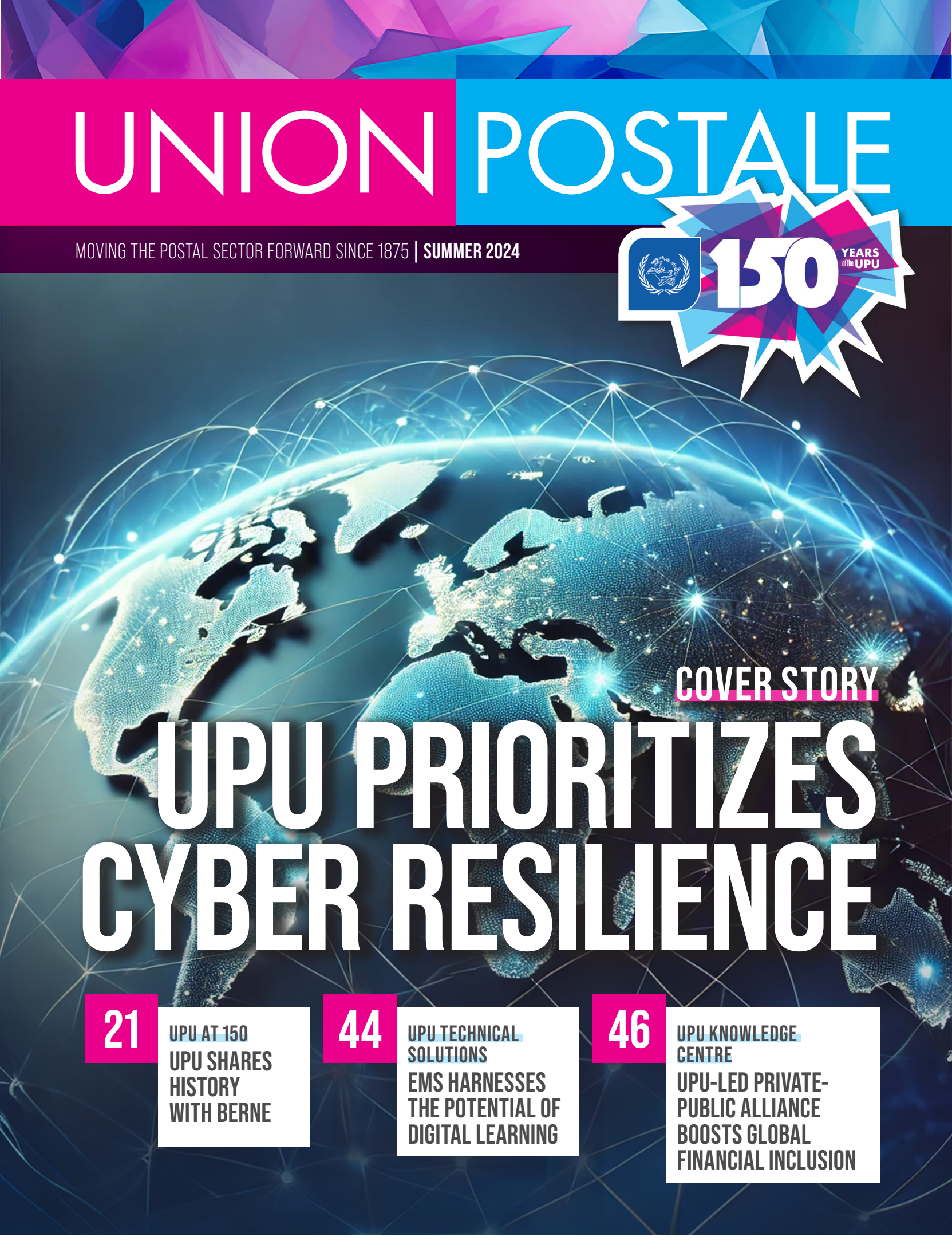
UNION POSTALE

MOVING THE POSTAL SECTOR FORWARD SINCE 1875 | SUMMER 2024

150 YEARS of the UPU



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VOICE MAIL

DIGITAL UNION

POSTAL MATTERS

UPU MEDIA ZONE

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

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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**

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EMS HARNESSES THE POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL LEARNING

The EMS Cooperative provides comprehensive training to equip operators with the essential knowledge needed to grow their Express Mail Service (EMS) business and provide an excellent service to customers. Alongside, its face-to-face training programme, the EMS Cooperative has developed a suite of engaging eLearning materials, ensuring training is accessible to everyone.

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UPU-LED PRIVATE-PUBLIC ALLIANCE BOOSTS FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN BOTSWANA AND BEYOND

Launched in 2017, the Financial Inclusion Technical Assistance Facility (FITAF), a joint initiative established by the UPU with Visa Inc. and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, sought to advance financial inclusion for millions through the delivery of digital financial services by posts.

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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BUILDING A STRONG NETWORK FOR A DIGITAL WORLD

"While we continue to move ahead, we must ensure that all member countries move ahead together to secure our network through continuous digitalization efforts. No one should be left behind."

Masahiko Metoki
Director General, UPU

At 150 years old, the UPU's single postal territory has withstood numerous tests of its resilience and its relevance. It has survived among various changes and conflicts. It has survived and even improved the advent of new technologies, from telephones to the Internet, during increasing competition in the post and logistics sector worldwide.

This milestone was achieved not by resting on our laurels, but by continuous dialogue, research and innovation to ensure we not only adapted to, but anticipated our challenges and grasped our opportunities. This shared spirit of evolution and collaboration among our family – 192 member countries strong today – is what has helped us endure. Maintaining this spirit is what will help us continue to do so.

As global postal players rapidly digitize their processes and services, one of our next great challenges is cybersecurity. More than a few designated postal operators have been the subjects of attacks. But we are working proactively to maintain the strength and security of our network to protect customers.

In early 2023, our team at the International Bureau helped keep international mail moving to and from the United Kingdom following a cyber incident. This relied on a UPU solution – the International Postal System (IPS) – which has been fortified and adapted with the feedback of members over decades. Later the same year during the Riyadh Extraordinary Congress, member countries decided to allocate additional budget towards cybersecurity.

Earlier this year, member countries gathered with wider postal sector players and cybersecurity experts at the UPU's Cybersecurity Forum, where they discussed potential threats to the sector, but also solutions to reinforce the network's resilience. This type of dialogue is what has led the UPU to discover and develop the solutions that have ensured a safe, secure and reliable universal postal service for 150 years.

While we continue to move ahead, we must ensure that all member countries move ahead together to secure our network through continuous digitalization efforts. No one should be left behind.

To ensure a fully inclusive dialogue, I believe it is essential to provide opportunities to exchange ideas and perspectives at the regional level. An example of this is our regional Postal Leaders Forums, which have helped us gather insights and bolstered knowledge-sharing among countries and other partners.

These discussions must be followed up with training and operational support from our International Bureau teams, in coordination with partners. Capacity-building programmes organized through the UPU's Development Cooperation provide invaluable support to our members – especially the most vulnerable – to accelerate their progress. Technical assistance programmes such as the Financial Inclusion Technical Assistance Facility (FITAF), which bolstered participating posts' digital financial services offering to increase their position as a financial inclusion partner, help bring all players in our network up to speed.

I thank our member countries for their engagement in these forums, for their work with UPU experts and partners, and for their drive to ensure our network persists for another 150 years and beyond.

Masahiko Metoki
Director General, UPU

FORGING STRONG LINKS

EDITOR'S NOTE

This quarter in UNION POSTALE we've taken a deep-dive into the ways the UPU and its members are working to build the strongest postal network possible – both physically and digitally.

In our cover story, you will read how the UPU is zeroing in on building resilience to cyber threats facing posts as they move deeper into the digital sphere. This includes a fascinating case study of Royal Mail's successful partnership with the UPU to protect the postal network and keep international mail flowing in the immediate wake of a ransomware attack.

This edition will also examine the forums and solutions it has developed to include, train and help evolve the posts of even the smallest and most remote postal operators as the sector forges ahead with digital transformation in all areas – from e-commerce to financial services. Interviews with the heads of the Kazakhstan Post and the State Post Bureau of China demonstrate how countries are working on transformation on a national level.

Of course, the sector cannot secure a strong future without looking to the lessons of its past. In light of the UPU's 150th anniversary year, we've taken a special angle on postal history through the eyes of the sector's own historians.

As always, I wish you happy reading.

KAYLA **REDSTONE**
Editor-in-chief

2024 UPU POSTAL LEADERS FORUMS DRIVE DIGITALIZATION DISCUSSIONS

In 2023, UPU launched its first-ever regional forum for postal leaders in Africa. Following the event's success, the organization rolled out the concept for the Arab region and small island developing states (SIDS) to ensure all member countries – big and small – have space to voice their challenges and harness their opportunities through the digital transformation process.

Text by KAYLA **REDSTONE**

Nicolas Mayencourt, Founder and Global CEO of Dreamlab Technologies, speaks during the Arab Postal Leaders Forum. Photo: Oman Post.

The Arab Postal Leaders Forum was held between 12 and 14 February this year in Muscat, Oman, gathering postal leaders from 18 countries in the region. A similar Postal Leaders Forum for small island developing states (SIDS) was held 5 to 7 March in Mahé, Seychelles, bringing together leaders from 30 SIDS postal operators.

Their programmes – which brought together speakers from posts, the wider postal sector, the United Nations and other international and regional organizations – focused on harnessing the potential of postal digitalization, taking into account the unique situation of each group of countries through partnership, knowledge-sharing, technical assistance and reform.

The meetings provided a unique opportunity for UPU Consultative Committee members to come together with member countries to highlight how their solutions could help address countries' challenges or help them better mobilize to grasp the opportunities of digitalization.

New concept

In describing the rationale behind the new series of events, UPU Development Cooperation Director Mutua Muthusi highlights how they have helped increase the organization's engagement with postal CEOs.

"It has been established that for close to 60% of UPU member countries, the only interaction they have with the UPU is through the respective regional programmes. We also felt that an opportunity to gather the regional postal CEOs together would be enriching because we would also provide them with a platform to interact among themselves, share experiences and learn from one another," says Muthusi.

Without the Forums, Muthusi explains that the UPU may only have the chance to benefit from their vision and input during its quadrennial Congresses, during which there may not be sufficient time for discussion. Having a dedicated space, including tailor-made declarations, has provided valuable feedback that the organization can take into account while drafting its next Regional Development Plans, as well as the Dubai Strategy for 2026-2029.

Mihret Woodmatas, senior ICT expert, African Union Commission, leads a panel on leveraging e-commerce in small islands during the SIDS Postal Leaders Forum. Photo: Seychelles Postal Service

The idea has been well received across the sector, gaining not only interest from participants, but tangible support.

"Another feature that is positive about these forums is that we have been able to attract sponsorship from partners to meet the financial requirements of hosting the events. The sponsorships have come mainly from members of Consultative Committee, but also from other organizations within the host countries," says Muthusi.

Digitalization declarations

Each meeting resulted in a customized declaration for each region, named accordingly after their host cities.

For the Arab region, the Muscat Declaration emphasizes the importance of fostering collaboration among regulatory bodies, governments, industry stakeholders, and international organizations to enhance postal connectivity by 2030. It advocates for policies promoting affordable digital services, encourages innovation within postal networks, and stresses the need for cybersecurity improvements. This includes a call to action for the UPU and development-oriented stakeholders to take proactive steps to support the declaration's implementation.

For SIDS, the Mahé Declaration focuses on leveraging postal networks to bridge the digital divide and promote sustainable growth in SIDS, emphasizing the potential of postal infrastructure to extend digital, financial, and e-commerce services to remote areas. It highlights the role of

> "The (Arab Postal Leaders) Forum supports member countries and regional bodies in their development of effective and efficient policy and regulatory frameworks to foster postal development as a key building block of an inclusive and sustainable digital society and economy."
>
> **Muscat Declaration, 2024**

Paositra Malagasy CEO Richard Ranarison raises Madagascar's flag during the SIDS Postal Leaders Forum. Photo: Seychelles Postal Service

designated operators in facilitating the uptake of digital services and enhancing digital inclusion, particularly through public-private partnerships, calling on governments to include the post in their national development and digital transformation strategies.

The declaration also pledges to promote collaboration, advocate for inclusive access to digital services, enhance postal staff's digital skills, and improve cybersecurity, urging governments to utilize universal service funds for digital infrastructure deployment.

Encouraged by the high participation of senior postal leadership in comparison to other UPU events, the UPU secretariat is currently in the process of organizing forums in other regions, as well as second editions. KR

> "We hereby pledge to encourage the involvement of regulatory bodies, governments, industry stakeholders and international organizations to foster a collaborative approach towards enabling full digital and physical connectivity of post offices by 2030"
>
> **Mahé Declaration, 2024**

UPU Deputy Director General Marjan Osvald led a discussion on cooperation with airlines during the UPU's SIDS Postal Leaders Forum.

