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**Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on
their efforts in 2016 to implement the outcome of the WSIS**

Submission by

Universal Postal Union

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 20th session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

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REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY OUTCOMES

BY UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION (UPU)
Berne, December 2016

I. Executive Summary

The outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) acknowledged the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and the worldwide postal network as an important asset in the development of the information society. Over 690,000 post offices around the world provide services to urban, rural and remote communities in all countries. Modernization and transformation of this important national infrastructure is an ongoing process, to connect the unconnected and introduce new services at the national level that increase digital inclusion, financial inclusion, trade inclusion and help facilitate increased participation in the information society for micro, small and medium enterprises.

The UPU assists member countries in this modernization through addressing infrastructure development, deployment and regulation via regional conferences, programs, meetings and publications. It works with governments and posts to modernize the global postal network defined within the UPU Treaty and encourages the increased use of ICTs to improve quality, reach and security of services. At the level of technical cooperation, the UPU continues to carry out a number of actions to support the reduction of the digital divide in all countries.

Some notable achievements in 2016 include:

- After its 26th Universal Postal Congress, the Istanbul World Postal Strategy—based on integration, innovation and inclusion—was approved. In the strategy, there is a specific mandate for the role of ICTs
- The UPU collected 24 evidence based case studies for E-Services and E-Commerce showing how using ICTs the postal sector can help achieve the SDGs.
- The UPU joined the “eTrade for All” initiative which intends to improve the ability of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to use and benefit from e-commerce.
- The UPU organized a thematic workshop within the WSIS Forum called “Putting Public Assets to Work, innovations and reflections on how the postal network can ensure the global reach of digital services to increase inclusion”
- Broadband internet connectivity reaches 39% of post offices in developing countries, whilst around 49% of post offices have broadband internet access in developed countries.
- 46 countries support development of .POST internet top-level-domain for secure digital services
- 70 countries utilizing digital exchange network and software provided by the UPU for remittances
- 117 countries are connected to the global monitoring system (GMS) network, utilising over 300,000 UHF passive transponders for monitoring postal movements. This generates billions of data elements per year of Big Data for analysis.
- The UPU organized a series of E-Commerce Conferences in Arab, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe regions aimed at private sector, governments and regulators encouraging the use of ICT in the postal network to foster growth of e-commerce services.

II. Analytical Overview

UPU Ministerial Conference

Postal leaders from around the globe gathered at the UPU Ministerial Conference on October this year to focus on the contribution of postal services in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The conference was guided by the theme “Delivering sustainable development: Connecting citizens, businesses and territories,” Ministers’ discussions reaffirmed the Post’s role as a driver of global development. The Conference comes at a time when the postal sector is facing profound transformation due to the development of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the booming of e-commerce. Ministers stated that customers should be viewed as partners in the transformation of the postal industry and the development of innovative postal services.

26th Universal Postal Congress

UPU Universal Postal Congress was held last October in Istanbul, Turkey. The strategy—based on integration, innovation and inclusion—was approved and strives to improve interoperability of postal network infrastructure, ensure sustainable and modern products, and foster market and sector functioning.

Within the Istanbul World Postal Strategy there is a specific mandate for the role of ICTs:

- “Goal 1: Improve the interoperability of network infrastructure” aims to strengthen the global postal network through its activities on quality of service, supply chain and security, accounting and operational processes, ICTs, and standards.
- “Goal 2: Ensure sustainable and modern products” which aims to facilitate diversification and integration through its activities on e-commerce and trade facilitation, financial inclusion and services, product and service diversification and harmonization, integrated remuneration and e-services.

National post office connectivity

According to UPU study, connectivity of the national post office network continues to increase. Just over 39% of post offices in developing countries have broadband internet access, whilst around 49% of post offices have broadband internet access in developed countries. Almost 35% of post offices in developed countries provide public internet access points, whilst only 31% in developing countries provide the same. These figures highlight that the digital divide still exists and requires further attention to ensure the inequity is addressed.

Broadband internet access via the postal network in rural and underserved communities provides opportunities for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to participate in the rapidly expanding e-commerce opportunities, being able to sell their goods to more affluent urban or overseas markets whilst using the post office as a facilitator of the exchange of goods, payments and related services. The national post offices are at the centre of global e-commerce development by connecting people to markets, notably businesses in remote areas typically excluded from the global marketplace, and delivering goods to everyone everywhere. In parallel expanding access to broadband Internet is critical in view of supporting financial and digital inclusion for underserved communities. The combination of financial, digital and physical component of the Posts is a vital element of economic development and integration and an important mean to bridge the digital divide.

In addition, a connected post office network is an important national asset for governments to increase democracy and social inclusion via the provision of e-government services such as identity, registrations, licenses, and social services.

III. Innovative policies, programs and projects which have been undertaken

The UPU E-Business Programme aims to be the international focal point for measuring and monitoring the latest developments in ICTs with case studies and guides, developing standards to ensure interoperability, developing regulations to support innovation, and providing policy and strategy recommendations, capacity building and training that help member countries use the postal network to better serve their citizens and businesses.

The UPU is a co-facilitator of the C7 WSIS E-Business Action line, and encourages digital innovation within the postal industry to provide significant opportunities for improving inclusion for all. Through innovation and modernization, the three-dimensional postal network of physical, financial and electronic services can assist:

- governments in becoming more efficient, providing better services and responding to demands for inclusion, transparency and accountability via e-government;
- businesses, especially micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), through its widespread geographic reach which allows greater access to international trade, especially in the e-commerce area; and
- citizens by ensuring that universal and multichannel services reach everyone in society, especially in terms of digital and financial inclusion via mobile channels.

