection to gain market insights, balanced with the sensitivity of commercial and privacy rights. They stressed the importance of using data for strategic decisions, building member capacities in data management and protection, and fostering government support for integrated solutions like data hubs. Additionally, discussions underscored the need for bespoke regulatory approaches, robust cybersecurity measures, and alignment of strategic goals with available resources. **LL**

# BERNE'S MUSEUM OF COMMUNICATION AND THE UPU MEET HISTORY: EXPLORING THEIR SHARED HERITAGE AND THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION

Text by **NICO GURTNER** and **MAKIKO HAYASHI**

In the heart of Berne, the Museum of Communication stands as a testament to the evolution of rapid communication and human connectivity. It houses one of the world's largest stamp collections, thanks to its close ties with the Universal Postal Union nested also in Berne. The UPU, celebrating 150 years of ensuring global communication, and the museum,

founded in 1907, share a rich history that mirrors the rapid development of communication technologies. Awarded the Council of Europe Museum Prize in 2019 as only the third museum in Switzerland, the Museum of Communication is celebrated for its innovative and interactive exhibits that underscore its exceptional impact in bringing history to life.



Source:  
Museum of  
Communication,  
Berne | 2024



**From telegraphs to smartphones: communication through ages**

The journey of communication is a fascinating tale of transformation. Before the UPU's inception in 1874, the telegraph revolutionized global connectivity. For instance, the Indo-European telegraph line around the time of 1870 created a massive globalization boost. It reduced the delivery time of a message from London to Calcutta that took from over 30 days in 1850 to just 28 minutes. Something we would today call a disruption, this leap was an incredible acceleration of communication, setting the stage for future innovations. The telephone followed closely, with networks emerging in the late 1870s shortly after the UPU's creation. Although initially a luxury, the telephone gradually became an essential medium. In 1920s Switzerland, there were only three telephones per 100 people, highlighting its exclusivity. Concurrently, newspapers like the Neue Zürcher Zeitung were published three times daily until 1969. Meanwhile, radio began shaping the mass media landscape from 1920, alongside the development of televisions in the 1930s, which became a mass medium by the 1960s.

The 1950s saw the dawn of the computer age, with the electronic calculating machine of the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich (ERMETH) marking Switzerland's entry into this new era. Over time, from the 1980s, computers shrank from room-filling machines to personal devices, transforming businesses and homes alike. The introduction of the Internet in the 1990s and smartphones in 2007, notably with Apple's iPhone, ushered in an era where digital communication became inseparable from daily life.

**The PTT archives: a chronicle of Swiss communication and the UPU**

The PTT archives, housed in the same foundation as the museum, chronicle the history of Swiss Post, Telegraphy and Telephony (PTT) from 1848 to 1997. With about 7,500 meters of archival and library documents, these archives

offer invaluable insights into the evolution of communication. The common online database of the museum and the archive features over 400 entries on the UPU, including a photo collage of delegates from the founding congress in 1874, a letter from Laurenz Koschier requesting recognition of the first stamp, and architectural models for the Around the World monument, some of which were never realized.

**Philatelic treasures: the legacy of stamps**

Throughout its 150 years of history, the UPU has remained synonymous with the letter and stamp. The museum's collection, enriched by contributions from UPU and its member states, includes several hundred thousand pieces out of a total of over three million stamps, making it one of the largest stamp collections in the world. This vast collection offers a glimpse into global postal history, with legendary pieces like the Basel Dove captivating visitors.

Stamp collecting, once a widespread hobby, continues to draw enthusiasts to the museum. The legendary Basel Dove and other rare stamps remain highlights of the museum's exhibits, bridging the past with the present. Years ago, the museum's extensive collection became a major attraction, marketed as the "world's largest public stamp collection". This designation drew countless collectors eager to see the pieces that had been missing from their collections.

Today, stamps still remain part of the museum's exhibits, with the iconic Basel Dove still drawing in visitors. Meanwhile, the museum has expanded its thematic landscape to reflect the wide-ranging changes in communication. As technology has advanced, so too has the museum, adapting its exhibits to engage and educate modern audiences, ensuring it remains relevant in an age of digital innovation.

**A modern museum experience: interactive and engaging**

The Museum of Communication thrives on interactivity, blending education with entertainment. Its innovative exhibits, large video screens, interactive stations and



The telegraph messenger with a bicycle and the telephone operator with a headset exemplify the acceleration and increasing interconnectedness of the communication world. Image source: Museum of Communication, Berne Photographer: Josef A. Elsener





The Museum of Communication and the UPU together provide a comprehensive living narrative on the historical evolution of human connection. From the early days of telegraphs to today's digital conversations, their stories illustrate the profound impact of communication technologies on our world.

communicative hosts ensure an engaging and playful experience for visitors to enter into the topics and spark deeper into their interest for exploration. This approach has significantly boosted visitor numbers, from 33,000 in 2003 to 128,000 in 2023. The museum's communicators add a personal touch, inviting visitors to engage with the exhibits, offering mini-tours and unlocking special features that make each visit unique. For instance, you can immerse yourself in the illusion of an extra floor on an elevator, even though the building doesn't physically have one. Additionally, visitors can sit inside a historical postal bus, providing a tangible, hands-on experience that vividly brings the past to life. The museum not only preserves these stories but continues to innovate, ensuring that the history of communication remains a lively, engaging and ever-evolving conversation. Through its exhibits and archives, the museum connects us with the past while guiding us into the future.

The Museum of Communication and the UPU together provide a comprehensive living narrative on the historical evolution of human connection. From the early days of telegraphs to today's digital conversations, their stories illustrate the profound impact of communication technologies on our world. As we celebrate their milestones, we are reminded of the ever-evolving nature of communication and its power to shape societies. **NG&HN**



Top image: in the early 1990s, the exhibition at the Museum of Communication was dominated by philately: on two floors, countless gray drawers in the wall held stamps. Bottom image: Twenty-five years later, the scene in the same place looks significantly different and invites visitors to engage playfully. Image source: Museum of Communication, Berne



For more information about the Museum of Communication:

<https://www.mfk.ch/en/>

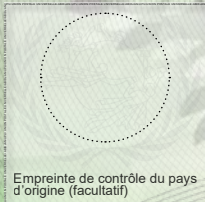


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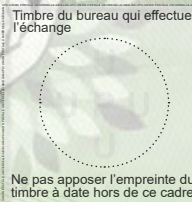
« Préserver l'écosystème – Protéger le climat »



UNION  
POSTALE  
UNIVERSELLE



Empreinte de contrôle du pays  
d'origine (facultatif)



Timbre du bureau qui effectue  
l'échange

Ne pas apposer l'empreinte du  
timbre à date hors de ce cadre

**COUPON-RÉPONSE INTERNATIONALE**

Ce coupon est échangeable dans tous les pays de  
l'Union postale universelle contre l'affranchissement  
minimal d'un envoi prioritaire ordinaire  
ou d'une lettre avion ordinaire  
expédié à l'étranger.

À échanger jusqu'au  
31.12.2025

## PROLONGATION D'ÉCHÉANCE

### COUPONS-REPOSE INTERNATIONAUX - CRI TYPE «ABIDJAN»

La date d'échéance du CRI type «Abidjan» a été prolongée  
et passe du 31 décembre 2025 au 31 décembre 2026.

Les coupons déjà imprimés avec la date du 31 décembre 2025  
restent valables pour l'échange et devront être acceptés par les  
opérateurs désignés jusqu'au 31 décembre 2026.

# 2021–2026

## PROLONGATION OF DEADLINE

### INTERNATIONAL REPLY COUPONS - IRC TYPE "ABIDJAN"

The expiry date of the IRC type "Abidjan" has been extended from  
31.12.2025 to 31.12.2026.

Coupons already printed with the date 31.12.2025 remain valid for  
exchange and must be accepted by designated operators until  
31.12.2026.

Pour plus  
d'informations /  
More information



[cri@upu.int](mailto:cri@upu.int)  
[WWW.UPU.INT](http://WWW.UPU.INT)

# CONNECTING POSTAL HISTORIES WITH THE FUTURE

Léonard Laborie (CNRS - Sirice, Paris) and Heidi Tworek (The University of British Columbia), editors of a special issue of the academic journal *Monde(s)*, offer their perspectives on how postal networks have shaped globalization and why the Universal Postal Union's history remains crucial for understanding global communication systems today.

*Interview by* **MAKIKO HAYASHI**

**The special issue examines “postal traffics” and the inception of the Universal Postal Union, exploring the organization’s historical significance and role in the first wave of globalization through postal services. Can you tell us about your editorial role and vision? What inspired you to choose this topic, and why is it important now, in the historiography of global communications and beyond?**

We had worked previously on the history of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), which celebrated its 150th birthday in 2015, so we knew that such celebrations are rare occasions to enable historians and the institution to collaborate.

The 150th anniversary of the foundation of the UPU presented a unique opportunity to emphasize the importance of postal networks in global history while connecting with the organization to raise awareness about the importance of its own history.

A historical symposium held in February 2024 on the premises of the UPU's International Bureau both spurred new work on the topic and fostered connections with the organization around its archives and heritage. The special issue of *Monde(s)*, an academic journal dedicated to global history, is one of the outputs of this energetic collaboration.



Léonard Laborie (CNRS - Sirice, Paris) and Heidi Tworek (The University of British Columbia)



It is composed of contributions to the historical symposium that fit best with the journal's scope of global history, meaning an approach that examines planetary dynamics plus local interactions, particularly across borders. The articles gathered here cannot be exhaustive, but they do have the merit of covering a vast period from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 21st, and covering all continents.

**How do you think this issue will contribute to the existing “historiography” on global communication systems?**

For the last fifteen years, academics have renewed their focus on the history of global communications.