SPOTLIGHT ON SIDS

While not comprising a "region" of their own, SIDS share a number of common challenges due to their size and geography. On the sidelines of the SIDS Postal Leaders Forum in Mahé, Seychelles, the UPU had the chance to speak with several leaders to learn more about their areas of focus and what they hoped to gain from the discussions.

"I think it (the Forum) has made us realize that all posts, especially the small ones, have very similar issues and that ... if we can all work together as a group to support each other and negotiate with partners, maybe we'll get better contract deals to be able to take away the huge costs that impact small posts in doing business, in making sure public service operates."

Mariella Buisson
CEO, Seychelles Post

"One of the topics that came up (at the SIDS Postal Leaders Forum) was the potential for posts to use the address database capabilities to maximize revenue and provide social services to meet the sustainable development goals for our respective countries, so we're looking at that as an opportunity for TTPOST."

George Alexis
Acting Managing Director, Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPOST)

"(One of the opportunities we are trying to take advantage of) is having our entrepreneurs in Belize being able to send items internationally to other suppliers ... Coming here at this Forum was quite interesting because we've met with different stakeholders and heard from different post offices to see what they're doing and how we can make a difference. We spoke to one of the stakeholders saying that they have a marketplace already, they have the link to all of those suppliers and customers, so that makes it easier for us at Belize Post to at least get into that network and see how we can do business there."

Marsha Price
Postmaster General,Belize Postal Service

"For our small island, our postal operations are not functioning at an acceptable level, by which I mean they are not running at a profit – it's always at a loss. But here, listening to other small countries' CEOs and representatives present how they expanded their type of business to financial institutions and such, it's a good way for us to look at ways that we can go on and liaise with UPU to assist us."

Lotomo'ua Tu'ungafasi
CEO, Tonga Post

"One opportunity that we saw (at the Forum) and we want to take advantage of – and it came out in the discussion with Mr Gopal from Ship2MyID – was for everybody having an address. Not a physical address, but a (digital) address so that you can reach them wherever they move. So if they move from one side of the island to the other, once you have a GPS location for them you can always ship to them."

Carey Brown
Deputy Postmaster General, Jamaica Post

"I think for us the SIDS conference was very eye-opening because it's not something that we talk about on a regular basis.

All of us are used to focusing on the big countries. The dynamics are a bit different and as an airline you normally have a solution that fits everybody, but then with smaller islands we have to think of the solution a bit differently. There's a lot more partnership required, potentially with other airlines maybe even with sea carriers in certain places, if required, so the dynamics are a bit different."

Ram Vignesh
Product Manager for eCommerce and Postal Mail, Etihad Cargo Postal Service

Oman hosted the UPU's Arab Postal Leaders Forum in February. Photo: Oman Post

International Telecommunications Union Senior Programme Officer Nancy Sundberg presents during a panel on digital divide challenges during the SIDS Postal Leaders Forum. Photo: Seychelles Postal Service

Watch the full interviews here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyfF9Dqihgw&list=PLqiPfpT90h34n9wZ-T76uzfxyZfrlWAJuV

AN INTERVIEW WITH USPS HISTORIAN STEPHEN KOCHERSPERGER

In February this year, the UPU hosted its first-ever international Historian's Colloquium, which brought together 40 academics and historians, as well as philatelists from more than 16 countries around the world, to discuss the development of a "single postal territory".

Text by HELEN **NORMAN**

One of the lead speakers at the event, which was held as part of the UPU's 150th anniversary celebrations, was Stephen A. Kochersperger, Historian and Corporate Information Services Manager at the United States Postal Service (USPS). Kochersperger spoke about the transnational influences impacting the development of the US's parcel post between 1887 and 1984.

According to Kochersperger, the U.S. was one of the world's last major nations to establish a domestic parcel post, and among the last to accede to the UPU Postal Parcels Agreement, which governs the exchange of postal parcels between contracting countries.

Speaking about why he decided to cover this topic, Kochersperger said, "I thought it curious that the United States was such an outlier in developing parcel post and I wanted to understand the reasons behind it."

Star route carrier, ca. 1891. Ida Malott poses for a photograph on her horse circa 1891. She was one of a small number of women known to have carried mail in the 19th century. (Photo: from 'The Story of Our Post Office' (Cushing, 1893), provided by USPS)

Transnational influences on parcel post

During his presentation, Kochersperger outlined that domestic parcel post in the U.S. wasn't introduced until 1913 – three decades after the UPU concluded its first international parcel post convention in 1880. This was mainly due to geographic, technological, and political issues.

The US was even slower to join the UPU Postal Parcels Agreement, with the country not joining until 1984 at the Hamburg Congress. Prior to this, the U.S. maintained an array of bilateral and multilateral agreements, which were motivated by protectionism, Kochersperger noted.

"The U.S. favoured parcel post agreements with Western Hemisphere countries, while avoiding agreements with European nations," he said. "When the U.S. eventually entered European agreements, they were more limited than the agreements with American nations."

Kochersperger explained how World War II caused a dramatic shift in U.S. parcel post due to new economic realities, political realignments, and technological advances. "The economies of most European and Asian nations were in ruins after the war," he said. "Former U.S. competitors were suddenly partners in the mutual project of rebuilding."

U.S. policy on international parcels adjusted accordingly and although it was still based on bilateral agreements, protectionism took a back seat to easing the flow of parcels to war-torn regions. "Wartime advances in transportation facilitated the post-war movement of goods, including air parcel post. Containerization and computerization streamlined the handling of parcels. New technologies increased demand for goods and for faster delivery," he added.

Following the war, the UPU devised methods for parcels to travel and clear customs more quickly. The UPU worked to refine rates and regulations, and tackled the thorny issues of terminal dues, transit charges, and land and sea rates.

"Meanwhile, a lack of consensus and new technologies created openings for private sector competition," explained Kochersperger. "Reorganization of the postal administrations in many countries, including the USPS, required them to be self-funded. The world's postal administrations faced an increasingly competitive global parcel post network."

It was this competitive landscape that drove the U.S. to finally join the UPU Postal Parcels Agreement in 1984 – more than 70 years after the country first established its domestic parcel post.

The work of a historian

Researching topics like this is what drives Kochersperger in his role as a postal historian. "I have always been captivated by history, and my fascination with the postal service began when I started collecting stamps as a boy," he said. "Little did I know that those things would lead me to a career in the USPS that has spanned four decades. I learn new things every day and the work is never boring."

According to Kochersperger, the role of the postal historian is extremely important as it "reminds the public how important the mail has been throughout history." He added: "The post is so ubiquitous that most people take it for granted,

Scales and handstamps, 1925. Postmaster General Harry New mails packages in Washington, D.C., on December 1, 1925; the window clerk has scales to weigh parcels and letters, as well as postmarking handstamps, close at hand. In 1925 New declared Christmas Day a holiday for letter carriers and urged the public to shop and mail early for Christmas. (Photo: collection of Library of Congress, provided by USPS)

Christmas parcels, ca. 1920. Rural carriers in Waynesboro, Virginia, load their vehicles with parcels the day before Christmas, circa 1920. When rural free delivery began in Waynesboro in 1903, the weight limit for parcels shipped via U.S. Mail was just 4 pounds. By 1920, parcels weighing up to 70 pounds could be mailed. (Photo: collection of United States Postal Service)

as if it always was and always will be. The reality is that it has taken the tremendous efforts of countless people to keep the mail moving. Postal history introduces us to the people who have made the posts work and how they did it."

Kochersperger's office responds to inquiries from within the USPS and from the public. These inquiries can be on any aspect of postal history, from post office buildings to policy questions. "We often have requests from people researching family history about ancestors who worked for the postal service," he added.

"I am personally responsible for the integrity of the information we publicize via the Postmaster Finder, postal history website, and postal history publications. I also deliver presentations and speeches on postal history and manage our collection of postal artifacts and our historic photo archive. I am the point of contact between the USPS and the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, and I oversee the USPS Corporate Library," he explained.

Next year Kochersperger and his team will be working hard on celebrating the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Postal Service. "We are developing plans for a proper celebration," he said. "I am also working on a new edition of our official history to coincide with the anniversary."

Kochersperger is hopeful that there will be more colloquia covering postal history in the future to help bring the industry together. "Postal history is such a niche and much of our work is solitary, so it was exciting to see that there are many others involved in this work," he concluded. HN

"I have always been captivated by history, and my fascination with the postal service began when I started collecting stamps as a boy. Little did I know that those things would lead me to a career in the USPS that has spanned four decades. I learn new things every day and the work is never boring."

Stephen A. Kochersperger
Historian and Corporate Information Services Manager at the United States Postal Service (USPS)

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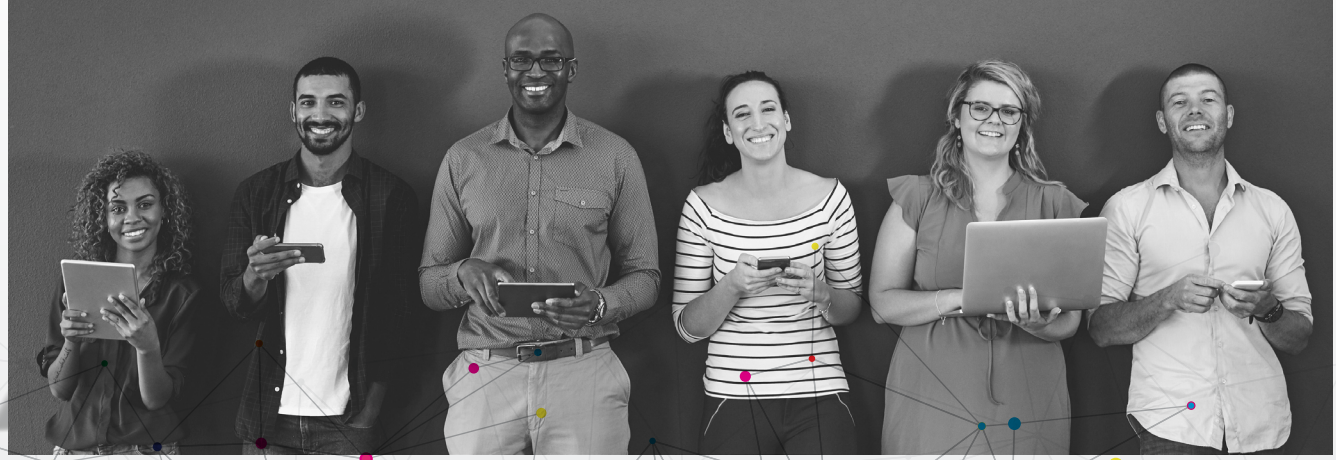


UPU THROUGH HISTORY: INSIGHTS ON THE UPU'S ROLE IN SHAPING POSTAL AND POLITICAL LANDSCAPES

by MAKIKO **HAYASHI**

The first-ever Historians' Colloquium on 1 and 2 February 2024, delved into the legacy of the Universal Postal Union since its foundation in 1874, marking the first academic focus on the organization since its inception.

This landmark event attracted participants from over 16 countries, including the United States, Brazil, South Africa and Japan. It highlighted the UPU's pioneering role in multilateralism, creating a unified global "single postal territory." Historians and academics gathered to analyse its profound historical impact on international collaboration, illustrating the postal industry's evolution and influence over 150 years. The colloquium also acted as a stage for a series of interviews with speakers, where they shared their unique perspectives on how the UPU influenced the postal and political landscapes of their respective nations.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Professor Richard R. John from Columbia University, USA, highlighted the distinctive role of U.S. postal services in unifying the nation through information.

How do you see the role of postal services in the history of the United States?
"The role of U.S. postal services in history is pivotal, notably as one of the first members of the UPU and a promoter of the 1863 Paris meeting that eventually led to the UPU's formation in 1874. Amidst the Civil War, the U.S. supported international postal communication to project power globally, establishing standards crucial for immigrants and merchants. However, its role was understated domestically, rarely covered in the media and overshadowed by other historical events, leading to a 'hidden hand' in facilitating information and, reluctantly, goods movement."

What did joining the UPU change in the development of postal services in the United States?
"Joining the Universal Postal Union marked a significant shift in the development of postal services in the United States by emphasizing the critical role of information circulation. Before the UPU, the U.S. postal system focused on expanding infrastructure ahead of revenue expectations, primarily to distribute newspapers at low costs, which helped bind the expansive republic together. This unique approach differed from countries like Britain and France, where postal systems were well-developed before emphasizing widespread information dissemination. The U.S. postal service's distinctive role was to facilitate the exchange of information to unify diverse regions, a commitment that remained until the inclusion of parcels in the mail in the 20th century."