The UPU has adopted a Digital Transformation Agenda recognizing the potential of ICT for development to be implemented in the period 2017-2020. As an information and technical assistance platform for the postal sector, the UPU is working to make a modern ICT enabled multichannel postal network and its services, accessible to all including the most disadvantaged populations.

A new ecommerce project was implemented in Tanzania, to provide staff from Tanzania Post with a toolkit and training to setup and launch an e-commerce platform. This is part of an ongoing .POST ecommerce programme that has now been implemented in Uruguay, Uganda and Cambodia since 2015.

Over 175 Designated Operators exchange electronic data between each other and Customs, as well as potentially organizations in the private sector (airlines, and other partners in the international supply chain) via the UPU Post*Net network. With the exponential growth of e-commerce this network is becoming an important Big Data store on the movement of e-commerce generated goods around the globe. Under an agreement formally signed recently, the UPU and UN Global Pulse agree to work on analyzing postal Big Data flows, working closely with UPU economists on exploring the potential of postal Big Data for insights into social and economic trends that could reveal early warnings of crises or other phenomena and their impact before they happen.

In developing countries, the UPU continues to expand the access and usage of affordable Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology. The UPU's RFID based Global Monitoring System (GMS) provides governments and their postal operators, the ability to work with private sector specialists and UNDP to deploy RFID technology, skills and capacity building activities, primarily focused on developing countries. In 2016, 117 countries are now connected to the global RFID network, utilising over 300,000 UHF passive transponders for monitoring mail movements.

The UPU organized a series of E-Commerce Conferences in Arab, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe regions encouraging the use of ICT to foster growth of e-commerce services aimed at which private sector, governments and regulators.

The UPU published its latest Global Panorama on Postal Financial Inclusion 2016. Using data provided by 161 postal operators, the report puts forward the different business models that have been adopted to deploy digital financial services and calls postal operators that have not fully digitized their operations to do so urgently, or risk being completely marginalized as financial service providers. In addition, the study presents the various models adopted by the 52 Posts worldwide that have already started offering their financial services through a mobile platform.

Within the UPU, the Postal Technology Center has developed a comprehensive and integrated IT framework providing: IFS, IFS Mobile, POST*Net and Customs Declaration System to help the postal sector to provide inclusive financial and e-commerce services using technology. The UPU supports

increased use of ICTs by countries to shift from cash to electronic remittances, increasing financial inclusion. Moving these transactions from cash to electronic payment not only ensures the money gets into the right hands, it provides better protection for consumers, makes money movements more transparent and creates more opportunities to better reach and serve the un-banked and under-banked in society. 75 countries already use the UPU's International Financial System (IFS) software to offer electronic remittance services under .POST. In 2016, the UPU has launched a pilot project for providing its software on the secured Postal Cloud and 1st live implementation are planned for 2017.

The UPU partnership with International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has continued connecting over 30,000 post offices in Africa, Asia and Central Asia to the UPU's electronic remittance network, making it possible for millions of additional people to send and receive digital payments through the post.

The UPU partners with UNCTAD and different stakeholders in the international community for the "E-Trade for All". This initiative is intended to be a multi-stakeholder initiative to improve the ability of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to use and benefit from e-commerce. It will be a demand-driven mechanism in which leading development partners cooperate with the private sector to pool capabilities and resources. The UPU was recognized as an important partner to contribute within the seven key policy areas.

Related to Action Line C4, C7: E-Learning, the UPU continues to expand uses of ICT to disseminate training programs covering a large number of beneficiaries. Thanks to the UPU's e-learning platform, postal staff, particularly in developing countries, have permanent access to all training courses via the internet. The e-learning platform offers 49 online courses in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Approximately 15,812 participants from 183 countries have taken an online training courses since 2006. www.upu-trainpost.com/eng/trainpost_index.htm. The UPU E-Business program completed the new release of the E-Services and Digital Transformation training course.

In the area of building confidence and security in the use of ICTs (Action Line C5), the UPU is the first UN agency to operate a sector specific top level domain, .POST, with specific regulations to cover domestic and cross-border digital postal services. .POST utilizes the latest ICT monitoring solutions to increase cybersecurity protection and provide a secure cloud infrastructure on which postal services can be deployed. This is a significant undertaking and defines the role for national postal services in the digital economy, ensuring all countries have a secure and trusted interoperable infrastructure for e-government, e-commerce and other digital transactions. In 2016, the number of countries supporting the development of this platform increased to 46.

IV. Future actions or initiatives to be taken

The UPU will implement a new world postal strategy for 2017-2020. The strategy includes several programs dealing with facilitation of international e-commerce, e-government, digital transformation and stimulating market growth through the use of ICT in-line with WSIS goals. Innovation, Integration and Inclusion are the key strategic themes of the new strategy, and ICT will be a significant enabler.

In 2017, the UPU will continue to encourage countries to modernize their postal networks with ICT and drive innovation to increase the opportunities inclusion and integration of all of society. The UPU expects to receive new requests from countries to be trained in setting up and launching their own e-commerce marketplaces, and secure cloud services for communication, under .POST.

The UPU intends to study policies and regulations to stimulate the use of public assets such as the postal network as a vehicle of inclusion using the ICTs to provide physical, digital and financial services in order to contribute to progressing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

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