This interest began with submarine telegraphy, inspired in part by the rapid growth of undersea fibre-optic. There is an increasing literature on radio and television as well as a commitment to move beyond focusing on the European and American innovators of a technology to understand its deployment, effects, and uses beyond the West.

Although this research is commendable, much of it highlights new communication technologies. While academics have rightly nuanced our scholarly understanding of technologies' effects

and shown their varied uses, historians have largely overlooked the most common means of communicating across distances: the post!

We hope that this special issue will remind scholars that older communications technologies could often be used by many more people than newer ones, and that older technologies also evolved across time. A new technology did not replace an old one. Rather, they intertwined to form a multi-layered communication landscape. We also hope that it will inspire other researchers to seriously consider the networks, institutions and individuals behind the letters that they read in the archives.

**What sources and methodologies have the contributors used to uncover the historical dynamics of postal traffic?**

The contributors have employed an exciting variety of sources and methodologies. They have looked at obvious sources like stamps and the UPU archives, but also government archives.

Some contributions, like Charli Muller's, examine the writings of key figures in postal history, such as Rowland Hill, reinterpreting their contributions through a different lens, like colonialism. Others, like Rocío Moreno Cabanillas, use a comparative methodology to understand the similarities and differences between the Spanish and Portuguese empires' attempts to expand postal services in colonial Latin America at the turn of the 18th century.

Others, like Christian Franke, study reports and minutes of meetings among experts to understand the UPU's response to the new technology of electronic mail in the 1980s, showing how rich a source these seemingly dry reports can be. Overall, the contributions demonstrate that the post is

**“A new technology did not replace an old one. Rather, they intertwined to form a multi-layered communication landscape.”**

**Léonard Laborie**, CNRS - Sirice, Paris &  
**Heidi Tworek**, The University of British Columbia

a subject we can study using a wide variety of sources and methodologies, offering valuable insights into global history.

**The issue aims to “postalize globalization” and “globalize post offices”. Could you explain these concepts further and tell us how they help our understanding of the role of postal networks in shaping transnational relations and national identities?**

The special issue explores the geopolitical, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions of the relationship between communication networks and globalization.

Globalization is generally understood as the increased flow of people, goods, and information. Yet those working on information have generally concentrated on “new” communications technologies such as electric telegraphy, telephony, and, more recently, the internet.

We suggest that the post needs to be included in studies of globalization. That would help us to understand how letters connected migrants to their homelands, or how multi-national enterprises used the post to communicate across distances or how smaller businesses could use the interconnectedness of postal networks to explore new markets and export goods. We are hoping that this issue encourages this sort of sensitivity to the role of the post in globalization, a concept we describe as “postalizing globalization”.

Conversely, postal historians tend to orient themselves around the nation-state or the internal dynamics of a particular polity, like an empire. Postal networks were, for sure, key for building and conveying national identities.

But we hope that this special issue will demonstrate to postal historians the promise of moving beyond borders and taking a global history approach to their studies, including the making of national identities. This would contribute to build upon the concept of this special issue to “globalize post offices”.

**The UPU was pivotal in standardizing international mail delivery. From your perspective, what has been the UPU’s impact on the efficiency and expansion of postal services globally?**

The creation of the UPU boosted international postal traffic through common norms and lower tariffs. This marked a clear turning point, not only in the volume (quantity) of international postal traffic, but also in its quality. New international services, such as the international parcel post, emerged and developed rapidly within the framework of the UPU.

The UPU was one of the very first international governmental organizations with a global scope, open to any country in the world. British India joined in 1876, Brazil and Japan in 1877, Ethiopia in 1908, and China in 1914, to give just a few examples. Even countries

that were not admitted to the United Nations after the Second World War could still be part of the UPU.

Newspaper accounts from the late 19th and early 20th centuries reveal great excitement about the possibilities of this international cooperation. For historians, it is essential for us to explore the mindset and motivations of those who created the UPU and later negotiated its continuous adaptation to evolving geopolitical, economic, and sociocultural conditions. Although the UPU, with its 150-year history, might appear almost as a ‘natural’ institution that has always existed, it ultimately depends on the people that it convenes.

**In what ways do you see the role of the UPU influencing the political, economic and social realms, particularly in terms of facilitating or hindering global communications and exchanges?**

The UPU was meant to facilitate the circulation of information and goods across borders – its DNA is liberal. This often created tensions at local and national levels. Tensions culminated in 2018 when the United States initiated a withdrawal procedure from the organization. The implementation of new regulations was negotiated to cope with this challenge. This reminds us that the UPU has negotiated limits as well as expansions of cross-border circulations. The UPU shows the value of thinking about multilateralism historically. It also reminds us that we cannot take seemingly simple aspects of daily life like international parcels and post for granted; people and institutions enable those exchanges. The UPU may seem technical, but many aspects of our international interactions would not occur as they do without it. **MH**

“The creation of the UPU boosted international postal traffic through common norms and lower tariffs. This marked a clear turning point, not only in the volume (quantity) of international postal traffic, but also in its quality.”

**Léonard Laborie**, CNRS - Sirice, Paris &  
**Heidi Tworek**, The University of British Columbia



Read the special issue of *Monde(s)* here:  
<https://shs.cairn.info/journal-monde-s-2024-2?lang=en>





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# NEW CORREOS DE MÉXICO CEO TARGETS POSTAL MODERNIZATION

The Mexican Postal Service has a new leader. Violeta Abreu was appointed General Director of Correos de México by the first woman to serve as president of Mexico, Claudia Sheinbaum, who took office on 1 October. Abreu, herself one of only a few women leading posts, discussed with Union Postale her vision for continuing the transformational work of her predecessor, Rocío Bárcena, to modernize the post and to diversify its offerings so that the Mexican Postal Service may become a leader in logistics and e-commerce for the nation and beyond.

*Text by* TARA **GIROUD**



Violeta Abreu, General Director of Correos de México

"As our President, Dra. Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, has mentioned: 'It is time for women.'" Abreu said. "By integrating a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, we will achieve much more creative, efficient, and adaptable solutions to future challenges. ... In this time of women, it is essential that we can inspire all the women of the country by showing that it is possible to overcome obstacles and contribute to significant change."

Abreu aims to continue the post's modernization efforts, which began six years ago, to include operational logistics, strengthening human resources, and growing technological capacity.

This includes sustainability efforts, such as replacing the vehicle fleet, with 20 percent of new vehicles being electric or hybrid, implementing advanced technologies, such as fleet management systems and route optimization software to reduce fuel consumption and emissions, and using recyclable and biodegradable packaging materials. And the post continuously reviews operational processes to determine how they can be digitalized.

The post is also diversifying services beyond letters and parcels, Abreu said, to include alliances with other government institutions. The post aims to be the main logistics operator for such projects as distribution of medicines and school textbooks. With the post's presence in even the most remote of areas, it fulfils a vital social function, Abreu said. The post also works to remain competitive with large, private operators to bring fair prices to everyone.

"This modernization goes hand in hand with affordable prices for all Mexicans," Abreu said, "because the postal service is made for people so that they can keep their family close no matter how many miles separate them."

The post also aims to be a leader and reference in postal development for other members of the Postal Union of the Americas, Spain and Portugal.

**"This modernization goes hand in hand with affordable prices for all Mexicans, because the postal service is made for people so that they can keep their family close no matter how many miles separate them."**

**Violeta Abreu**  
General Director of Correos de México

"We want to lead regional initiatives that strengthen postal integration, share good practices and implement strategies for the modernization of the postal system," she said.

A key area of focus is providing services that foster economic inclusion for micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises with a project launched during the previous administration known as CorreosClic Marketplace. The CorreosClic e-commerce platform brings visibility to businesses and artisans throughout the country allowing them to deliver their products to any corner of the world, Abreu said.

The project has caught the attention of shoppers throughout the world, including people from Zambia and Russia, who have browsed products and some also made purchases.

Such sharing of innovation and collaboration supports the post's aims to be a source of connection between the Universal Postal Union's member countries.

"Mexico has a privileged geopolitical position," she said, "and we must take advantage of that opportunity to act as a bridge between the Americas and other UPU member countries, interconnecting all the designated operators of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, promoting collaboration and postal traffic between all regions of the world."

Along with its digital marketplace, the post aims to support the growth of all Mexican companies by working hand-in-hand with each of them, she said. This includes offering courses and training for entrepreneurs and companies and expanding postal services to meet their needs.

"Our vision is that all Mexican companies – whether micro, small, medium or large – join this initiative, and, through our Marketplace, the richness and magic of Mexican products can be shared in all countries of the world," Abreu said. "We want to be a part of the engine of economic development in the country, so that trade is enhanced through the Mexican Postal Service network."

While the Mexican Postal Service continues to evolve and grow into the digital revolution, what also remains strong is the heart of the postal mission to connect people, a mission that relies on the dedication of its employees, Abreu said.

"Correos de México is a people's institution that contributes with the development and communication at the national level, Latin America and the world," Abreu said. "[It] is made up of women and men who, for years, have been anonymous heroines and heroes who travel kilometers so that Mexicans can communicate with their loved ones." **TG**

# ROMFILATELIA CEO CRISTINA POPESCU HIGHLIGHTS 150 YEARS OF UPU AND ROMANIAN POST LEGACY



Special feature by **CRISTINA POPESCU**  
CEO Romfilatelia

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There are two important moments in the history of the Romanian Post Office: the establishment of the State Post Office in the Principality of Moldavia in 1856 and the introduction into circulation of the first Romanian postage stamps, the famous "Bull Head" (Cap de bour) issue in 1858, which became one of the most valuable collectible stamp issues.