BRAZIL

Pérola Goldfeder, PhD from Ouro Preto Federal University/ Minas Gerais State University, Brazil, examined Brazil's role in global postal communications. She spoke about the Brazilian postal service's development and the UPU's role in it.

"Joining the UPU altered the trajectory of Brazilian postal services, as revealed in my ongoing PhD research. In the 19th century, Brazil sought to transition from bilateral postal treaties to a multilateral system, which materialized with its integration into the UPU. While statistical data indicates no significant change in correspondence volume with Europe and the United States, the UPU introduced accountability measures, notably impacting the indebtedness of the Brazilian postal system, particularly as a result of its involvement with the UPU and the French postal system. Further investigation is required to fully comprehend this indebtedness and its implications on Brazilian postal development within the UPU framework."

SOUTH AFRICA

Professor Gary Baines from Rhodes University, South Africa, examined the development of sub-Saharan Africa's postal network and the UPU's influence on its infrastructure and international postal mechanisms.

What role did the postal network play in the formation of independent states in sub-Saharan Africa?
"In sub-Saharan Africa, postal networks, inherited from colonial administrations, played a crucial role during and after the decolonization process. While these networks sometimes struggled to maintain their infrastructure amid rapid transitions to independence, such as in the Congo, they fundamentally served as lines of administrative continuity. Upon decolonization, for instance in 1964, 22 newly independent African states automatically became members of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), benefiting from its international system. However, secessionist and unilaterally declared independent states like Katanga, Biafra and Rhodesia faced challenges in gaining UPU membership and international recognition, thus using postal issuance primarily as a means to assert sovereignty. The UPU played a significant role in the dynamics of secessionist states in sub-Saharan Africa by reinforcing the non-recognition of their sovereignty. When breakaway regions like Biafra, Katanga and Rhodesia issued stamps, member states such as Nigeria and the Congo reported these actions as illegal to the UPU. The UPU responded by issuing circulars to its members, directing them not to accept the stamps from these secessionist states, effectively supporting the prevailing norms of sovereignty during the 1960s."

JAPAN

Ririko Honda, currently a Master's student at the Graduate School of Law, Keio University, Japan, is also an exchange student at the University of Bern. She spoke about her intriguing findings from months of research in the UPU archives and about the development of Japanese postal services.

"As an exchange student at the University of Bern, I have been conducting research at the UPU's archives alongside a very helpful librarian. In these archives, I have found numerous documentations. Among the wealth of materials, the Union Postale series stands out, spanning from its first volume to recent editions. This comprehensive collection allows us to trace the evolution of postal history. Another significant aspect is that the archives provide a diverse array of materials covering not only domestic but also international and regional postal services. This breadth offers invaluable insights into the postal service sector. In my research, unfortunately, I have yet to find the precise paper on the influence of Japanese postal development by the UPU. However, I think that by analyzing historical contexts of the Congress agenda and implementation of the Japanese postal system, we may identify influences from UPU practices." **MH**

Hear more from postal historians and academics:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvbPw1MoCew&list=PL-qiPfpT90h342mFIzWNeWyCtwaTQF-mETa

Learn more about the Historians' Colloquium and read our presenters' abstracts:
https://www.upu.int/en/events/historians-colloquium-celebrating-upus-150th-anniversary

UPU SHARES HISTORY WITH BERNE

by KAYLA **REDSTONE**

At 150 years in Berne, Switzerland, the UPU is part of its host city's history. In order to share that history with the local community, the organization participated in two flagship Bernese events: Museumsnacht (Museums Night) and the Frauenlauf (Women's Run).

Museumsnacht took place on the evening of 15 March, inviting guests from Berne to take an inside peek at 39 museums and other institutions after regular business hours. The event drew more than 800 spectators to the UPU's headquarters, where they were greeted by a number of exhibits. Visitors were able look back at the post through its portrayal in film, marvel at the UPU's collection of art and artifacts donated by member countries over the decades, and view nearly 11,000 stamps from the UPU's stamp vault. Adult and children alike were invited to participate in mock plenary sessions to learn how decision-making takes place at the world's primary forum for postal cooperation. They were shuttled to and from the International Bureau in one of Swiss Post's legacy postbuses.

The UPU participated in the Frauenlauf on 9 June, a yearly series of races that draws approximately 10,000 participants. The UPU gathered a team of about 90 runners and walkers from its staff and the Swiss Post and established a stand in the visitors' village where runners and spectators alike could learn more about the UPU and its role in promoting gender equality through the postal network.

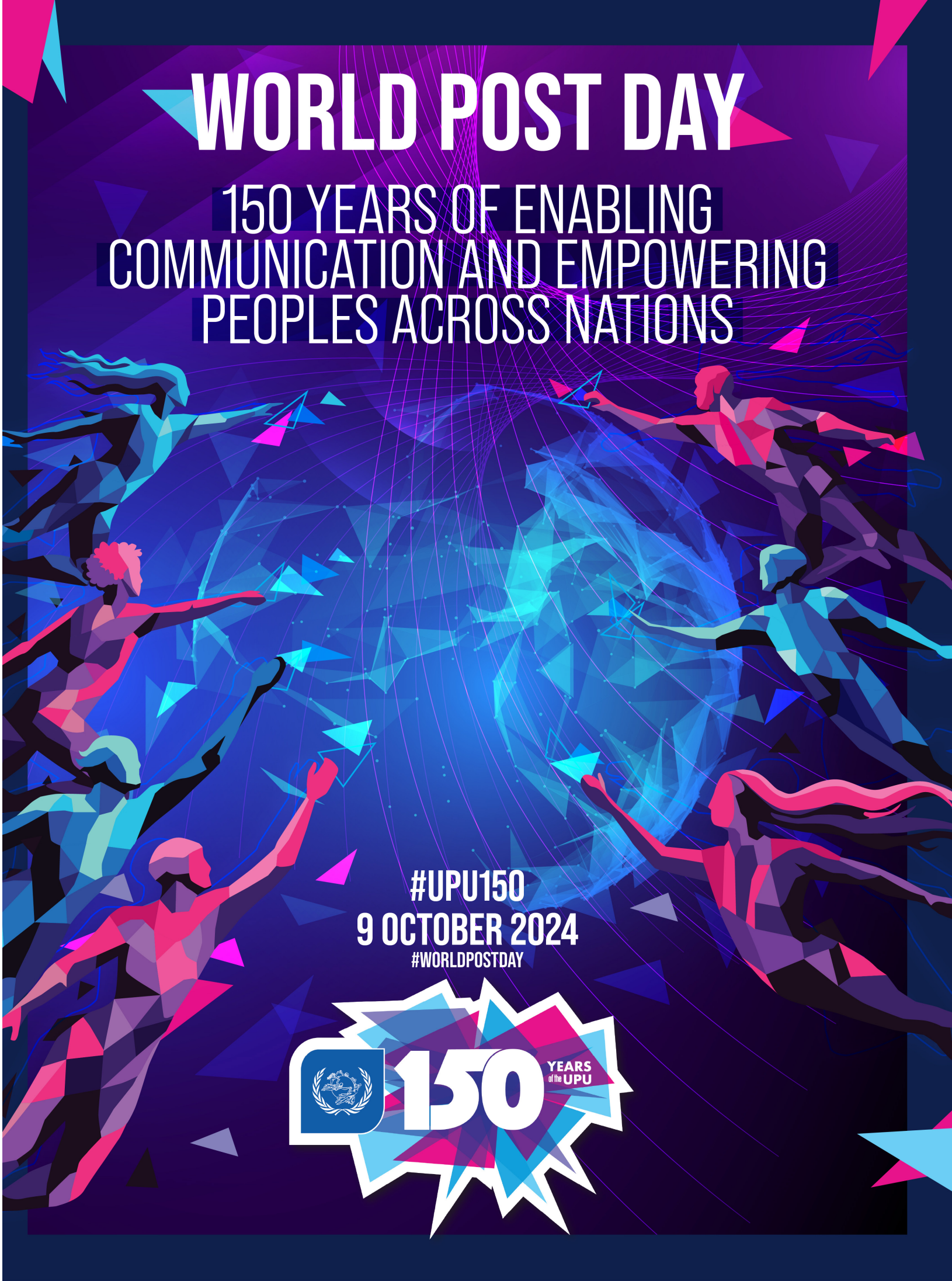
Check out what locals had to say about the UPU in our Museumsnacht lookback video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPeULY9w3us&t=56s

UNION POSTALE UNIVERSELLE
4

MUSEUMSNACHT
BERN 24

Le/la présidente de la session invitera quelques pays représentés par les enfants
à donner leur avis sur le meilleur matériau et la meilleure couleur pour le sac postal.
Si vous souhaitez faire un commentaire, veuillez soulever la pancarte portant le nom de votre pays.
Après les discussions, le vote commencera.

Take a glimpse of the action at the Frauenlauf in our summary video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TqazBuvfTE&t=6s


WORLD POST DAY
150 YEARS OF ENABLING COMMUNICATION AND EMPOWERING PEOPLES ACROSS NATIONS
#UPU150
9 OCTOBER 2024
#WORLDPOSTDAY
150
YEARS of the UPU

TRANSFORMATION ON THE HORIZON FOR KAZPOST

KazPost CEO Assel Zhanassova told Union Postale of her plans for transformation, cross border growth and network expansion at Kazakhstan's designated operator.

Text by HELEN **NORMAN**

In 2023, KazPost recorded a net profit for the first time in five years. The result was thanks to the hard work of its 20,000 employees in embracing and deploying the company's new strategy, which was put in place last year by the post's sole shareholder, Samruk-Kazyna, a sovereign wealth fund in Kazakhstan.

"Last year was very challenging for KazPost as we faced the task of financially restructuring the company," says Assel Zhanassova, CEO of KazPost. "It's widely known that the post has experienced a difficult period in recent years. In addition to weak revenues, the company incurred significant losses due to several internal and external factors."

Therefore, in 2023 Samruk-Kazyna set KazPost the task of improving the financial position of the company. "Last year the post earned approximately ₸3 billion (€6.1 million) in net income," adds Zhanassova. For comparison, in 2022 the company closed at minus ₸12.5 billion (€25.4 million).

"Achieving such a result required significant effort, including work to optimize expenses. Thanks to the net profit, last year we were able to increase salaries for more than 16,000 employees. This year, efforts in this direction will continue," Zhanassova continues.

Transformation strategy

The net profit will also help the post accelerate its transformation strategy, which includes the overriding mission to become "a reliable partner providing high quality postal-logistics, financial, social and government services, contributing to the economic growth of society and connecting the entire territory of the country," according to Zhanassova.

KazPost CEO Assel Zhanassova

"Today, KazPost is actively developing in the direction of e-commerce, with extensive infrastructure and organized logistical chains."

Assel Zhanassova
KazPost CEO

"The strategic focus for the new strategy is on building reliable partnership relations," she continues. "We have also approved the three main pillars for the strategy – logistics, finance, and post. Logistics focuses on third-party logistics (3PL), courier services, international business, and customs-logistics services. Finance includes the corporate bank for Samruk-Kazyna, banking-as-a-service (BaaS), and internet acquiring. Finally, the Post pillar includes traditional postal services, government services and social services."

A big focus in KazPost's transformation strategy is e-commerce, which the post hopes will compensate for declining letter volumes. According to the operator, letter volumes have decreased by 19% between 2018 and 2023, while periodicals have decreased by 48%. E-commerce volumes, meanwhile, have been growing.

"Today, KazPost is actively developing in the direction of e-commerce, with extensive infrastructure and organized logistical chains," explains Zhanassova. "As part of our e-commerce development we are establishing fulfilment centers with the aim of creating an ecosystem for growth. This ecosystem will include a full range of infrastructure and integrated services for the e-commerce sector. From this year, we have been developing, for example, a comprehensive range of 3PL services for online stores, from delivery to order management and goods tracking. Previously, we just provided 2PL services which delivered goods from one client to another."

As part of this 3PL offering, KazPost opened a new 12,000 m2 fulfilment center and 10,000 m2 logistics hub to handle parcels in the capital city of Astana. The post is also successfully operating fulfillment centers in Aktobe, Almaty and Astana. The post plans to open a new hub in the Turkestan region and further expand infrastructure in the Almaty and Khorgos regions.

"As a result, we will have the capacity to process more than 60 million parcels per year," says Zhanassova. "In the future, I hope that KazPost will become an integrated financial and logistical operator in the e-commerce market of Kazakhstan, providing the country's residents with a full package of financial and logistical services."