The sustained measures to modernize the postal services under the rule of Alexandru Ioan Cuza and Carol I are also proven by Romania's presence at the Congress of Berne in 1874, at which it was decided to establish the Universal Postal Union. Our country is one of the twenty-two founding members, under the signature of an outstanding personality, George Lahovary.

In 2004, at the time when the postal stamps of an anniversary issue were announcing the 23rd Congress of the Universal Postal Union in Bucharest, Romfilatelia was established, the only institution authorized to issue and introduce into circulation Romanian postal stamps. The Congress also marked the 130th anniversary of the founding of the Universal Postal Union, and Romania was the first Eastern European country to host this major event.

In September, 2004, when the Congress took place, Romfilatelia introduced into circulation six postage stamps under the title *Congresses. UPU in philately*.



Each of the six postage stamps reproduced in "stamp-on-stamp" mode, a postage stamp issued by the postal administrations that hosted the Universal Postal Union Congresses in previous years.

It should be mentioned that in the twenty years of its existence, Romfilatelia has elaborated its stamp publishing plans following the guidelines of the Universal Postal Union regarding the mission of postage stamps, that of developing social and cultural communication, of being an active presence in the organization of cultural, political and diplomatic events. Specifically, past and present history, great personalities of culture, science and invention,

spirituality and traditions, natural and living human treasures, spirituality, the health of people and nature, helping people in difficult situations, were present as subjects of the postage stamps, many of them realized in joint issues with other countries. Forty-one joint issues have been produced up to this anniversary of the Universal Postal Union.

The appreciations of the prestigious magazines of the international philatelic field and the juries of some profile exhibitions organized by the World Association for the Development of Philately, within the Universal Postal Union, materialized by numerous awards, diplomas, mentions, gold medals, are presented as certain proofs of the evaluation of the way Romfilatelia, as the only specialized institution of the Romanian Government, to be an obvious promoter of the most prominent role of the postage stamp: universal messenger of the most important values of mankind, active presence in social and political life, domestic and international.

The postage stamp issue entitled *Universal Postal Union, 150 years* stands as a tribute to the most important international organization coordinating postal policies and the global postal system. **CP**

**Development of Philately, within the Universal Postal Union, materialized by numerous awards, diplomas, mentions, gold medals, are presented as certain proofs of the evaluation of the way Romfilatelia... to be an obvious promoter of the most prominent role of the postage stamp: universal messenger of the most important values of mankind, active presence in social and political life, domestic and international.**



# 150 YEARS OF UPU MARKED BY GLOBAL JOINT STAMP ISSUE

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) marked its 150th anniversary in 2024, celebrating a century and a half of connecting the world through the shared language of mail. This milestone is a testament to the UPU's enduring legacy and its pivotal role in fostering global communication.

*Text by* SONJA **DENOVSKI**

## **The invention that changed communication**

The journey toward this milestone began with Sir Rowland Hill's revolutionary invention of the adhesive postage stamp in 1840. Originally part of Britain's postal reform, Hill's Penny Black stamp not only introduced the concept of pre-paid postage but also established uniform rates based on weight. This innovation eliminated the financial risks for postal services caused by recipients refusing to pay for their mail.

With over 60,000 Penny Black stamps printed in the first year and 70 million produced before its retirement, the world quickly embraced this new system. The postage stamp became a universal tool for written communication, a model adopted worldwide, and a medium for honoring significant events and figures. The first commemorative stamp, issued in 1888, celebrated the centenary of New South Wales, Australia, setting a precedent for how stamps would capture history and culture.

## **Creativity and collaboration in commemoration**

To honor its 150th anniversary, the UPU invited member countries to participate in a global celebration through the issuance of commemorative stamps. The UPU offered a design aligned with its anniversary branding, while also encouraging countries to bring their unique creativity to the table. This approach underscored the diversity and cultural richness of the global postal community.

The response was remarkable: more than 100 countries, territories and postal administrations participated, issuing stamps that reflected their national identities while paying tribute to the UPU's monumental milestone. These commemorative stamps stand as a collective symbol of unity and collaboration among member nations, echoing the core values of the UPU.

## **A legacy of connection**

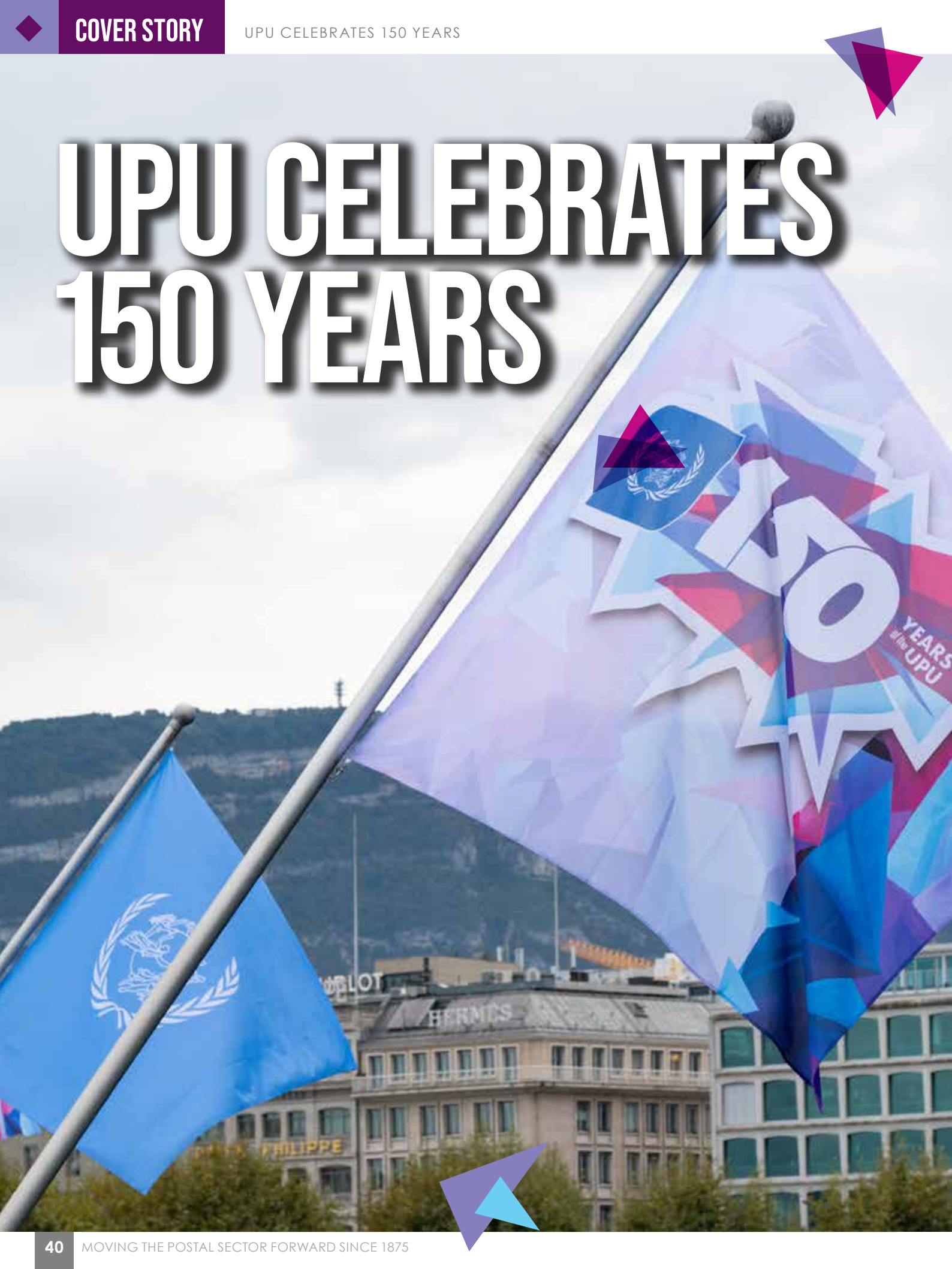
For 150 years, the Universal Postal Union has been at the forefront of global postal cooperation, enabling mail to transcend borders and fostering connections across continents. Central to this story is the postage stamp – a small yet profound symbol of innovation, culture, and communication.

Stamps serve as visual ambassadors of history, celebrating milestones, honoring achievements, and preserving cultural heritage. Through their imagery, they embody the UPU's mission to connect people and cultures across the globe.

As we celebrate this landmark anniversary, the commemorative stamps issued by postal services worldwide remind us of the enduring power of philately. Each design is a tribute to the creativity and dedication that have shaped 150 years of global cooperation. Looking to the future, the postage stamp remains a timeless medium of connection, uniting the world in an increasingly digital age. **SD**



# UPU CELEBRATES 150 YEARS





# The Universal Postal Union – the second oldest international organization, a member of the United Nations family and the primary forum for international postal cooperation – celebrated World Post Day in a big way in 2024, marking its 150th anniversary with the international community.

by **KAYLA REDSTONE**

The UN observance marks the day the Treaty of Bern was signed by 22 countries to create the Universal Postal Union. A century and a half later, 192 countries are party to the UPU's treaties, forming a truly universal postal network that has helped facilitate not only the ability to communicate across borders, but access to a number of essential services offered by the Post, for billions of people worldwide. This was the inspiration for the theme of the landmark anniversary year and 2024 World Post Day: "150 years of enabling communication and empowering peoples across nations".

With the goal of properly reflecting on the organization's past, acknowledging its present situation and paving the way for its future, the UPU organized a series of events on 9 October in Berne, Switzerland.

## 150 years in Berne

The UPU opened its 150th birthday with a ceremony acknowledging the importance of the city of Berne in its foundation, as its host city. This began with a ceremony to inaugurate a new sign in front of the UPU monument in Berne's Kleine Schanze park.

Titled "Around the world" and designed by French sculptor René de Saint-Marceaux, the granite and bronze statue depicts five figures – representing Africa, Asia, the Americas, Australia and Europe – passing letters around a globe to signify the UPU's vital role in global communication. A

female figure seated at the side of the globe and holding Berne's coat of arms signifies the UPU's host city. The work was inaugurated in 1909, following an international design competition.

UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki was joined by President of the Executive Council of Berne Evi Allemann and Mayor Alec von Graffenried, to cut the ribbon inaugurating the new sign in the presence of high-level representatives from the Swiss government, former UPU Directors and Deputy Directors General, and members of the UPU's current executive management.

Speaking during the ceremony, the UPU Director General expressed the organization's gratitude to the City of Berne.

"Today, the UPU stands strong with 192 member countries, committed to connecting and empowering people in every corner of the world. But our roots remain firmly here, in this beautiful city of Berne, which has provided a home to the international postal community and has been a constant source of inspiration."

After the ceremony, guests moved to Berne's Restaurant Zum Äusseren Stand, formerly a political meeting hall and the venue where the 22 founding countries gathered to sign the treaty that created the UPU.



UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki, alongside President of the Executive Council of Berne Evi Allemann and Mayor of Berne Alec von Graffenried, inaugurated the new sign at the historic UPU monument in Berne's Kleine Schanze park, with high-level Swiss officials, former UPU leaders, and current executive management in attendance.

### 150 years of multilateralism

Later in the day, the organization welcomed the international community at its headquarters. Ambassadors of UPU member countries represented in Berne and Geneva joined heads and high-level representatives of UN and international organizations, as well as the Swiss authorities and the UPU secretariat.

The Director General opened the celebration in reading his annual World Post Day message, which highlighted the organization as a pioneer of multilateralism and an example of its continued relevance in an ever-evolving world.

"As we look to the future, the UPU's mission remains clear: to connect and empower people around the world," he said. "By staying committed to multilateralism, innovation, and inclusivity, the UPU will continue to support global communication and serve future generations for the next 150 years."

Speaking via video message on the occasion, UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized the UPU's vital role

in connecting everyone, everywhere, through the past present and future.

"Global cooperation helped guarantee a single postal territory worldwide – one that leaves no one behind by delivering messages, goods, and financial services to some of the most remote places on earth," he said. "Looking ahead, the UPU continues to leverage new technologies to provide essential services to humanity."

The global cooperation that has built and strengthened the international postal network has included not only the dedication of member countries, but also the support of other international partners – particularly in regards to expanding and evolving e-commerce needs. High-level representatives from UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Customs Organization (WCO), International Civil Aviation Organization, Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) and World Trade Organization delivered testimonials during the commemoration.



**"Today, the UPU stands strong with 192 member countries, committed to connecting and empowering people in every corner of the world."**

**Masahiko Metoki**  
UPU Director General

UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan reflected on the revolutionary nature of the UPU's conception.

"Imagine a world without cars, without planes, without the Internet. Imagine a world where communications were slow, unreliable, and often impossible. In that world, the creation of the UPU was a moonshot, an act of faith in the future that did not yet exist – a leap into the unknown – and yet it worked."

She underscored that, while communication and commerce have evolved since 1874, the UPU has played a pivotal role in evolving its network to meet modern needs.

"The UPU has been instrumental in helping postal operators navigate this shift, facilitating the growth of cross-border e-commerce and ensuring that everyone can participate in the global digital economy," she said.

In a video message, ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin highlighted how the partnership between ITU and the UPU has and is continuing to help ensure inclusive and meaningful connectivity for people around the globe through the Partner to Connect Digital Coalition.

"Connecting post offices, especially in rural areas, is key to bringing much-needed digital infrastructure to underserved communities around the world," she said.

Looking to the future, she added, "As we continue to shape the future of global communication, let's keep harnessing every technological shift to build a more connected, inclusive, and sustainable digital world, ensuring that no one is left behind as we work to advance progress on the Sustainable Development Goals."

In his address to the ceremony, WCO Secretary-General Ian Saunders described the work of posts and customs authorities as, "durable, intersecting threads in the fabric of society, keeping people connected and getting them the information and the things that they need."

He emphasized how the cooperation between the two organizations was helping to ensure the digitization of

customs clearance processes for postal items and address new challenges in the evolving global supply chain.

UPU member countries also shared messages of congratulations for the occasion. La Poste Groupe (France) CEO Philippe Wahl addressed the audience in person, further underscoring the value of international cooperation to help the sector navigate challenges still to come.

"Recent years have demonstrated that multilateralism is our common good and value here at the UPU, and this requires both universality and multilateralism. Of course, we will face new challenges and crises now and beyond, but it is through these principles that we will move forward," he said.

**Acknowledging excellence**

While the celebration gave the international community to reflect on the growth and development of the network as a whole, it also provided an opportunity to celebrate standout performers in the UPU's annual postal development index, which compared the postal networks of 174 countries based on the UPU's big data records, official postal statistics, and key surveys. Countries' networks were assessed



"Looking ahead, the UPU continues to leverage new technologies to provide essential services to humanity."

**António Guterres**  
UN Secretary-General



The Via Egnatia music ensemble performed a brief concert featuring melodies from around the world, including the recently rediscovered UPU anthem, composed by Jean Balissat for the UPU's 100th anniversary and the 1974 Lausanne Congress.

for their reliability, reach, relevance and resilience, receiving a score out of 100.

Switzerland topped the ranking for the eighth consecutive year, while Germany shared the top possible score for the first time. Japan, the United States, France, the Netherlands, and Australia followed in the Postal Excellence category with the next highest scores.

The UPU also acknowledged the leaders of each region – including Brazil, China, Estonia, Mauritius and Morocco – as well as Hungary, Indonesia and Barbados, who were named “Rising Stars” for achieving the greatest overall improvement in postal development compared to the previous year.

Representatives from each country were invited to receive awards from the UPU Director General and Deputy Director General.

Speaking on the results, UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki emphasized the critical role of postal services in today’s interconnected world.

“Postal services are more than delivery systems: they are channels for commerce, pillars of infrastructure, and catalysts for socio-economic development. To all award recipients and to postal workers across the globe: your dedication connects communities, empowers businesses and unites the world.”

### The future generation

The ceremony concluded with a celebration of the future by awarding medals to the four young winners of the UPU’s International Letter-Writing Competition.

In line with the milestone anniversary and the UN Summit of the Future, the 2024 edition of the competition asked children aged 9-15 to “Write a letter to future generations about the world you hope they inherit.” Letters from 50 participating countries were assessed by an international jury including representatives from competition partners, UNICEF and UNESCO, as well as former UPU Director General Eduard Dayan.

Of the 50 letters received, one stood ahead of the pack – a letter from 15-year-

old Aliaksandr Piatrou from Belarus envisioning a future defined by progress towards a peaceful and harmonious world.

He writes: “With your permission, I want to give you some advice. Take care of the older generation, remember that it was they who gave you the opportunity to live freely under a peaceful sky. Work, move forward, make efforts, make new discoveries every day. Practice self-development and creativity. Discover and develop your talents. Earn likes in real life, appreciate what you have. Study history to avoid repeating the mistakes of past generations.”

Second place was shared by Cheng Zihan, 11, from China and Nayra Novelia Kusuma, 14, from Indonesia. Cheng, who focused his letter on preserving the environment, writes, “Regardless of where you find yourselves, we all share this planet’s destiny and breathe the same air. It’s crucial for you to shoulder the responsibility of your era, address climate change.”

Nayra advocated for the preservation of literacy in a world dominated by digital gadgets. “The era of technological



Winners of the Postal Excellence Awards were recognized for their exceptional contributions to advancing global postal services.



UPU Deputy Director General Marjan Osvald spoke with the four young winners of the International Letter-Writing Competition, praising their inspiring letters and emphasizing how their words can influence important decisions shaping the future.

improvement, digital development, dominating robots, and foreign cooperation makes the world look more luxurious ... Time after time, fear haunts my desire to increase interest in literacy, especially in this country," she writes.

Valeria Scartsella, 14, from Cyprus, won the competition's third prize for her letter imagining advancements in technology and knowledge that would leave behind a more peaceful and equal world for her predecessors.

"In the future, people will join forces to combat every difficulty that humanity will face," her letter explains. "Scientists will pool their ideas and harness technology to solve the global problems mankind has been facing for centuries, such as hunger and poverty."

UPU Deputy Director Marjan Osvald described the letters as, "both inspiring and humbling." To the winners, he said, "Your words carry the power to inspire those who are making decisions today – some of whom are gathered here in this room, while others join us virtually."

### A toast to the future

Following the ceremony, the diplomatic community was invited to a reception hosted jointly by the Swiss Confederation and the UPU.

Federal Councillor H.E. Mr Albert Rösti, Head of the Swiss Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, reaffirmed Switzerland's "unwavering commitment to fostering international cooperation in postal services" as a "neutral and stable" host country.

Looking towards the future of the Union, he touched on significant challenges and opportunities facing the sector – from e-commerce and digital services, to sustainable development and financial sustainability – closing on a hopeful note.

"I am confident that the UPU, with the continued support of its member countries, will continue to adapt and innovate. Together, we can build a future where the postal sector remains a vital force in connecting people and promoting global understanding." **KR**

In line with the milestone anniversary and the UN Summit of the Future, the 2024 edition of the competition asked children aged 9-15 to "Write a letter to future generations about the world you hope they inherit."



"Your words carry the power to inspire those who are making decisions today..."

**Marjan Osvald**  
UPU Deputy Director General



“With your permission, I want to give you some advice. Take care of the older generation, remember that it was they who gave you the opportunity to live freely under a peaceful sky.”