Last mile network

Alongside increasing parcel handling capacity, the post is also developing an "order collection point" network for marketplaces and expanding its self-service post terminals network. "The accessibility of products through order collection points and post terminals for marketplaces has become one of the factors driving the growth of the e-commerce market in the Republic of Kazakhstan," explains Zhanassova. "For example, at the start of 2024, 23 points for marketplace Ozon have been opened in KazPost branches across the country."

KazPost plans to roll out 300 parcel pickup points by the end of 2024. It also plans to increase the number of post terminals in its network from 150 to 450 this year.

Alongside investments in its pick-up and drop-off (PUDO) network, last year KazPost also began updating its vehicle fleet. "The first batch of vehicles has now arrived at the Atyrau regional branch," says Zhanassova. "At the end of last year, couriers and drivers were transferred to new vehicles, including 39 JAC pickups for rural areas, 20 GAZelle vans, and 33 armored vehicles. By mid-2024, KazPost's vehicle fleet will be supplemented by 145 new vehicles."

Photo: KazPost

Photo: KazPost

Cross-border e-commerce

KazPost is also looking at how it can grow its business via cross border e-commerce. In 2023, the post announced a new memorandum of cooperation with Estonian postal group Omniva. "While previously parcels from European countries were delivered to us through Russia, now we can deliver them directly from European countries," says Zhanassova.

This partnership also builds on the transit potential of Kazakhstan. "As we know, Kazakhstan plays a key role in the development of e-commerce due to its geographical location, which allows for convenient connections between Central Asia, Russia, Europe, and China. This creates excellent prospects for importing goods from abroad through bonded warehouses. The company aims to take on all the challenges of its customers related to the movement, declaration, and issuance of goods to improve and facilitate the process of receiving e-commerce items from across borders."

To help it achieve this, the operator has launched a pilot project for bonded warehouses last year. The first bonded warehouse was launched in Almaty, with a warehouse area of about 700 m2. The post plans to expand this pilot project to other regions, including Astana and Aktobe. These bonded warehouses will enable foreign e-commerce platforms to store goods in Kazakhstan, with KazPost then handling customs declarations and delivery to the nearest branch once an order has been placed.

"KazPost's financial services are integrated with leading international payment systems and postal services of the Universal Postal Union, which provides benefits for migrants and their families located outside Kazakhstan."

Assel Zhanassova
KazPost CEO

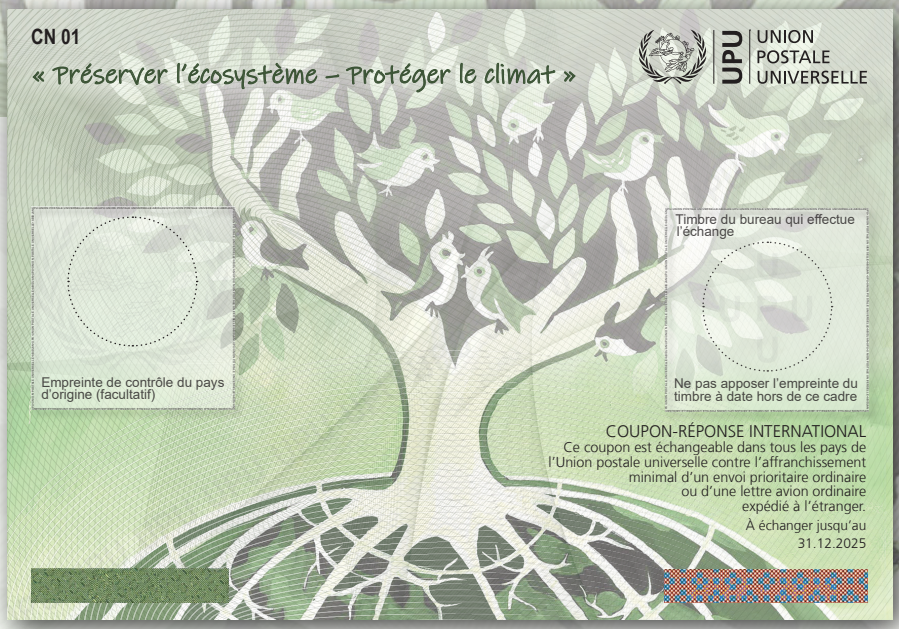
To further bolster its cross-border e-commerce offering, KazPost has also launched the "KazPost Keruen" service, which delivers goods from international marketplaces within 10 days. "This currently handles goods from the US and Germany," explains Zhanassova. "In 2024, we plan to connect China, the UK, the UAE, and Türkiye to the service. In a short period, the service has registered about 2,000 users and processed more than 300 parcels."

Supporting migrants

In addition to transforming its own business, KazPost is working hard to support citizens. Last year, for example, the post signed an MoU with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to improve the accessibility, efficiency, and further digitalization of remittance services for migrants and their families.

"KazPost is cooperating with IOM in ensuring the availability of financial services and improving the financial literacy of migrants," explains Zhanassova. "KazPost's financial services are integrated with leading international payment systems and postal services of the Universal Postal Union, which provides benefits for migrants and their families located outside Kazakhstan.

"Also, within the framework of the memorandum, representatives of the companies have taken part in meetings of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and presented money transfer and payment acceptance services that are available to migrants in Kazakhstan," she concluded. HN



PROLONGATION D'ECHEANCE

COUPONS-REPONSE INTERNATIONAUX - CRI TYPE «ABIDJAN»

La date d'échéance du CRI type « Abidjan » a été prolongée et passe du 31.12.2025 au 31.12.2026.

Les coupons déjà imprimés avec la date du 31.12.2025 restent valables pour l'échange et devront être acceptés par les opérateurs désignés jusqu'au 31.12.2026.

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
WWW.UPU.INT

INCLUSION DELIVERED IN CHINA

Zhao Chongjiu joined China's State Post Bureau as Director General in late 2020, bringing to the position a wealth of experience from his previous tenure at the country's Ministry of Transport. He tells Union Postale what it takes to operate postal services in one of the world's most populous countries.

Interview by KAYLA **REDSTONE**

Zhao Chongjiu, Director General of China's State Post Bureau (SPB)

You have enjoyed a successful career in the government, working for the Ministry of Transport before moving to the State Post Bureau. How has this experience informed your vision for the State Post Bureau?
As you pointed out, before joining the State Post Bureau (SPB), I worked for the Ministry of Transport for many years, in charge of matters related to passenger flow and logistics. Therefore, I have some knowledge on these subjects. A year and a half after joining the SPB, I feel that postal and express delivery is an important logistics segment with its own features.

First, it is closely related to people's lives. In 2023, Chinese people received 94 express parcels per person on average. As an important channel to deliver happiness and warmth, postal and express delivery is now everywhere and used by everyone, paving a new way of life.

Second, business operations are so scattered (geographically and in terms of customer type) that it is difficult to get them well-organized; however, the postal industry is highly organized. There are over 400,000 postal and express delivery outlets across the country, covering both urban and rural areas. There are 4 million delivery people shuttling in the streets and bustling in the fields to deliver services to over 1.4 billion Chinese people. The operation and management of the industry is extremely complicated.

Third, delivery safety and information security have received wide attention. Postal and express delivery is frequently used and the industry is highly IT-based, making it particularly important to strengthen the regulation on prohibited and restricted items, ensure delivery safety and strengthen the protection of information security.

Postal livestreaming boosts agricultural produce sales in China. Photo: State Post Bureau

Fourth, green development is widely valued. There is still a huge amount of work ahead for the postal and express delivery industry and our main customer - the e-commerce industry – to promote packaging minimization, standardization, and recycling, as well as harmless packaging.

Therefore, the industry should focus more on meeting people's needs for better services and achieve high-quality development by providing fast, green, convenient and affordable services.

China has one of the largest populations in the world and more than 30% of that population lives in rural areas. What are some of the specific considerations you need to make or challenges you need to address in ensuring the USO and delivering to so many people living outside urban centres?
Equalizing basic public services is a national policy of China and a symbol of social progress. Rural residents aspire to access the same public services, including postal and express delivery services, as urban residents. This also represents the direction of our efforts. To implement the arrangements of the Chinese government, we have successively carried out a wide array of projects since 2012, such as building post offices in towns without such facilities, bringing express delivery to towns and villages, providing direct access to postal services in villages and upgrading postal infrastructure in western regions and rural areas. With the implementation of these projects, all the towns now have post offices and express delivery outlets, almost all 500,000+ villages have direct access to postal services, and 95% of the villages are covered by express delivery services. The postal and express delivery services in rural areas have been significantly improved, which has strongly supported smooth urban-rural economic circulation, contributed to poverty alleviation, served rural revitalization, and enabled rural residents to better share the benefits of social and economic development of the country.

At the same time, we should also see that the rural areas in China are vast, with a huge population and relatively complex natural conditions. It is hard and costly to bring postal and express delivery services to remote rural areas in particular. Challenges still exist, such as unbalanced regional development and weak infrastructure in rural areas. In the next step, on one hand, we will continue to enhance the support and guarantee for universal services in rural areas, continue to strengthen the regulation and management on these services, and consolidate and improve these services; on the other hand, we will shore up weak links in rural delivery and logistics infrastructure, promote the construction of circulation systems in rural areas, and improve the supply capacity and quality of services of rural delivery and logistics.

What role does the Post play in facilitating the development of MSMEs in China?
The postal and express delivery industry strongly supports the development of Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) through its network that goes deep into the countryside, covers the whole country and connects the world.

This ubiquitous service has gradually become a corridor for product sales and an accelerator for trade flow, providing constant and strong support for the survival and development of MSMEs. I would like to share two cases with you. The first case is in Luochuan County, Shaanxi Province, where apples are a local specialty. In Luochuan County's logistics centre, 30,000 to 50,000 boxes of apples are sold and sent out to all over the country every day. The center serves over 230 e-commerce companies and over 40,000 fruit growers behind these companies. After the apples are picked from the trees, it only takes two or three days for express delivery companies that have settled in the logistics center to deliver them to the hands of consumers in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, who are 1,500 kilometers away. The second case is in Qinghe County, Hebei Province. This county is an important cashmere raw material processing and distribution center, cashmere spinning base and cashmere

"As an important channel to deliver happiness and warmth, postal and express delivery is now everywhere and used by everyone, paving a new way of life."

Zhao Chongjiu
Director General, State Post Bureau, China

production and marketing base in China. Over 1,100 MSMEs are engaged in cashmere production and business activities. The local postal and express delivery enterprises and the cashmere manufacturing industry have developed in tandem, and gradually formed such cooperation modes as integrated warehouse and distribution, on site express delivery and last-mile delivery. In 2022, the volume of express delivery for cashmere products reached 80 million pieces, worth 8 billion yuan (USD 1.1 billion).

China is a major player in the cross-border e-commerce market. With this in mind, what is the State Post Bureau's view on overcoming current supply chain issues or challenges?

In recent years, the State Post Bureau has continued to strengthen the construction of its international delivery and logistics system. The postal and express delivery industry is making positive contributions to implementing China's "dual circulation" strategy and boosting the development of global cross-border e-commerce market by strengthening cross-border services across the entire chain. However, China's international delivery and logistics system still faces challenges in terms of network efficiency, service capacity and effective supply.

In the next step, we need to focus our efforts on enhancing customs clearance capacity, strengthening the construction of warehousing facilities and improving the last mile delivery network to further enhance the cross-border delivery service capacity and better meet the demands for cross-border e-commerce services. We will guide and support China Post Group to improve international delivery services through the global postal network, further optimize the layout of international mail exchange offices (stations), and enhance the regular transport of mails by rail and the emergency sea transport of mails by fast ships. The SPB will also actively participate in the affairs of UPU and regional postal organizations, deepen postal cooperation with various countries, strengthen communication with international organizations in the fields of customs, railway and civil aviation, and expand cooperation space.

"The postal and express delivery services in rural areas have been significantly improved, which has strongly supported smooth urban-rural economic circulation, contributed to poverty alleviation, served rural revitalization, and enabled rural residents to better share the benefits of social and economic development of the country."

Zhao Chongjiu
Director General, State Post Bureau, China

Couriers in the fields help farmers to pack oranges. Photo: State Post Bureau

From your perspective, what is the role of partnerships – with government, private sector, or within the postal sector – to foster the growth of the Post and ensure the postal network is used to its full potential?

The postal and express delivery industry is an important public utility of the country. The State Post Bureau has always insisted on giving full play to the decisive role of the market in allocating resources while leveraging the role of the government and placing the postal and express delivery industry in the overall planning of China's economic and social development. We strive to create a favourable external environment and mobilize resources from all parties to jointly promote the reform and development of the industry so that it can better play a fundamental, strategic and leading role in protecting freedom of communication, serving production and consumption, and smoothing economic circulation.