**Aliaksandr Piatrou**

Winner of the 53rd International Letter-Writing Competition for Young People



Watch the UPU Director General's World Post Day message:

<https://youtu.be/8Tcq7dEC-M6g?si=l6EwRSKMxnk-PnTN5>



Read the winning letters:

<https://www.upu.int/en/universal-postal-union/outreach-campaigns/international-letter-writing-competition-for-young-people>



Watch the UN Secretary-General's World Post Day address:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPT\\_67tLD14](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPT_67tLD14)



Check out messages of congratulations from UPU member countries and partner organizations:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CP72t8brcb-k&list=PLqiPfpT90h34ZQt-JqhTKysH24AgKDG0d->



Watch our World Post Day 2024 lookback video:

<https://youtu.be/nsiK-TzTx-g8?si=pF54X-hopYSjAkMG>



During World Post Week, UPU flags on Geneva's Mont-Blanc Bridge honored 150 years of connecting nations and empowering communities worldwide.

"As we look to the future, the UPU's mission remains clear: to connect and empower people around the world. By staying committed to multilateralism, innovation, and inclusivity, the UPU will continue to support global communication and serve future generations for the next 150 years."

**MASAHIKO METOKI**

Director General, UPU

"Global cooperation helped guarantee a single postal territory worldwide – one that leaves no one behind by delivering messages, goods, and financial services to some of the most remote places on earth," he said. "Looking ahead, the UPU continues to leverage new technologies to provide essential services to humanity."

**ANTÓNIO GUTERRES**

UN Secretary-General

"Imagine a world without cars, without planes, without the Internet. Imagine a world where communications were slow, unreliable, and often impossible. In that world, the creation of the UPU was a moonshot, an act of faith in the future that did not yet exist – a leap into the unknown – and yet it worked."

**REBECA GRYNSPAN**

Secretary-General, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

"As we continue to shape the future of global communication, let's keep harnessing every technological shift to build a more connected, inclusive, and sustainable digital world, ensuring that no one is left behind as we work to advance progress on the Sustainable Development Goals."

**DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN**

Secretary-General, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

"ICAO and the Universal Postal Union have become increasingly intertwined, as illustrated by the seamless integration of postal and air cargo services worldwide. The strength and importance of our partnership were particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, as we supported states in maintaining essential connectivity."

**JUAN CARLOS SALAZAR**, Secretary-General,  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

"The work we do as post and customs can be thought of as durable, intersecting threads in the fabric of society, keeping people connected and getting them the information and the things that they need."

**IAN SAUNDERS**, Secretary-General,  
World Customs Organization (WCO)

"Achieving sustainable transport goals will require decarbonization and modal shift to cleaner modes. This also means a strong need for multilateralism. The existing problems can only be solved on an international, worldwide level."

**WOLFGANG KÜPPER**, Secretary-General,  
Intergovernmental Organisation for  
International Carriage by Rail (OTIF)

"I am confident that the UPU, with the continued support of its member countries, will continue to adapt and innovate. Together, we can build a future where the postal sector remains a vital force in connecting people and promoting global understanding."

**H.E. ALBERT RÖSTI**, Head of the Federal  
Department for the Environment, Transport,  
Energy and Communications (DETEC)



54<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL  
LETTER-WRITING  
COMPETITION



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



# IMAGINE YOU ARE THE OCEAN

Write a letter to someone explaining why  
and how they should take good care of you.

## 2025



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2021 United Nations Decade  
2030 of Ocean Science  
for Sustainable Development





# INSPIRING GLOBAL YOUTH TO ADVOCATE FOR OUR OCEANS

The 54th International Letter-Writing Competition, hosted by the Universal Postal Union, is set to inspire young minds worldwide in 2025. Collaborating with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and UNESCO, this year's competition brings ocean conservation to the forefront, urging participants aged 9 to 15 to embody the voice of the ocean and write a compelling letter advocating for its protection.

Established in 1971, the International Letter-Writing Competition (ILWC) has become a cornerstone of youth engagement, with millions of participants worldwide learning the art of effective communication. Last year alone, around 1.5 million young people from 50 countries participated, showcasing their creativity and passion for global issues.

UPU invites its 192 member countries to join this inspiring initiative by organizing national-level competitions. This offers a unique opportunity to amplify young voices, promote literacy, and raise environmental awareness. By giving youth a platform to express their ideas and creativity, countries empower the next generation to share their perspectives on sustainability and their essential role in safeguarding the

planet. Participation in this global initiative also fosters cultural exchange and demonstrates each nation's commitment to addressing universal challenges like ocean conservation, fostering a shared sense of purpose and global unity.

The competition process is rigorous and rewarding. National organizers will select the best entries from each country, which will then compete at the international level. A jury at UPU headquarters in Bern, Switzerland, will evaluate submissions to crown the global winners.

This year's theme, "Imagine you are the Ocean. Write a letter to someone explaining why and how they should take good care of you." provides a unique platform for youth to reflect on our shared responsibility for the oceans. Through their letters, young writers will champion sustainability and remind the world of the interconnectedness of people and the environment.

The competition nurtures creativity, builds confidence, and connects young people across cultures, fostering a global sense of unity and purpose. **SD**

"Participating in the competition was a unique opportunity for me to share my thoughts about the future with people from different countries. I'm glad that my work was among the winners. Recognition is very important for teenagers – it gives confidence, inspires creativity, and fosters growth. I am grateful to the organizers of the competition and encourage other young people to take part in it."

**Aliaksandr Piatrou (Belarus)**  
2024 gold-medal winner

"I participated and the experience was overwhelming. The whole experience was a roller-coaster of emotions that I will never forget. I was able to network and make new friends. It was amazing to meet Sarah the Robot one-on-one.

To my fellow children all over the world, writing is not easy, but I encourage you to begin somewhere. All great achievements require time. To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.

Thank you to 'UPU' for giving children an opportunity to nurture their talents/abilities and to shine. Take the challenge, grasp the opportunity, and make a better future for all of us and our environment. Try something new and discover yourself every single day."

**Claire Gakii (Kenya)**  
2023 gold-medal winner

"Participating in the UPU competition has made my life better. My self-confidence has grown, and I look to the future with hope. I always believe I will succeed and am not afraid of challenges. The power of love is immense. I love the UPU family so much – it has become a big family for me. I now have friends from different cultures. After the competition, I realized that a pen and paper can change the world. Writing letters is freedom. Letters, like birds, cross seas and mountains. I want all young people to write letters, believe in themselves, and love others. Letters filled with love, knowledge, and kindness will save the world."

**Esra Sümeyye Öz (Türkiye)**  
2022 gold-medal winner



For more details on how to participate and make a difference, visit UPU's ILWC website.

<https://www.upu.int/en/universal-postal-union/outreach-campaigns/international-letterwriting-competition-for-young-people>





# 2024 STATE OF THE POSTAL SECTOR REPORT CHARTS ROADMAP FOR LONGEVITY

## The 2024 edition of the UPU's flagship report on the development of the postal sector provides a scrutinizing analysis of the sector's past and present, providing an optimistic vision for its successful future.

Text by **TARA GIROUD**

As the Universal Postal Union celebrates its 150th anniversary, the international postal network is facing an existential question: Is it able and willing to pivot its mission, policies, and ways of working to embrace the latest technological revolution, or will it maintain the status quo? The answer will determine whether the institution will reach its 200th anniversary.

This stark question, derived from an analysis of nearly 150 years of postal trends, is explored in the 2024 State of the Postal Sector report. One of its key findings shows that despite the sector's massively expanded reach since the 19th century, it has erased almost all its gains in the share of cross-border postal volumes.

UPU economist José Anson, who conducted the study, said if the global postal network maintains the status quo, it will almost certainly lead to the UPU's extinction. And yet, there is reason to hope.

"Our member countries, government regulators, designated operators, I think, are conscious that they are living through a critical juncture now," Anson said, "and that if they are not able to introduce more bold changes in how the organization operates and how it supports our facilities, digital trade, and the internationalization of the economy in the coming decades, there is very little grounds for survival by 2074."

Such a "Regression" to obsolescence, however, is just one possibility explored in the report. It also charted two other scenarios: "Resilience," in which some changes are made at the periphery, such as remaining focused on logistics

yet forgoing integrated financial and digital services, which would keep internationalization rates low.

The best-case scenario, with a dramatic transformation of systems and regulations, however, could usher in a "Renaissance," with internationalization rates rebounding to peak levels within a couple of decades and the postal sector emerging as the leader in cross-border services, the report said.

In pure numbers, the global population served by the international postal network has surged to 7.3 billion in 2024, from 600 million in 1874. With this growth, international letter volumes surged approximately 35-fold by its peak in 1991, with international parcel volumes continuing to climb until pre-COVID-19 pandemic 2019, when volume was nearly 80 times that of the start of the UPU.

Such postal services continue to provide value to member countries, as a previous UPU study found that without postal services, a country's GDP would fall by a median of 7 percent, the report said.

Still, the rate of cross-border volumes as a factor of total postal volumes, the internationalization rate, has continued to decline since both letter- and parcel-post peaked in 1913, just before World War I with the peak of the first wave of globalization. Letter-post has since fallen to 0.5 percent from its peak of 5.5 percent and parcel-post has plunged to 0.7 percent from 7.3 percent.

The report also highlights how the international postal service has never reached its full potential. While the rate of

international postal delivery has tended to mirror trends in globalization, there has always been a gap. In 1913, at the peak of internationalization rates, letter- and parcel-post were significantly lower than global trade flows of about 14 percent of GDP. And that gap has only widened.

For example, post-World War II, trade globalization led to expansive growth that, into the 2000s, saw trade as a

The best-case scenario, with a dramatic transformation of systems and regulations, however, could usher in a "Renaissance," with internationalization rates rebounding to peak levels within a couple of decades and the postal sector emerging as the leader in cross-border services.

percentage of global GDP surpass 20 percent, the second wave of globalization. Yet postal internationalization rates continued a decline that had begun after World War I, nearly a century before.

Postal services continued to lose ground through several advances in communication technologies, from telephones and fax machines to email and digital platforms. Additionally, global express companies arrived in the 1980s and implemented track-and-trace systems with faster, more reliable cross-border services.

“This divergence raises important questions about how international postal exchanges are governed by the UPU and whether the current structures and policies are sufficient to adapt to the rapidly changing global trade and communication landscape,” the report said.

Still, a need exists for international mail, the report notes, such as for legal documents and niche markets. The report even noted that a resurgence in popularity of postal mail could appear with younger generations who may experience digital fatigue. However, the challenges remain clear. Demand for international parcels and small packets saw a nearly 60 percent drop by 2024 from the 2019 peak as domestic demand increased and international deliveries faced regulatory, taxation and security issues, among other challenges.

With this backdrop, the sector must commit to large-scale change, the report said. It must embrace technological innovations, such as automation and real-time tracking systems to improve efficiency; strengthen international collaboration and policy coordination, such as with the UPU’s efforts to harmonize postal regulations and foster hyper-collaboration among postal operators, governments, and private sector players; and invest in infrastructure in least developed countries to expand international connectivity and improve service delivery to foster greater economic participation and development.

Such steps could allow for a resurgence in internationalization after 2025 with letter-post potentially climbing back



Read the full 2024 State of the Postal Sector report here:

[https://www.upu.int/UPU/media/upu/publications/202412sPSReportMain\\_EN.pdf](https://www.upu.int/UPU/media/upu/publications/202412sPSReportMain_EN.pdf)



up to 1 percent and parcel-post surging to 15 percent by 2074.

There are encouraging signs that the sector could begin to make changes more collaboratively and quickly. For example, the reinvigorated UPU Consultative Committee is welcoming more of the wider postal players into collaboration, Anson said.

“This is a clear sign that the need for collaboration goes in both directions,” he said. “This could eventually lead to this Renaissance scenario because ... in the single framework you have all relevant parties to cross-border e-commerce logistics in the world, all relevant parties will be there having found a balanced governance of the respective interests.” **TG**

In pure numbers, the global population served by the international postal network has surged to 7.3 billion in 2024, from 600 million in 1874.

**precision**  
**tracking** **data** **security**  
**monitoring** **RFID**  
**tracking** **service** **solution**  
**quality** **integrity**  
**technology**  
**transmission** **global**

One of the Universal Postal Union's main goals as an intergovernmental organization is to support its member countries to monitor and improve the quality of mail services for their customers worldwide. The Global Monitoring System (GMS) offers different services aiming at monitoring quality and processes on a global, cross border or national scale. GMS is continually committed to providing avenues for members to improve quality of service.

For more information contact Ms Margaret Westfall, TAM UPU GMS Program, [margaret.westfall@upu.int](mailto:margaret.westfall@upu.int)



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE UPU WORLD LEADERS FORUM AND PARCEL+POST EXPO 2024

On October 22–23, 2024, the UPU World Leaders Forum took place as part of the Parcel+Post Expo in Amsterdam. Centered on the theme "Smart and Collaborative Solutions to Enhance Customer Trust," the forum provided a platform for industry leaders and experts to discuss key challenges and opportunities in the postal and logistics sector.

*Text by* SONJA **DENOVSKI**





Breakout panel titled "Empowering Women Leaders to Shape the Future of Post: Innovation, Inclusion, and Trust" underscored the critical contribution of female leadership in navigating the postal sector's transition into a digital-first world while fostering a culture of innovation and inclusion.

The event opened with a focus on female leadership driving innovation, followed by discussions on artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. These sessions set the tone for exploring strategies and partnerships to enhance customer trust, leverage technology, and prepare the sector for a digital future.

### **Empowering women leaders to shape the future of Post**

Setting the stage, a breakout panel titled "Empowering Women Leaders to Shape the Future of Post: Innovation, Inclusion, and Trust" brought together prominent female leaders to discuss the vital role of women in driving innovation and fostering collaboration in the postal sector. Moderated by Simona Bratuša, Advisor for International Mail at Pošta Slovenije, the panel featured insights from Ivana Vrvišar, Member of the Executive Management at Pošta Slovenije, Mariella Buisson, CEO of Seychelles Postal Service, and Siobhan MacDermott, Head of the Global Advisory Business at 8 Degrees East.

The panel explored the unique challenges women encounter in a traditionally male-

dominated industry and highlighted the importance of diverse leadership in shaping customer-focused, inclusive postal services. Discussions emphasized eliminating biases in technology, particularly in artificial intelligence, to ensure that solutions address a wide spectrum of customer needs.

Panelists also stressed the importance of mentorship programs to encourage women to pursue technology-focused roles and leadership positions in the sector. They shared practical advice for emerging female leaders, encouraging persistence, self-advocacy, and active efforts to seek out mentorship opportunities.

### **Strategic potential of Artificial Intelligence**

The keynote session on artificial intelligence, delivered by Edgar Barroso, CEO of Horizons Architecture and Professor of Innovation and Public Entrepreneurship at Tecnológico de Monterrey, delved into the transformative potential of AI in the postal and logistics sector. Barroso described AI as both a source of inspiration and anxiety due to its unprecedented capacity for reasoning and self-evolution.

**The UPU World Leaders Forum provided a platform for industry leaders to explore strategies and partnerships to enhance customer trust, leverage technology, and prepare the sector for a digital future.**

He outlined three major concerns surrounding the adoption of AI. The first is accuracy, emphasizing the need for AI systems to provide reliable and non-misleading information. The second is cybersecurity, focusing on data privacy, ownership, and the potential misuse of sensitive information. Finally, he addressed replacement anxiety, the fear that machines may replace human roles rather than complement them. Barroso encouraged the audience to view these challenges as opportunities for "hybrid intelligence," where humans and AI work collaboratively to enhance problem-solving and collective decision-making.

"We have to embrace these technologies to understand them and to spread them as democratically as possible, so that every human has the opportunity to have an augmented intelligence—a hybrid intelligence," Barroso stated, adding that the industry is "underestimating these systems because we haven't yet tapped into their strategic potential to solve problems we couldn't as humans."

Barroso also questioned whether the postal sector is focusing too narrowly on operational efficiencies and standardization.

He urged leaders to explore AI's ability to tackle complex, unresolved challenges and integrate vast data sets to inform smarter decision-making. These capabilities, he argued, could help address declining volumes and open up innovative pathways for growth. He concluded by stressing the importance of deploying AI ethically and inclusively, ensuring its benefits are accessible to all.

The discussion continued in a roundtable session moderated by Barroso, bringing together prominent industry voices to explore practical applications of AI in the postal sector. Panelists included Dr. Vinaya Prakash Singh, Secretary-General of the Asian-Pacific Postal Union; Christian Oestergaard, Lead Visionary and Senior Group Strategist at PostNord; Farah Akoum, Senior Director of Product Management and Digital Shopping Experience at Nordstrom; and Valeria Sadovykh, Technology Strategist at Microsoft.

The panelists emphasized the importance of combining AI-driven insights with human oversight to ensure ethical and responsible implementation. They discussed the critical need for transparent data management to maintain customer trust, as well as fostering

collaboration between postal operators and technology partners to maximize the potential of AI-driven solutions.

The roundtable also highlighted AI's ability to anticipate customer needs and streamline operations, creating a more efficient and customer-focused sector. Panelists agreed that while AI will not replace human expertise, it can significantly enhance decision-making and innovation by providing new ways to approach complex challenges.



"We have to embrace these technologies to understand them and to spread them as democratically as possible, so that every human has the opportunity to have an augmented intelligence – a hybrid intelligence."

#### Edgar Barroso

CEO of Horizons Architecture and Professor of Innovation and Public Entrepreneurship at Tecnológico de Monterrey



UPU Deputy Director General Marjan Osvald and UKI Media CEO Tony Robinson officially open the UPU World Leaders Forum, setting the stage for two days of discussions on innovation, collaboration, AI and cybersecurity.





"More than 90% of data breaches are due to social engineering – manipulation of people's emotions or human error. Cybersecurity is no longer just about protecting systems; it's about helping people become shields by using emotional intelligence to transform how criminals weaponize emotions."

**Nadja El Fertasi**  
Founder of Thrive with EQ

### Building trust in a connected world through cybersecurity

The keynote session on cybersecurity, delivered by Nadja El Fertasi, Founder of Thrive with EQ and a leadership coach specializing in trust and security in digital transformation, highlighted the evolving nature of cybersecurity in today's digitally connected world. As technology advances, so do the methods used to exploit vulnerabilities, making cybersecurity essential for maintaining customer trust in the postal sector.

El Fertasi emphasized that cybersecurity is no longer just a technical challenge but increasingly a human one. "More than 90% of data breaches are due to social engineering – manipulation of people's emotions or human error. Cybersecurity is no longer just about protecting systems; it's about helping people become shields by using emotional intelligence to transform how criminals weaponize emotions," she noted. "The path of least resistance to a company's or customer's data is through people's emotions," she explained, underscoring the need to address the human element in cybersecurity strategies.

To counter this, El Fertasi proposed leveraging emotional intelligence (EQ) as a shield. By understanding how criminals exploit emotions, organizations can empower employees to become their first line of defence. She encouraged the postal sector to embed cybersecurity awareness

into all levels of the organization, using accessible, bite-sized training to foster a culture of mindfulness. This approach, she argued, can turn cybersecurity into "muscle memory," aligning practices with business priorities while addressing each department's unique needs.

She framed cybersecurity as a continuous learning path, emphasizing that building trust requires ongoing efforts rather than one-time actions. By focusing on awareness, fostering understanding, and developing habits that prioritize safety, the sector can protect data and create trust-building interactions with customers in a digital-first world.