Our goal is to serve the overall development of the country. We formulate an industry development plan every five years to draw a blueprint for the future development of the industry. At the same time, in view of the key problems arising from industry development, we have formulated targeted policies to strengthen regulation and improve the development environment. With the joint support of the central government and local governments, we have made big strides in fulfilling our universal service obligations, with every town having a post office and every village having direct access to postal services. Our achievements in bringing express delivery to towns and villages can also be attributed to the enabling policy environment created by the government.

Postmen deliver mail for villagers in Shibatong Village, Shuanglong Town, Huahuan County, Tujia and Miao autonomous Prefecture, Hunan province. Photo: State Post Bureau

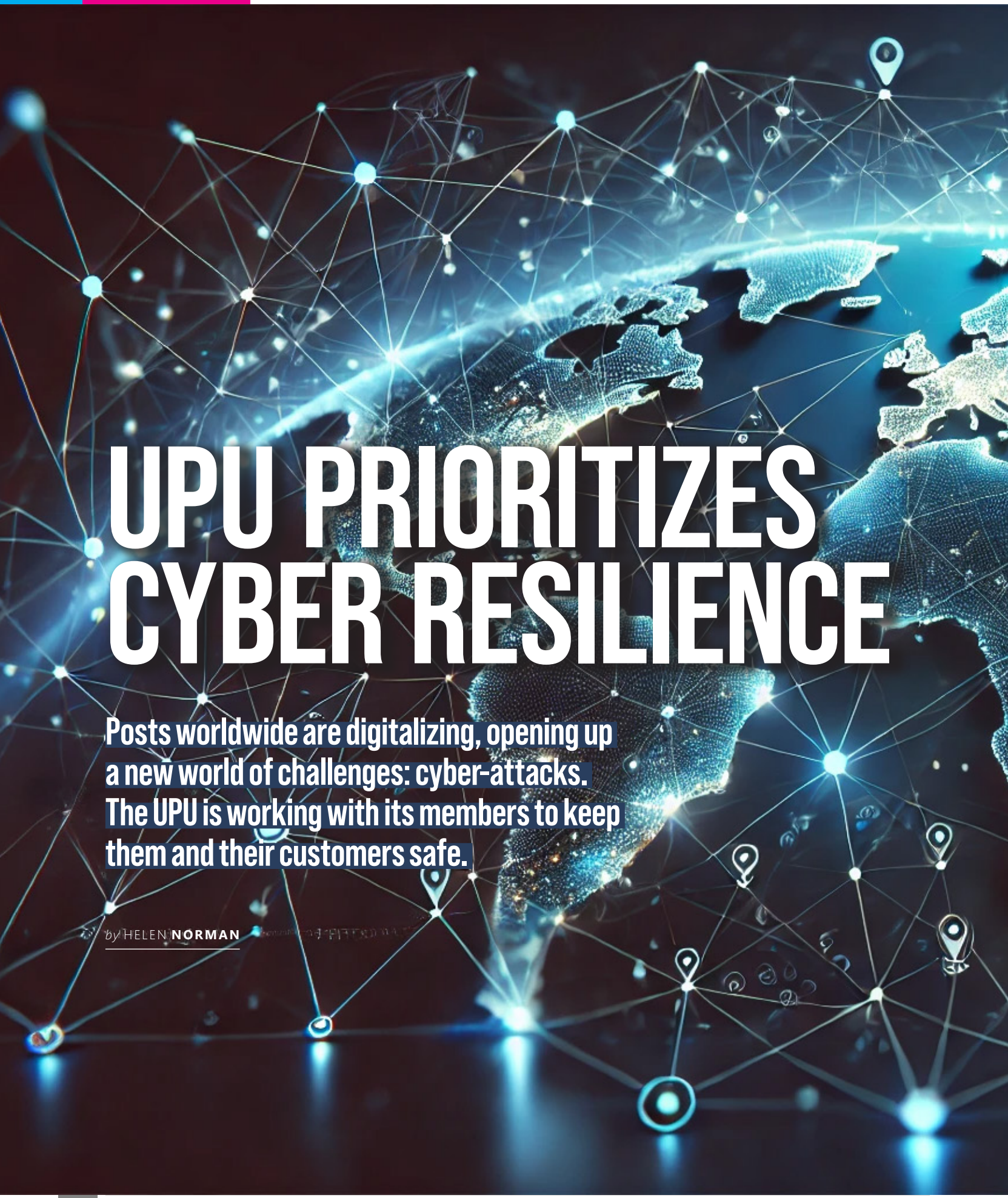
"The postal and express delivery industry strongly supports the development of Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) through its network that goes deep into the countryside, covers the whole country and connects the world."

Zhao Chongjiu
Director General, State Post Bureau, China

We place emphasis on building integrated postal service platforms to unleash the potential of the postal network. We have promoted China Post Group to strengthen cooperation with private express delivery enterprises to jointly extend express delivery services to rural areas.

We lay stress on promoting industrial synergy and serving economic and social development. The postal and express delivery industry has fully participated in and supported the process of national economic circulation, thoroughly implemented China's national strategies (such as rural revitalization) and the "Belt and Road Initiative", and effectively served e-commerce, modern agriculture, advanced manufacturing and international trade. Postal and express delivery is now everywhere and used by everyone. The industry has played an important role in serving the economic and social development and achieved its own substantial development during the course. After years of development, the industry has achieved an average daily delivery volume of 400 million pieces, employed over 4 million staff, and seen the revenue exceeding 1 trillion yuan (USD 137.7 billion). KR

Delivery vehicles enter the countryside to transport express goods in Tonglu, Zhejiang province. Photo: State Post Bureau



UPU PRIORITIZES CYBER RESILIENCE

Posts worldwide are digitalizing, opening up a new world of challenges: cyber-attacks. The UPU is working with its members to keep them and their customers safe.

by HELEN **NORMAN**

Postal cyber security was thrust into the spotlight last year when the UK's Royal Mail Group was hit by a cyber incident which caused severe service disruption to its international export services. This incident was not the first of its kind and it is unlikely to be the last. As the digitalization of the postal industry has accelerated so too has its vulnerability to cyber-attacks.

Speaking at the UPU Cybersecurity Forum in April 2024, UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki highlighted how the postal sector needs to secure its digital infrastructure in the same way it has secured its physical network. "With the rise of cyber threats targeting postal services globally, it is imperative that we come together to assess the risks, share best practices, and explore innovative solutions to safeguard the integrity and resilience of our postal networks."

According to Lati Matata, Director of the UPU's Postal Technology Centre (PTC), ransomware attacks, like the one that hit Royal Mail, and the theft of personal identifiable information, which is subsequently used in identity fraud, are some of the biggest cyber threats for posts.

The UPU is working hard to both raise awareness of the rising risk of cyber-attacks and to support its members in protecting their digital infrastructure if an incident does occur. The UPU worked closely with the Royal Mail Group last year to ensure its services were protected and back up and running as quickly as possible after the ransomware attack, for example.

"The UPU has launched several initiatives to raise awareness of this emerging threat against the postal industry," Matata says. "This includes embedding cyber security as a topic across all its ongoing operational readiness workshops and providing training platforms and courses on the subject on its TRAINPOST platform.

"Additionally, the UPU is building several programs and initiatives to drive industry cyber resilience forward in the upcoming Dubai Cycle 2026-2029. This includes the postal sector Information Sharing and Analysis Centre (POST-ISAC) and the SECURE.POST initiative, which aims to ensure the security and integrity of postal services' domain names. The POST-ISAC initiative in particular is the vision of cyber security expert Mr. Massimiliano Aschi of Post Italiane, who long anticipated the importance of digital security in postal services.

"Finally, the UPU has just relaunched the .POST Shared Services platform, which is designed to offer all postal sector players – public and commercial – services to strengthen online trust through brand-identity, secure email and web/e-commerce site hosting," Matata adds.

About the POST-ISAC

ISACs are not-for-profit organizations that provide a centralized source of information on cyber threats and enable the two-way exchange of information between the private and public sectors on causes, incidents and threats, as well as the sharing of experience, knowledge and analysis. In general, information sharing through an ISAC can improve situational awareness, provide timely and comprehensive reports without using an organization's internal resources, and offer opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

... Ransomware attacks, like the one that hit Royal Mail, and the theft of personal identifiable information, which is subsequently used in identity fraud, are some of the biggest cyber threats for posts.

"ISACs are generally industry-specific, due to the commonality of a sector's business model and threat landscape," explains Matata. "The UPU is therefore well positioned to develop a postal sector-specific ISAC, hereby called a POST-ISAC, for the benefit for the entire postal sector.

"Through the support of the United States Tied Fund, investment into a study on how to develop and launch a POST-ISAC is underway, scheduled to be completed in November 2024. After which, subject to the necessary approvals and funding allocations, the POST-ISAC shall be launched in 2025," he concludes.

"... The UPU has just relaunched the .POST Shared Services platform, which is designed to offer all postal sector players – public and commercial – services to strengthen online trust through brand-identity, secure email and web/e-commerce site hosting."

Lati Matata
Director of the UPU's Postal Technology Centre (PTC)

Dr Tadas Jakstas, Team Lead – Cyber Security Capacity Building, NRD Cyber Security, presents during the UPU Cybersecurity Forum in Berne earlier this year. Photo: UPU

Supporting Royal Mail

The UPU's current work on supporting the postal sector to develop better cyber resilience builds on an already strong offering when it comes to assisting posts with cyber security. This offering was put to the test last year when, on 10 January 2023, the Royal Mail Group was hit by a cyber incident which caused severe service disruption to its international export services. The post immediately launched an investigation into the incident and worked around the clock to ensure services resumed as quickly as possible.

Antony Harvey, the then Managing Director of Royal Mail International (now Commercial Operations Director), reveals that "the cyber incident occurred at several key points within the post's international IT estate, disabling IT systems which controlled import and export processing and dispatching".

"We followed our incident response processes involving IT and cyber security teams, who disengaged IT systems to protect our infrastructure, and involved the appropriate law enforcement and national security authorities," says Harvey. "With the support of our stakeholders and partners we managed to contain the incident."

Soon after the incident first occurred Royal Mail engaged with the UPU to see how it could support the post to resume its export services as soon as possible. "We first worked with one of our partners' International Post System (IPS) solutions to recommence despatches," explained Harvey. Developed by the UPU's Postal Technology Centre (PTC), IPS is a solution for processing inbound and outbound international mail.

"We then engaged with the PTC and within two weeks of them providing their experts on the ground we went from a borrowed solution to a full IPS solution at our main Office of Exchange (OE)," Harvey continues. "With the support of the UPU Director General, Masahiko Metoki, and working with his International Bureau (IB) teams, we were able to stand up an IPS solution that enabled us to reopen exports to all our partners and improve our import operation."

The IPS solution

Following the cyber incident, the PTC received a specific request from Royal Mail to provide a mail handling solution for its International Mail Processing Centre's (GBLALA) export mail process, according to David Avsec, Coordinator, Account Relations and Product Management,

UPU Postal Security Programme Manager Dawn Wilkes moderates a panel on innovations in cybersecurity resilience during the 2024 UPU Cybersecurity Forum.

The IPS functionalities include modules for processing inbound and outbound mail, handling international accounting, exchanging EDI messages, and add on modules for tracking mail items and for using IPS on portable scanning devices.

PTC. "The first step was to consult within the PTC management and its units on possible solutions and their feasibility. Considering the situation, all PTC experts acted swiftly, and a formal proposal was sent to Royal Mail to deploy IPS Cloud within four hours of the first contact."

IPS Cloud exposes the full IPS functionalities on a cloud environment, prepared specifically for the post, and fully managed by the PTC. The functionalities include modules for processing inbound and outbound mail, handling international accounting, exchanging EDI messages, and add on modules for tracking mail items and for using IPS on portable scanning devices.

"Cloud access was the key to the success of the Royal Mail deployment," adds Avsec. "It enabled us to deploy IPS very quickly, on multiple sites at Royal Mail and scale it on demand to the post's needs. For Royal Mail, it meant that it could focus its energy on change management, such as training staff on the IPS and adapting its procedures, without too much IT complexities to address."

The IPS software is the result of many years of cooperative work, according to Avsec, with each new user adding to the solution through the changes that they ask the UPU to implement. These changes, or innovations, are then available to the rest of the users.

"With IPS, posts comply with UPU regulations and standards, and can be sure that the software is adapted anytime as these regulations and standards evolve," explains Avsec. "Cloud access also offers very flexible deployment options, and offloads most of the IT operational duties to the PTC. Sustainability is also a parameter – IPS has been distributed for 25+ years now and is here to stay. It remains core to what we do in the PTC."