Following the keynote, a roundtable discussion moderated by El Fertasi brought

Cybersecurity is no longer just a technical challenge but a human one, requiring organizations to embed awareness and mindfulness across all levels of operation.



A roundtable discussion explored practical applications of AI in the postal sector, highlighting the importance of ethical implementation, transparent data management, and human-AI collaboration to enhance efficiency and customer trust.



During the cybersecurity roundtable, experts discussed the critical role of human vigilance and shared responsibility in strengthening cybersecurity within the postal sector.

together experts to explore practical strategies for combating cyber threats. Panelists Michel Dubois (La Poste Groupe), Piyush Srivastava (AWS), Dr. Sushan Banerjee (Beyon Connect), and Siobhan MacDermott (8 Degrees East) reinforced the importance of human vigilance, noting that most breaches stem from human error.

They emphasized the need for rigorous training, regular security drills, and fostering organizational accountability to uphold security standards. The panel also highlighted the value of a shared responsibility model, where postal operators collaborate with customers to raise cybersecurity awareness. Advanced tools, such as encryption and AI-driven threat detection, were identified as essential components of a resilient, trust-focused cybersecurity framework.

### Showcasing collaborative success

The UPU World Leaders Forum concluded by highlighting key partnerships that are driving innovation and addressing critical challenges in the postal sector. These collaborations demonstrated how strategic alliances and advanced technologies are reshaping operations, enhancing customer

experiences, and enabling postal operators to adapt to an increasingly digital world.

An Post (Ireland) and Hurricane Commerce showcased their partnership, which has been instrumental in navigating the complexities of Brexit and adapting to evolving customs regulations. By transitioning from manual customs processes to a fully electronic system, An Post has streamlined cross-border e-commerce operations, ensuring compliance and improving customer satisfaction. According to Cyril McGrane, Director of Pricing, International & QOS at An Post, "This partnership allowed us to make a historic leap in efficiency, enabling a seamless transition to 100% electronic customs handling."

Ukrposhta (Ukraine) and AfterShip highlighted their efforts to sustain cross-border trade for Ukrainian merchants selling on platforms like Etsy and eBay. By integrating AfterShip's advanced API, Ukrposhta ensures seamless tracking for nearly 200,000 packages monthly, despite the challenges of war. "The integration with AfterShip allowed us to solve critical issues with tracking and updates, enabling us to focus on timely physical delivery and better serving our

customers," said Julia Pavlenko, Director of International Operations at Ukrposhta.

Saudi Post (SPL) and GN TEQ demonstrated how their collaboration has transformed SPL's logistics operations. By automating customer onboarding, customs clearance, billing, and tracking, they reduced onboarding times from months to days and cut delivery times within Saudi Arabia from six days to three or four. These advancements have positioned Saudi

Discussions highlighted how artificial intelligence can tackle unresolved challenges, integrate vast data sets, and open up innovative pathways for growth in the postal sector.

"Partnerships are the backbone of innovation—they allow postal operators to address complexities, adapt to new regulations, and deliver seamless, reliable services for customers worldwide."

**David Spottiswood**

Co-Founder of Hurricane Commerce

Arabia as a regional logistics hub under the Vision 2030 initiative. Additionally, SPL's expanded services, including Delivered Duty Paid (DDP) and cash-on-delivery options, have driven over 3 million additional e-commerce shipments in just a few months.

SF Express and China Post presented their intelligent cloud security inspection platform, which enhances safety for postal workers and customers. This AI-driven solution improves operational efficiency, strengthens collaboration with global logistics partners, and increases customer satisfaction through robust security measures.

As David Spottiswood, Co-Founder of Hurricane Commerce, emphasized, "Partnerships are the backbone of innovation—they allow postal operators to address complexities, adapt to new regulations, and deliver seamless, reliable services for customers worldwide."

**Highlights from the UPU stand**

The UPU stand not only showcased innovative solutions and technologies but also served as a hub for networking and collaboration, bringing together postal operators, technology partners, and industry experts.

Zonos, in partnership with the Postal Technology Center (PTC), highlighted the Delivered Duty Paid (DDP) project. "We're taking the complexity out for



posts by addressing compliance issues and enhancing the customer experience," explained Jane Collison, Global Trade Partnerships at Zonos. The project provides transparency in duties and taxes while scaling global e-commerce opportunities for posts, adapting to the specific needs of each destination post.

Hurricane Commerce showcased its integration with the UPU's Customs Declaration System (CDS), addressing the critical need for accurate data in cross-border shipping. "Complete and accurate

"We're taking the complexity out for posts by addressing compliance issues and enhancing the customer experience."

#### Jane Collison

Global Trade Partnerships at Zonos

data ensures parcels clear customs seamlessly, avoiding delays and saving time and money for both posts and customers," noted David Spottiswood, Co-Founder of Hurricane Commerce. The partnership improves efficiency and communication for end customers while reducing logistical challenges for posts worldwide.

The Escher Group, collaborating with Posti (Finland), demonstrated how AI-powered Optical Character Recognition (OCR) engines are transforming mail sorting. "By significantly increasing automation and eliminating manual sorting, we've helped Posti take costs out of their operations and improve efficiency," said Brody Buhler, CEO of Escher Group. These engines also utilize machine learning, continually improving recognition accuracy and optimizing processes.

The stand also featured .POST, the UPU-sponsored Internet Top Level Domain, designed to provide a secure digital space for the postal, supply chain, and logistics sectors. Through a demonstration of the .POST Shared Services Platform, attendees saw how it

safeguards sensitive data and facilitates secure transactions and communication across the global postal network.

#### Looking ahead

The UPU World Leaders Forum and Parcel+Post Expo showcased how the postal sector is evolving to meet the demands of a digital-first world. With a focus on customer trust, advanced technologies, and collaborative solutions, the event highlighted the sector's commitment to innovation and global connectivity.

From AI-driven efficiencies and enhanced cybersecurity to partnerships driving operational transformation, the discussions and presentations reflected a forward-thinking approach to overcoming modern challenges.

Building on this momentum, the UPU is already preparing for the next Parcel+Post Expo, scheduled for 21–23 October 2025 in Amsterdam, where the conversation will continue on shaping the future of the global postal community. **SD**



"By automating customer onboarding and delivery processes with GN TEQ, we reduced onboarding times from months to days and delivery times from six days to just three or four, advancing our goal of making Saudi Arabia a regional logistics hub."

**Walid AlSulami**

General Manager of  
Products, SPL Group

"Through collaboration with Hurricane Commerce, we transitioned to 100% electronic customs handling, enabling seamless compliance and improving operational efficiency for cross-border e-commerce."

**Cyril McGrane**

Director of Pricing, International  
& QOS, An Post

The UPU stand showcased cutting-edge solutions like the Delivered Duty Paid (DDP) project, AI-powered OCR engines, and the .POST platform, while serving as a hub for networking and collaboration among industry leaders.



# CORREOS DE COSTA RICA LAUNCHES COLD CHAIN TRANSPORT OF MEDICINES

Text by **KAYLA REDSTONE**

Costa Rica's designated operator is diversifying its services offering, having launched a successful new pilot project in 2024 to deliver medicines in partnership with leading pharmaceutical providers in the country.

The pilot project served 12 private pharmacies in eight districts in the country's northern region, with the postal operator delivering between 40 and 70 shipments per day over two months. The post's main contract was with Farmanova Intermed Group, a company made up of 13 companies dedicated to the development, marketing, and distribution of health products.

The move is part of Correos de Costa Rica's plan to further expand its commercial portfolio.

Correos de Costa Rica's innovative medicine delivery service connects pharmacies across the northern region, utilizing specially equipped vans and trained personnel to ensure safe and reliable transportation of medications. Photos: Correos de Costa Rica



According to the post, between May, when the service was launched, and November over 10,000 shipments were successfully delivered.

In order to achieve success, the project required a transformation of the operator's delivery fleet and operating processes.

"The first step was to adapt our fleet to the service requirements, based on the conditions that suppliers recommend for the transport of medicines in the cold chain," says Correos de Costa Rica spokesperson, Carla González Barboza. "Subsequently, we hired personnel who were trained exclusively to handle this project and who have provided a high-quality service to companies," she adds.

The post adjusted its fleet to ensure that the temperature of the driver's cabin and cargo area could be adjusted independently to maintain the integrity of the products. A new system of temperature sensors on the cargo area – cooled to between 19°C and 21°C – as well as individual items packed with ice to maintain cooler temperatures collected and stored

temperature data during shipment as proof of compliance with storage requirements.

Postal staff also required specialized training in order to handle the new class of products according to strict protocols.

Given the project's success, Baboza explains that the post has plans to expand to serve customers in other areas.

"The work with Farmanova has been very successful, and plans are to expand it to more routes around the country. We currently cover the San Carlos route and hope to soon introduce the service in the province of Cartago," she says.

On advice for other postal operators, Barboza highlights the importance of understanding the requirements of handling new types of items.

"It is essential to investigate the client's needs to adapt the logistics plan assertively, in addition to having clarity on the health requirements and protocols for the management of medications and the cold chain." **KR**

"The first step was to adapt our fleet to the service requirements, based on the conditions that suppliers recommend for the transport of medicines in the cold chain. Subsequently, we hired personnel who were trained exclusively to handle this project and who have provided a high-quality service to companies."