IPS deployment

To help Royal Mail get up and running with IPS Cloud and given the gravity of the situation, the PTC allocated significant resources to speed up the onboarding process. "Specifically, we had to accelerate and sequence all the usual steps, such as hardware provisioning, securing the solution, and setting up user access management, EDI network configuration

and the monitoring and alerting system, but without any compromise on quality and reliability," says Bishan Joshi, Manager, Support Services and Applications, PTC. "This was only possible because of the vastly experienced, committed and diligent team."

"The implementation process was intense, with a lot of meetings and short deadlines to train many people," adds Stéphane Herrmann, Lead Technical Account Manager, Mail Products and Services, PTC. "The installation of IPS in a designated operator the size of Royal Mail usually requires several months of preparation, for example. However, we only had a few days to prepare."

According to Herrmann, numerous meetings took place between the PTC and Royal Mail experts to gather the necessary information for the configuration of IPS, and to agree on the best way to use the application. Then several days were dedicated to the training of functional administrators, technical staff, and operational staff at the offices of exchange.

"All the Royal Mail staff were available and cooperative despite the difficult situation," Herrmann explains. "The GBLALA exchange office operates 24/7, therefore PTC experts trained all shifts for 24 hours to ensure there was no interruption in the use of IPS. Then a second site's staff was also trained."

According to Royal Mail, like the PTC's Customs Declaration System (CDS), which the post has been using for the past eight years, IPS is a very flexible and intuitive solution, enabling staff to "learn on the job," says Harvey. "Within days staff were confident that they had mastered the system," he adds.

"Working with the PTC we identified a number of super-users and developed a train-the-trainer program, to ensure we had continuity in our training and to future proof our operation," Harvey continues. "We were supported at each stage by the PTC who reacted to our individual requirements around the clock."

The UPU's support was critical to Royal Mail's recovery plan, Harvey notes, and that support went further than just providing IPS Cloud. "The UPU provided us with guidance in terms of regulations, it was there for us as a conduit to communicate with our postal partners, and it was proactive in identifying issues with some of the approaches we had," Harvey explains. "Its customer engagement was excellent, providing fast and effective change when we needed it.

"With this in mind, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the UPU for the fast and comprehensive support it provided to the Royal Mail Group, our staff and to our customers. This support and that of our partner posts has been amazing in helping us to recover our international services. It underlines the value in working together, as part of the UPU, within the global postal network," Harvey adds.

Lessons learned

Royal Mail plans to use the cyber incident experience and lessons learned to enhance its services and those in the UPU network. "Systems like IPS and CDS and the data they harness are essential to our automation, but we need to improve data management and develop our services," Harvey says. "We need to ensure we have the services and the features that customers want. Customers need assistance to comply with the increasingly complex customs requirements, for example, and the UPU has

"Systems like IPS and CDS and the data they harness are essential to our automation, but we need to improve data management and develop our services."

Antony Harvey
Former Managing Director of Royal Mail International and current Commercial Operations Director

During a visit to Royal Mail following the cyber incident, UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki was invited to tour the post's Heathrow Worldwide Distribution Centre and International Logistics Centre.

UPU Director General Masahiko Metoki and his team met with senior representatives from Royal Mail Group, including former CEO Simon Thompson, shortly after the implementation of IPS.

a key role to play in setting global standards to ensure we have a viable universal service."

For the UPU, the situation with Royal Mail has confirmed its capacity to react very quickly in a crisis. "This is thanks to both our flexible technologies – IPS, for example, comes with numerous configurable options, built along the years and thanks to its 180+ deployments worldwide – and our very lean organizational structure. We also confirmed the teams' motivation levels when exposed to such projects – everybody knows what is ahead, but still, everyone is engaging fully, and supporting each other," Avsec explains.

Alongside supporting the postal sector with cyber resilience, the UPU is also investing in its own cyber security. At the Riyadh Extraordinary Congress last year, it was agreed to increase funding to IB's operational budget, specifically for Cyber Security and the Emergency Solidarity Fund. "The increased funding on the former will be used towards improving the cyber resilience of the IB itself, as the IB is the custodian of postal data and facilitator of secure hybrid forums and meeting sessions of the UPU bodies," explains Matata.

"The IB will also apply these funds to implement Information Security and Business Continuity Frameworks for its operations. The target will be to increase the cyber resilience of the IB by 2025, such that in subsequent years it shall be eligible for ISO 27001 and ISO 22301 certification. The ISO standard certifications are for information security management systems (ISMS) and business continuity management system (BCMS), respectively," he adds.

Matata also highlights that the IB's core data management processes for the UPU postal IT network, operated by the PTC, have already been ISO27001 certified since 2019 to date.

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The UPU held its first-ever Cybersecurity Forum in April 2024. Photo: UPU

Supporting the industry

Royal Mail, meanwhile, will continue to work with the UPU following the cyber incident and IPS rollout to support the wider postal sector. "Unfortunately, we are not the first, and sadly we will not be the last victim of these malicious cyber incidents," Harvey said. "Indeed, we have already seen several of our postal partners affected in the same way. We have committed to Mr Metoki that we will provide as much information as we can on our experiences during this challenging time." In fulfilment of this commitment, Royal Mail recently took part in the UPU's Postal Operations Council (POC) cybersecurity forum and will help the UPU with the development of the POST-ISAC.

Reflecting on the cyber incident last year, Royal Mail Group is now urging its partners to ensure they have defined and tested cyber incident response and crisis processes and, where possible, have key retainers for services/external relationships with providers and law enforcement pre-defined. "The plans are not just for the cyber and IT teams, they need to cover executive team roles and responsibilities, tabletop exercises of business, IT, and other key stakeholder group responses," Harvey explains.

"Review your technology system structures and the firewalls and scenario plan incursion and firebreaks, to protect most of your businesses, and make sure that not only your response processes, but your system architecture is clearly documented and supported. This will help you manage and protect your data, your customers and businesses," he concludes.

The UPU's Matata adds that the weakest link in the cybersecurity threat landscape is often the human. "To this end, posts should immediately launch awareness sessions on cyber hygiene practices for their staff to adopt best practices in daily use of digital equipment," he says. "Following that, the posts should perform a risk-based threat analysis and increase investments in cyber security related IT equipment to mitigate their top risks," Matata concludes. HN

Check out the secure .POST Shared Services platform:
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"With IPS, posts comply with UPU regulations and standards, and can be sure that the software is adapted anytime as these regulations and standards evolve."

David Avsec
Coordinator, Account Relations and Product Management, PTC.

MEMBER COUNTRIES BENEFIT FROM UPU'S IMPROVED, COLLABORATIVE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

With the increasing complexity of UPU capacity building projects requiring collaboration across disciplines, the organization has devised and successfully adopted a transversal framework for project management.

Text by POORAN **PARAMPATH**
UPU Capacity Development Expert

Member countries participated in a disaster risk management workshop in Berne earlier this year. Photo: UPU

UPU Capacity Development Expert Pooran Parampath highlights capacity building opportunities at the SIDS Postal Leaders Forum in Seychelles. Photo: UPU

The transversal principle adopted by the UPU in its current project management framework considers the management of the intersections between different project types, regional peculiarities and varied capacity building solutions. This new transversal approach has resulted in a number of benefits for member countries and the organization, including the optimization of limited resources, increased collaboration and coordination between directorates, and increased regionalization of projects.

The transversal framework has proven to optimize resources in two chief ways: first, by enabling common activities across different projects to be tackled at the same time; and second, by enabling the same project teams to work on common activities, enabling the transfer of expertise across projects. The main benefit we have observed from this change is the fast-tracking of project deliverables within resource constraints. This approach also has a positive impact on the overall budgetary consumption at the activity level and, over time, at the project level.

Increased collaboration is another observed benefit of this transversal approach. As inter-directorate work units and project teams cooperate to achieve transversal goals, there has been a gradual breakdown of silos within and between the directorates. The major benefit of this is knowledge-sharing between teams – team members with more experience in financial accounting, for example, can step in to assist other more inexperienced team members, yielding better results while enhancing team dynamics.

There have been other advantages to this model. These advantages include the deepening of the UPU's regionalized approach by focusing on regional peculiarities during the development and implementation of each project's capacity building solutions. During the initiation of projects, regional and country-level gap analyses are undertaken as a first step. Gaps are then matched with rightsized UPU solutions and realistic KPIs are identified. Although the transversal models themselves are global, the application doesn't necessarily have to be, especially where the needs between regions and countries vary. A critical success factor of this approach has been ensuring that the benefits derived from transversal management does not replace or minimize any customization. In this way, we ensure global projects meet the diverse needs of different member countries.

At the UPU, the benefits of this approach are illustrated by several of our ongoing projects and capacity building activities.

The Operational Readiness for E-commerce (ORE) initiative is a prime example. The transversal capacity building approach here focuses on the development of global project templates, KPIs and prescribed activities, which are then tailored to the realities of the different regions and individual countries. This process is complemented by regional training needs assessments to identify gaps and prescribe training interventions. At the UPU, these interventions fall within one of three types of solutions: namely, group workshops, consultancies for advisory or evaluative services and procurement of equipment.

A critical success factor of this approach has been ensuring that the benefits derived from transversal management does not replace or minimize any customization. In this way, we ensure global projects meet the diverse needs of different member countries.

Additionally, there is a compounding effect with these solutions as they themselves are transversal as they cut across all other projects regardless of their technical domains. Therefore, the management of these solutions also benefit from the types of coordination and resource optimization described above. A simple example is seen in the central management of the capacity building suite of solutions which are offered to different directorates and project types within the International Bureau. This includes the creation of eLearning courses, facilitation of group workshops, management of individual training and coaching, among others.

These benefits are also demonstrated in other ongoing projects such as the Disaster Risk Management, Diversification and EAD Expansion.

With more projects now being streamlined through this transversal framework, UPU member countries should see a marked difference in outcomes by the end of the cycle. PP

EMS HARNESSES THE POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL LEARNING

The EMS Cooperative provides comprehensive training to equip operators with the essential knowledge needed to grow their Express Mail Service (EMS) business and provide an excellent service to customers. Alongside, its face-to-face training programme, the EMS Cooperative has developed a suite of engaging eLearning materials, ensuring training is accessible to everyone.

Text by ALISON **COE**

EMS eLearning is suitable for anyone working in the cross-border postal sector and is designed to improve EMS operations and introduce the Cooperative's performance improvement systems. A recent workshop identified training on EMS as a priority; eLearning is an easy and cost-effective way for operators to uplift staff skills and raise knowledge of the service.

Begin with the introductory course, "Getting to know EMS", which familiarizes staff with the service's fundamentals and highlights support systems for EMS operations and services, such as EMS SMART and i-Care. The course emphasizes key priorities for EMS and will help staff focus on the actions with the most impact.

This is complemented by specialized courses, such as the "Electronic Advance Data (EAD) - Implementing ITMATT course" developed with the support of the United States Postal Service, which focuses on the postal supply chain. Many learners worldwide have already accessed the EAD course, which provides an overview of UPU Regulations, operational settings and how to sign data sharing agreements with partners.

In addition, EMS created the very popular "EAD video tutorial" to assist customers sending items internationally with guidance on preparing customs declaration forms. It is available for operators to use in their own communication with customers.

A further video tutorial on the "EMS Operational Pipeline" is a quick way to help staff working with EMS become familiar with scans and the commonly used events on each leg of the operational pipeline.

Finally, the "EMS Marketing" course explores ways to use marketing to reconnect with international EMS customers. The mix of videos, exercises and case studies will equip staff with marketing strategies to differentiate EMS, target customers effectively and grow business.

All the eLearning materials are free, open to all, and can be studied at any time and any place. The courses can be used to support professional development of staff and, upon successful completion, learners receive a certificate.

The addition of these online materials will better equip operators with an inclusive and engaging way to improve knowledge of EMS to all staff, particularly those unable to attend face-to-face training. Accessing the eLearning will contribute to improving EMS operations and services, ultimately supporting business growth. AC

All the eLearning materials are free, open to all, and can be studied at any time and any place. The courses can be used to support professional development of staff and, upon successful completion, learners receive a certificate.

Explore EMS eLearning

eLEARNING COURSES:

The EMS eLearning can be accessed on the Universal Postal Union's eLearning Platform:
https://training.ptc.post

VIDEO TUTORIALS:

How to prepare a customs declaration label (for customers); EMS Operational Pipeline and its scans.
https://www.ems.post/en/ems-elearning

UPU-LED PRIVATE-PUBLIC ALLIANCE BOOSTS FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN BOTSWANA AND BEYOND

Text by TARA **GIROUD**

Launched in 2017, the Financial Inclusion Technical Assistance Facility (FITAF), a joint initiative established by the UPU with Visa Inc. and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, sought to advance financial inclusion for millions through the delivery of digital financial services by posts. Nearly 7 years later, the organizations reflect on the programme's achievements, lessons learned and strong support for the benefits of collaboration, zeroing in on Botswana as a testimony to its success.