**Carla González Barboza**  
Correos de Costa Rica spokesperson



# MARKET DIGEST

by MAKIKO HAYASHI  
and LIN LIU

## BOTSWANA

**BOTSWANAPOST** has partnered with Funeral Services Group (FSG), a leading funeral services provider, to advance digital transformation and streamline payment processes for insurance premiums, particularly in underserved communities. During the partnership signing in Gaborone, BotswanaPost CEO Cornelius Ramathlakwane emphasized the need for innovation to stay relevant and compete with digital-native companies. The collaboration will leverage BotswanaPost's extensive network to provide digital services like e-government and e-commerce while ensuring accessibility and minimal costs for consumers. FSG Managing Director Fegus Ferguson highlighted the partnership as a symbol of trust, aiming to offer convenient and reliable financial solutions to citizens across Botswana. **MH**

(Source: dailynews.gov.bw)

## CANADA

**CANADA POST** celebrated National Indigenous Peoples Day this year by issuing a new set of stamps honoring Indigenous leaders, continuing a tradition started in 2022. This year's stamps feature Elisapie, Josephine Mandamin, and Christi Belcourt, each recognized for their contributions to environmental advocacy and the preservation of Inuit, First Nations, and Métis cultures. Elisapie is celebrated for her work in music and film promoting Inuit culture; Mandamin is honored for her activism in water rights; and Belcourt is recognized for her visual art that highlights Métis traditions. The stamps were unveiled at events in Montréal, Thunder Bay, and Ottawa, and are now available nationwide. **MH**

(Source: canadapost-postescanada.ca)

## CAYMAN ISLANDS

(Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

The **CAYMAN ISLANDS POSTAL SERVICE (CIPS)** partnered with the Sunrise Adult Training Centre (SATC) during the UPU's regional strategy conference, which took place in Grand Cayman, to promote inclusivity. SATC, which provides training and support to empower adults with disabilities, saw its clients play a key role in the conference by managing registration desks, distributing materials and assisting delegates. This initiative highlighted the skills and value of SATC clients, challenging stereotypes and demonstrating their capabilities. The collaboration not only fostered inclusivity but also opened doors for future opportunities, encouraging other organizations to engage and empower individuals with disabilities within the community. **MH**

(Source: ieyenews.com)

## FAROE ISLANDS

(Denmark)

**KEBA (KRIPPNER ELEKTRONIK BANK-AUTOMATION)** is partnering with **POSTA**, the designated postal operator of the Faroe Islands, to optimize last-mile logistics. With a population of just under 56,000 spreading across 18 islands, the Faroe Islands present unique delivery challenges. Initially considered in 2012, parcel lockers have now become essential due to declining letter deliveries. Since 2022, KEBA has helped Posta reduce delivery routes and costs while enhancing service quality by strategically placing parcel lockers. Currently, ten lockers are in use, with plans for ten more. This collaboration,

which also includes efficient delivery of medical products, has received positive feedback, significantly improving logistics on the islands. **MH**

(Source: Parcel and Postal Technology International)

## HUNGARY

A museum post office has opened in Hollókő, a UNESCO World Heritage site, blending traditional and modern postal services while offering a glimpse into the 157-year history of **MAGYAR POSTA (HUNGARIAN POST)**. The post office, styled as a 19th-century facility, features historical artifacts, a garden, and an old telephone exchange. Hollókő, with its well-preserved folk architecture, serves as both a tourist attraction and a living community. The new post office aims to provide essential services to locals and visitors alike, addressing concerns that the loss of such services in small villages can weaken local communities over time. Collaborative efforts between the post and cultural institutions aim to strengthen these communities. **MH**

(Source: hungarytoday.hu)

## INDONESIA

**INDONESIA'S MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATICS (KOMINFO)** is driving digital transformation in the postal and logistics industries as part of its Digital Indonesia Vision 2045 roadmap. Celebrating **PT Pos INDONESIA's** 278th anniversary on August 26th, Kominfo Minister Budi Arie Setiadi emphasized the need for innovation and technology to enhance public satisfaction across 744 postal offices nationwide. PT Pos Indonesia is leveraging technologies like radio frequency identification (RFID) to automate shipment sorting and boost competitiveness. The initiative underscores the importance of effective policies and a commitment to fostering a safe and efficient digital ecosystem. **MH**

(Source: antaranews.com)



## ITALY

**POSTE ITALIANE** has partnered with Enilive, a subsidiary of Eni, to power its fleet with biofuels as part of its sustainability strategy. The collaboration involves using HVolution, a biofuel made from renewable resources like used cooking oil, for its road vehicles. Additionally, sustainable aviation fuel will be provided for its air fleet. This move supports Poste Italiane's goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030, aligning with Italy's broader energy transition efforts. Both companies aim to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and accelerate decarbonization in the transport sector. **LL**

(Source: Parcel and Postal Technology International)

## KAZAKHSTAN/ CHINA

**KAZPOST** has launched the Cainiao E-Packet service in Kazakhstan, aimed at improving parcel delivery from Chinese trading platforms. This new service, introduced at the Dry Port Khorgos, ensures direct delivery to Kazakhstan, reducing delivery times and enhancing service quality. E-Packet Plus provides advanced logistics for e-commerce, allowing parcels to be delivered to post offices and automated machines nationwide. The collaboration with Cainiao includes plans to increase parcel weight limits to 20 kg, further benefiting consumers and businesses. This initiative aims to support cross-border e-commerce and improve logistics efficiency between China and Kazakhstan. **MH**

(Source: en.inform.kz)

## LUXEMBOURG & SWEDEN

Ericsson, a leading Swedish multinational specializing in telecommunications equipment and services, is enhancing its network security capabilities by integrating the Telecom Intrusion Detection System (TIDS) from **POST LUXEMBOURG** into its signaling security offerings. Ericsson is a key player in the global telecom industry, known for its innovative solutions in mobile network infrastructure, including the deployment of 5G technology. This partnership aims to provide comprehensive protection for mobile and mission-critical network operators, especially as they roll out 5G networks. POST Luxembourg, the largest provider of postal and telecom services in Luxembourg, brings its award-winning TIDS solution, offering real-time visibility into signaling threats. This complements Ericsson's existing security tools like the Ericsson Security Manager (ESM) and Unified Signaling Firewall (USFW). The collaboration strengthens Ericsson's position in signaling security, addressing the growing need to secure interconnect networks between communication service providers. **MH**

(Source: ericsson.com)

## MALAYSIA

**POS MALAYSIA** launched its latest Pos Shop in Kuantan, Pahang, marking its 17th outlet. The new 1,800-square-foot location combines postal and parcel services with a retail space for daily essentials, offering a one-stop solution for the local community. The shop includes a Pos Kafe, where customers can enjoy coffee and snacks while waiting for parcels. This expansion aligns with Pos Malaysia's strategy to enhance customer engagement and modernize its services. The company plans to open 33 more outlets across Malaysia by the end of 2024, reaching 50 Pos Shops nationwide. **LL**

(Source: Parcel and Postal Technology International)

## NIGERIA

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) is partnering with the **NIGERIA POSTAL SERVICE (NIPOST)** to address logistical challenges faced by SMEs nationwide. This partnership, announced by SMEDAN's Director General, Charles Odii, after meeting with NIPOST's CEO, Tola Odeyemi, aims to reduce the high logistics costs that hinder SME profitability. By optimizing delivery routes, improving warehousing, and leveraging digital platforms, the collaboration seeks to enhance operational efficiency and lower costs. This initiative is expected to boost SME competitiveness, expand their market reach, and contribute more significantly to Nigeria's economic growth, aligning with broader government efforts to support entrepreneurship. **MH**

(Source: innovation-village.com)

## OMAN

**OMAN POST** has partnered with OTaxi to improve domestic parcel delivery services, aligning with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. The collaboration aims to ensure 24-hour delivery in Muscat and 48-72 hours in other governorates, enhancing customer-centric solutions. This initiative marks the first phase of a broader plan to expand service offerings, beginning with parcel delivery and later extending to other postal services. The partnership also supports faster delivery times, benefiting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that rely on efficient logistics to drive business growth. Both organizations are committed to improving delivery services for businesses and consumers, fostering growth and reliability across Oman. **MH**

(Source: timesofoman.com)

## POLAND

**POCZTA POLSKA**, Poland's national postal operator, has initiated a transformation plan to modernize its operations and address financial challenges. The plan includes upgrading the post's courier and financial services, IT systems, logistics, and sales networks. The first phase, Poczta 1.0, focuses on urgent changes such as IT modernization, improving postal services, and optimizing employment through a voluntary redundancy program offering 12 months' pay. The initiative also includes transforming 7,600 post offices to better serve customer needs, with rural branches becoming Citizen Service Centers providing mail, pensions and document services. The goal is to enhance efficiency and rebuild Poczta Polska's market position as one of the oldest companies in Poland. **MH**

(Source: Parcel and Postal Technology International)

## QATAR

Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZ) has opened a new **QATAR POST** outlet at the Investor Relations Center in the Business Innovation Park, Ras Bufontas Free Zone, to enhance services for investors and support business growth. This follows a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between QFZ and Qatar Post, aiming to attract more foreign direct investment by offering comprehensive postal solutions tailored to companies in the free zones. The new outlet provides essential services like international shipping and mailbox services, contributing to operational efficiency and aligning with Qatar's broader economic development goals under the Qatar National Vision 2030. **MH**

(Source: Qatar Tribune on zawya.com)

## THAILAND

**THAILAND POST** plans to create a joint venture with a leading Chinese logistics company by early 2025 to enhance logistics traffic between China and Thailand. This initiative aims to boost international express services and support Thailand's growing e-commerce market. Thailand Post's president, Dhanant Subhadrabandhu, highlighted the organization's goal to become ASEAN's most trusted brand within three years. Logistics contribute 45% of its revenue, while international services account for 13%. The new joint venture will facilitate logistics transactions for goods between the two countries. Thailand Post's EMS World service, diverse shipping routes, and partnerships with global postal organizations and e-commerce platforms are key strategies to propel international growth and ensure efficient global delivery. **MH**

(Source: Bangkok Post PCL.)

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