Botswana Post launches its new Posa'it app, a one-stop-shop for digital services for Batswana, including the Dig-itPost financial inclusion tool targeting MSMEs developed through the UPU's FITAF programme. Photo: BotswanaPost

In Botswana, with a population of 2.6 million people, approximately 1.6 million are unbanked, underbanked, and underserved, leaving them at risk to fraud and other financial struggles. Botswana is not alone. Globally, 1.4 billion adults, mostly women, have no financial accounts, according to the World Bank's Global Findex 2021.

This disparity of access to digital financial services makes it challenging for the underserved to function in digital economies and to weather financial crises. At the same time, postal operators are expanding into financial services as they face pressure from declining traditional mail volumes.

That is why in 2017 the Universal Postal Union, together with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Visa, launched the Financial Inclusion Technical Assistance Facility (FITAF). This public-private partnership formed to support posts in their efforts to offer the underserved digital financial services and create more sustainable operations.

"The power of private-public collaboration in enabling Digital Financial Services (DFS) is immense," said Ihab Zaghloul, Programme Manager, Financial Inclusion at the UPU. "This important collaboration is both fundamental and transformational in enabling the postal networks to advance their DFS capabilities by having access to the pertinent digital tools and innovations to better meet the digital needs of underserved postal customers."

Digital Transformation

FITAF was an important and timely project because, while there is political will for digital transformation, understanding the "how" can be challenging, said Rajiv Garodia, Senior Vice President and Global Head of Visa Government Solutions.

Yet, the more individuals and businesses are digitized, such as those who benefited from the FITAF program, Garodia said, the more countries can move toward economic growth and resilience.

"When combined with good understanding of consumer needs, the right partnerships and commitment, we can see results," Garodia said. "Digital payments, as they expand, can create more robust financial infrastructure and more trusting, confident users. This can lead to the increased use of other financial products – such as savings, credit and insurance, which are so important to improving lives and livelihoods."

One main objective of FITAF was to better understand the regulatory environment in which member posts were operating. This ranged from nations in which regulators and policy makers understood the post's strong role in supporting national financial inclusion goals to nations in which no regulations exist and for which there is no clearly defined role for posts in supporting these national goals.

While these gaps in understanding and readiness create a challenge for some posts to take up this mission of helping to deliver national financial inclusion goals, it should also be an incentive for postal networks to work toward closing such gaps, the FITAF report noted.

Given the UPU postal network's global reach – with 663,000 post offices serving more

FITAF engaged 5.3 million underserved postal customers

Botswana Post CEO Cornelius Ramatlhakwane discusses the post's new Posa'it app. Photo: BotswanaPost

Photo: BotswanaPost

than 1 billion postal customers – posts are critical for nations that are dedicated to advancing financial inclusion, Zaghloul said.

To approach each member post based on individual needs, FITAF focused on four key phases: researching the needs of each postal operator and the communities they serve; designing and deploying postal-driven digital financial services assistance projects that target those needs; disseminating learnings to stakeholders; and providing necessary seed funding.

Throughout the program, FITAF established 20 projects with member posts, including BotswanaPost, that offered a range of supports, including ensuring alignment between the postal plans and national financial inclusion goals. The program also developed postal network digital financial services resources, and assessed network readiness levels, including regulation, expertise, capabilities, and investments.

In Viet Nam, the FITAF project supported a new mobile government app that extended coverage of national social and health insurance program to people in remote regions, reducing the need for inefficient paper-based enrollments and building awareness of the post's digital services in this underserved region.

In Argentina, the FITAF project conducted research into postal, customer, regulatory, and ecosystem digital financial services, which allowed for the creation of a DFS strategy for creating the most relevant digital financial offerings for The Correo Oficial de la República Argentina.

All in all, FITAF engaged 5.3 million underserved postal customers, 3.1 million being women, and others including youth, MSMEs and small farms.

"Digitizing digital financial services (DFS) access and government postal disbursements, leveraging DFS innovation, supporting postal DFS regulatory provisions and focusing on scalable ecosystem DFS partnerships were all key components of the FITAF partnership to advance postal DFS expansion and national financial inclusion impacts," Zaghloul said.

Case study: BotswanaPost

By participating in FITAF, BotswanaPost has been able to develop a mobile-based financial inclusion tool called DigiPost that is tailored specifically to the needs of

By participating in FITAF, BotswanaPost has been able to develop a mobile-based financial inclusion tool called DigiPost that is tailored specifically to the needs of MSMEs, most of whom are run by women or people with disabilities.

MSMEs, most of whom are run by women or people with disabilities, said BotswanaPost's Chief Corporate Affairs and Sustainability Officer, Tebogo Lebotse Sebego.

DigiPost empowers entrepreneurs of any kind from licensed hawkers to retail merchants to be postal agents offering comprehensive suite of diverse services of which include financial and insurance products. With a commitment to fostering financial and digital inclusion, BotswanaPost aims to reach over 500,000 individuals particularly youth and women within three years with through DigiPost and other related offerings she said.

"DigiPost is a phenomenal income generation solution for the family unit and entrepreneurs in general. It represents a milestone in Botswana's digital transformation journey," Sebego said. "With our innovative approach and strategic partnerships, we are committed to driving progress and prosperity along with social and financial inclusion."

The product, which rolled out earlier this year, aims to reach 100,000 standard users in 2024, with the hopes of onboarding 3,000 MSMEs this year and 6,000 through 2025.

3.1 million customers included were women, and other underserved populations including youth, MSMEs and small farms.

Photo: BotswanaPost

It hasn't always been easy, though. Sebego said there have been challenges building trust in the digital financial services, but the post continues to invest in training and education to help boost digital literacy. So far, efforts in these new digital financial services have helped the post expand its market reach and build greater trust in communities.

The post believes that its involvement with FITAF will enhance its relevance and sustainability, contribute towards financial inclusion and lead to economic development because the post is creating flexibility, embracing technology, and decentralizing products, services and capabilities.

"This grass roots approach promotes local entrepreneurship, which in turn contributes to job creation, income generation and poverty eradication among other things," Sebego said. ... "through FITAF BotswanaPost is able to promote financial inclusion, economic empowerment and is on its way to making a positive change in the lives of Batswana (beyond just making a profit)."

BotswanaPost also participated in an intra-UPU network sharing with La Poste Tunisienne and Vietnam Post, which Zaghloul said was critical to the success and advancement of postal digital financial services provisions because it allowed the posts to share best practices.

"As part of the FITAF programme, the collaboration between Tunisia Post, Vietnam Post and BotswanaPost has been a great

Photos: BotswanaPost

example of how this collaboration can identify new insights, innovative operating models, technology, cost savings and regulatory best practices," Zaghloul said.

Building on Progress

Moving forward, Zaghloul said that national frameworks for financial inclusion could deliver greater impacts through ecosystem collaboration with the postal network organizations that underserved communities have an affinity with.

This could be accomplished by establishing enabling postal regulatory provisions, introducing relevant diversified digital offerings, and realizing the strength of community education and capacity building.

"Through broader ecosystem collaboration on common national financial inclusion goals, substantial progress could be made in advancing underserved customers' digitization and financial inclusion," Zaghloul said.

This will require building on the learnings of the FITAF programme and continuing to expand collaboration to drive new private-public partnership programmes, he said.

Nations and posts should continue to bring digital financial services to underserved customers and provide them with more and better choices for payments, savings, microcredit, and insurance. They should also work to enhance postal network DFS capabilities, knowledge transfer and DFS innovations.

The FITAF report highlighted 87 lessons learned that stakeholders should note. For example, it suggested posts should not rush to invest in digital financial services technologies because the environment changes so quickly that posts could become weighed down by "old" technologies in just a few years' time.

Additionally, underserved customers seemed to adapt most quickly to mobile-based DFS solutions and payment capabilities. Additionally, they tend to prefer to use a single digital account, which could bring strong cross-selling opportunities for posts.

"Postal networks need to continue to strive to establish and confirm their important role in achieving national financial inclusion priorities, while promoting the need for ecosystem collaboration to support financial and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals," Zaghloul said. TG

Learn more about the FITAF programme and its results:
https://www.upu.int/en/publications/financial-inclusion/postal-networks-a-platform-for-financial-inclusion-enablement

FITAF supported projects in:

ARGENTINA

BENIN

BOTSWANA

BURKINA FASO

CAMBODIA

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

CUBA

GRENADA

JORDAN

KIRIBATI

KYRGYZSTAN

MONGOLIA

MOROCCO

NAURU

PAKISTAN

RWANDA

TANZANIA

TOGO

TONGA

TUNISIA

VIET NAM

FiTAF

SWISS POST CELEBRATES 175 YEARS IN BUSINESS

Photo: Swiss Post

This year Swiss Post is celebrating its 175th anniversary. Throughout its history the post has been on a relentless journey of modernization and has repeatedly provided positive impetus for society, the economy, and individuals. In 175 years, Swiss Post has experienced and helped shape motorization, automation and, most recently, digitization.

by HELEN **NORMAN**

This year Swiss Post is celebrating its 175th anniversary. Throughout its history the post has been on a relentless journey of modernization and has repeatedly provided positive impetus for society, the economy, and individuals. In 175 years, Swiss Post has experienced and helped shape motorization, automation and, most recently, digitization.

However, the post's basic mission has never changed – Swiss Post transports information, goods, people, and money safely and punctually from A to B. Since its founding in 1849 until today, Swiss Post connects people and helps to power a modern Switzerland.

Swiss Post has also evolved to become one of the most developed postal organizations in the world, according to UPU rankings. "For 175 years, Swiss Post has been adapting to the changing requirements of the population and the economy," says Roberto Cirillo, CEO of Swiss Post. "And it will continue to do so by expanding its position as a leading service provider in its core communication and logistics markets."Swiss Post is using its history of connecting people and goods as a guide to celebrate its 175th year. "Our anniversary programme is a varied journey through Swiss Post's history, enriched with experiences in which the Swiss public can discover the post of today and tomorrow," explains Aimé Theubet, Director of International Affairs at Swiss Post.

The programme includes various experience locations throughout Switzerland, where visitors get a behind the scenes look at Swiss Post and its operations. There are also treasure hunts in eight Swiss cities, during which people learn facts about the past, present and the

future of Swiss Post. Additionally, at the Museum of Communication in Berne, there are special tours to mark the post's anniversary and on 13-14 September a big family festival will take place.

1849 to 2024

One of Swiss Post's greatest achievements during its 175-year history, according to Theubet, is that it has been, and continues to be, "always there for everyone, everywhere." He continues: "The post delivers consignments nationwide, ensures payment transactions, operates a dense access network, and ensures regional accessibility. It is present every day in cities, conurbations and peripheral regions and is accessible to all physically and digitally."

Achieving this has been no easy task, however. The post has tackled several significant challenges over the past 175-years including increased digitization from the 1990s onwards, strong competition, especially during deregulation in the early 2000s, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a steep rise in online retail. "In 2021, Swiss Post transported 202 million parcels – an all-time record," says Theubet.

Today, the post consists of five strategic subsidiaries – Post CH, which operates in the logistics market, PostFinance, which operates in the retail financial market, PostBus, which operates in the passenger transport market, Post CH Communication, which operates in the digital communication market, and Post CH Network, which manages post offices and other access points.

Swiss Post of Tomorrow

Currently, Swiss Post is coming to the end of its 2021-2024 Swiss Post of Tomorrow strategy, which is based on four pillars – growth and development, sustainability, pricing measures and efficiency improvements. "Through the Swiss Post of Tomorrow strategy, Swiss Post has systematically developed its traditional core competencies over the past four years," explains Theubet.

As part of the strategy, Swiss Post has built up new expertise, specifically in logistics and digital communications, making targeted investments in its future viability. To develop its branch network, Swiss Post has opened its network to service companies and public authorities. "In recent years, we have also worked hard to secure our future as a relevant service provider for Switzerland," Theubet continues. "And we have largely been successful: we are a stable employer, a driving force in the economy and a role model in terms of sustainability."

Jungfraujoch post office. The highest post office in Switzerland at 3,460 meters above sea level. It opened on 1 August 1912, together with the railway connection. The historical photo of the counter hall is from the period 1930-1940. Photo: PTT-Archiv

In the first quarter of 2024, the post has continued to invest as part of its Swiss Post of Tomorrow Strategy. For example, Geneva became the third city after Berne and Zurich to see deliveries of letters and parcels carried out exclusively using electric vehicles.

Meanwhile, voters in the cantons of Basel-Stadt, Graubünden, St Gallen and Thurgau are now able to cast votes electronically thanks to Swiss Post's e-voting service. Additional partners are now present in Swiss Post's branches as network opening progresses. And PostFinance is the first systemically important bank in Switzerland to bring crypto trading directly to its customers.

"Swiss Post will continue building on these achievements in future to provide a strong physical and digital public service that is both sustainable and self-financed. We are not done investing in our future," adds Theubet.

... The post's basic mission has never changed – Swiss Post transports information, goods, people, and money safely and punctually from A to B. Since its founding in 1849 until today, Swiss Post connects people and helps to power a modern Switzerland.

2025-2028

The organization plans to build on the successes achieved in the 2021-2024 period of the Swiss Post of Tomorrow strategy during the 2025-2028 period. The aim is to ensure sustainable value creation, allowing the post to finance the public service, innovations, and investments from its own resources.

Looking ahead, Swiss Post will be focused on continuity and the profitability of its services. The latter has been challenging in recent years due to a volatile market environment.

"For 175 years, Swiss Post has been adapting to the changing requirements of the population and the economy, and it will continue to do so by expanding its position as a leading service provider in its core communication and logistics markets."

Roberto Cirillo
CEO, Swiss Post

"Swiss Post continued to face challenges in its core business in the first quarter of 2024," explains Theubet. "Letter volumes declined by 5.6%, over the counter payments fell by 13% and parcel volumes dropped by 6.2%. Despite these developments, Swiss Post posted better results for the first quarter of 2024 than in the previous year, after declines in the last two years. At CHF 87 million, operating profit was up by CHF 17 million compared to the prior-year period. Meanwhile, at CHF 84 million, group profit was CHF 43 million higher year-on-year. Operating revenue rose to CHF 1,920 million – an increase of CHF 151 million.

"Despite the positive financial results overall in the first quarter 2024, Swiss Post continues to operate in a challenging environment," Theubet says.

Swiss Post's 175-year history and its ability to overcome similar challenging environments in the past, puts the operator in a good position to turn its fortunes around in the coming years.

Swiss Post's future strategy will see the post expand its expertise in areas such as goods logistics and boost its profile in the advertising market. It also plans to strengthen its mobility services in a targeted way, using flexible solutions for business and private customers, and expand its trustworthy digital communication and financial services solutions.

The post will also continue to focus on its commitment to sustainability to ensure a harmonious environment for future generations. It is systematically converting its entire vehicle fleet to emission-free drives and investing in charging infrastructure throughout Switzerland. By doing so, it aims to achieve net zero along the entire value chain by 2040.

Furthermore, Swiss Post is adapting its branch network to meet changing customers requirements for both personalised advice and more flexible access solutions, such as automated parcel terminals. The post will continue to provide a nationwide, sustainable branch network with around 2,000 locations served. This includes self-operated branches and branches with partners such as supermarkets. The operator is also converting its self-operated branches into service centres, together with banks, health insurers, insurance companies and public authorities.

"Swiss Post will continue to pursue its Swiss Post of Tomorrow strategy, expand its leading position as a broad-based logistics service provider and strengthen its role as a driver of digital communication services," Cirillo concluded. "Looking to the future, it remains vitally important that Swiss Post's transformation is aligned with customer requirements to ensure it can continue providing products and services funded from its own resources." **HN**

Photo: Swiss Post

GMS by UPU
Global Monitoring System

precision
tracking
data
security
RFID
monitoring
service
solution
tracking
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

link by GMS
nexus by GMS
one by GMS
edge by GMS

MARKET DIGEST

by MAKIKO **HAYASHI**

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh's State Minister for Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, has emphasized the government's commitment to upgrading postal services in Bangladesh to "smart postal services" accessible even in remote areas. This initiative will expand the extensive network of 10,000 post offices and aims to transform the traditional mail system into a modern delivery service for goods, particularly from digital shopping platforms, ensuring affordability for marginalized populations. The plan includes automatic tracking systems and dedicated e-commerce corners in each post office for efficient sorting and delivery. These efforts align with Bangladesh's vision to establish a Smart Bangladesh by 2041.

(Source: digibanglatech.news)

BRAZIL

Embraer and Brazil's Correios have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to enhance air cargo transport efficiency within Brazil and globally, focusing on large cargo. This agreement will facilitate joint studies aimed at improving the efficiency and expanding both the Brazilian and international air networks for large cargo, utilizing Embraer aircraft models like E-190F, E-195F, and C-390 Millennium. This partnership is expected to reduce operational costs and increase the efficiency of Correios' logistics network, supporting its modernization initiative, "Correios do Futuro", and enhancing service reliability and customer offerings.

(Source: embraer.com)

CZECHIA

Czech Post is set to revolutionize cash transactions by allowing withdrawals and deposits from any bank account across all banks in the Czech Republic at its counters. Previously, this service was exclusive to ČSOB clients due to a partnership. By expanding this new service network to include all 2,900 branches across the Czech Republic, clients in smaller towns will have easy access to cash services. The initiative could significantly enhance the client experience and optimize bank costs related to cash handling.

(Source: czechia.postsen.com)

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopian Airlines Group has launched a USD 55 million e-commerce logistics facility at Bole International Airport, aimed at enhancing logistics for e-commerce, mail and courier services across Africa, Europe and America. Located within the Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics area, this facility covers 15,000 square meters and has the capacity to handle 150,000 tons of goods annually. A partnership established in 2023 with MailAmericas also aims to boost cross-border e-commerce, utilizing Addis Ababa as a key hub. This strategic development is set to position Addis Ababa as a central e-commerce logistics hub for Africa and beyond.

(Source: kenyanwallstreet.com)

FRANCE

France's **La Poste,** in collaboration with Banque des Territoires, has initiated a year-long trial of mobile post offices in five rural areas in the country to enhance public service accessibility in isolated regions. Utilizing five bright yellow vans, these mobile offices visit Orne, Gers, Jura, Haute-Marne and Creuse, providing essential postal and public services to 13,000 residents across 40 communities. Services include postal transactions, banking for Banque Postale customers, senior citizen assistance and internet and phone services. This initiative demonstrates La Poste's commitment to maintaining service proximity and supporting social cohesion in rural France.

(Source: Parcel and Postal Technology International)

GERMANY

Deutsche Post has ended its 63-year history of overnight airmail service within Germany, transitioning from air to road transport. This change, including the last flights on routes Stuttgart-Berlin, Hanover-Munich and Hanover-Stuttgart, aims to cut CO_2 emissions by 80% on these routes. Marc Hitschfeld of DHL Group highlighted the environmental benefits and noted that the urgency for airmail has decreased with digital communication advancements. The move reflects broader trends in postal services prioritizing environmental impact over speed, aligning with potential legislative changes to extend transit times for domestic mail.

(Source: DHL Group Post and Parcel Germany)

GHANA

Ghana Post introduces the Ghana Commemorative Cryptostamp, in honour of His Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II. This innovative stamp merges traditional philately with blockchain technology, creating a physical stamp with a corresponding digital twin, a Non-Fungible Token (NFT) on the blockchain. Each stamp integrates state-of-the-art encrypted Near Field Communication (NFC) chips for enhanced security, allowing real-time authenticity verification via smartphone scans that generate unique authentication messages. These "phygital" stamps bridge the physical and digital worlds, making them accessible and exciting for collectors.

(Source: ghanapost.com.gh)

INDIA & PHILIPPINES

India's Postal Administration and the **Philippine Postal Corporation (PHLPost)** are collaborating to develop a payment platform for postal remittances in the Philippines, enhancing the vital revenue from billions of dollars sent yearly by migrants from the Philippines. This initiative is part of a broader effort by the Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU) to improve postal services in the region, with India Post offering its advanced remittance solutions as development assistance. This collaboration aims to modernize and expand PHLPost's remittance services.

(Source: Parcel and Postal Technology International)

JAPAN

Charichari Corporation has launched a shared bicycle service by installing docking ports on properties owned by **Japan Post** in Kumamoto, Japan. This initiative represents the first time such facilities have been set up on Japan Post properties, aligning with efforts to diversify transportation options and reduce environmental impact. The new ports at the **Japan Post Group Kumamoto Building** and Postpark Kumamoto Oaks Street enhance access to the city center, promoting more sustainable urban mobility and supporting the community's move towards carbon neutrality.

(Source: japanpost.jp from prtimes.jp)

NORWAY

Posten Bring has set ambitious sustainability goals, aiming to convert its entire vehicle fleet to electricity or biogas by 2030. This initiative includes reducing emissions from its vehicles and buildings by 85% and from suppliers by 30% by the same year. At present, half of Norway's residents receive deliveries via electric vehicles, a number expected to rise to 70% by 2026 in the country's 60 largest municipalities. The company is also increasing the use of rail for goods transport, enhancing vehicle loading efficiency and investing in renewable energy production at its terminals. All vans used in Denmark, Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö will be electric by 2025.

(Source: Parcel and Postal Technology International)

PHILIPPINES

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is partnering with the **Philippine Postal Corp. (PhlPost)** to boost e-commerce in the Philippines through its SPEED (Strengthening Private Enterprises for the Digital Economy) initiative. This collaboration aims to modernize PHLPost by developing a digitalization roadmap that enhances its capabilities as a logistics service provider, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the agricultural sector. It includes the implementation of a new addressing system, Barangay Postal Stations for better nationwide delivery and a Real Time Visibility system for efficiency of mail operations. This strategic partnership extends PHLPost's reach even into remote areas, facilitating safer and more efficient participation in digital commerce.

(Source: phlpost.gov.ph)

SINGAPORE

Singapore Post Limited (SingPost) has launched its first standalone POPStop at Tampines MRT (Mass Rapid Transit interchange) station, part of its strategy to adapt to the booming online shopping market in Singapore. POPStops are service counters at transportation hubs for e-commerce item lodgements and returns, staffed with advisors trained in e-commerce logistics. The Tampines MRT location also introduces a generative AI-powered digital assistant to aid customers. This initiative aligns with efforts to integrate parcel services into daily commutes. Additionally, the new POPDrop boxes will soon expand to heartland areas, enhancing convenience and accessibility for customers and small businesses to drop off or return smaller items.

(Source: singpost.com)

SLOVENIA & CHINA

In Beijing, **Pošta Slovenije** and the **China Post Group** have signed a pivotal cooperation agreement to enhance mail and parcel logistics between the two countries. This agreement, finalized by Pošta Slovenije's General Manager Marko Cegnar and China Post's Chairman Liu Aili, aims to boost service quality and expand economic exchanges. Driven by the rise of Chinese online purchasing platforms which significantly contribute to Slovenia's parcel traffic, this partnership leverages Slovenia's strategic location in Europe. It opens new opportunities with enhanced cooperation, reflecting a long-term commitment to improving and expanding logistics services.

(Source: Pošta Slovenije from posteurop.org)

SWITZERLAND

At the SEF.NextGen spring camp organized by the Swiss Economic Forum (SEF), twenty young adults engaged with the **Swiss Post** to explore innovative digital solutions in healthcare. The event, held from April 15-19, 2024 in Mörlialp, Obwalden, encouraged these budding entrepreneurs to apply design thinking to develop a health app tailored for young adults in Switzerland. The challenge, as noted by a participant was to pinpoint specific user needs that the app needed to address in order to engage Generation Z effectively. This initiative reflects Swiss Post's commitment to leveraging digital innovation to meet the healthcare needs of younger demographics.

(Source: post.ch)

UNITED STATES

The United States Postal Service (USPS) has announced aggressive sustainability targets for 2030, aiming to significantly reduce carbon emissions and advance circular economy goals. Key objectives include cutting emissions from fuel and electricity by 40%, reducing contracted service emissions by 20%, diverting 75% of waste from landfills and enhancing the recyclability and recycled content of packaging. To meet these goals, USPS plans to electrify its fleet, optimize delivery routes and streamline operations through a USD 40 billion investment. Additionally, USPS is enhancing environmental education among its 640,000 employees and communities, focusing on climate literacy. These efforts underscore USPS's commitment to a substantial environmental impact reduction.

(Source: sustainabilitymag.com)

UNION POSTALE

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Union Postale is the Universal Postal Union's flagship magazine, founded in 1875. Each issue is published quarterly in several languages, giving advertisers a regular opportunity to reach out to their audience.

Some 12,000 copies of Union Postale are sent to named distribution lists annually. The bulk of these readers are the top decision-makers from national Posts and ministries from the UPU's 192 member countries. They include chief executives, operations managers, technical experts, industry regulators and government ministers.

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