

## Delivering innovative, integrated and inclusive development solutions

The postal sector must embrace innovation

15.04.2015 - The UPU's World Strategy Conference has ended with a recognition that the postal sector is a critical actor in delivering solutions that foster inclusion.



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These solutions can help the international community achieve its sustainable development goals.

However, said UPU Director General Bishar A. Hussein, the current postal paradigm must be broken and decision-makers at all levels – government, regulatory and operational – must embrace innovation to ensure the postal sector's future.

“My ambition is for us to deliver together by 2020 a postal world in which our sector's unique ability to include populations, economic actors and territories is fully recognized and exploited by governments, development partners and international organizations,” said Hussein in his concluding remarks.

“We must deliver a postal world where innovation is shared, promoted and driven – not as a luxury, but as a reality for all,” he added.

To achieve this, Hussein called for a “profound transformation” of the UPU by 2020, with quicker and more efficient decision-making processes. “The UPU and Posts must change. The UPU and Posts will change. Together we will move the world,” he said.

Discussions around inclusion and the need to innovate and strengthen collaboration among all members of the global supply chain – postal operators, transporters and customs authorities – dominated the discussions at the UPU’s two-day event in Geneva with more than 750 delegates in attendance.

“Innovation and the integration of networks, products and services are key to building a seamless postal network in line with the changing global environment,” said the director general.

## **E-commerce challenge**

Delegates and speakers highlighted the growth of e-commerce and changing consumer habits as major challenges facing the global postal sector, with some e-tailers acknowledging they were developing their own delivery networks. Postal CEOs recognized e-commerce as an important trade enabler for small and medium-size businesses, but said postal services needed to respond adequately to this growth or risk being left behind.

Hussein said the UPU and its members were hearing the message loud and clear and promised that the organization would build on its existing e-commerce programme to increase the reliability of postal networks, the predictability of service delivery and the transparency of products and services for international customers.

With so much change happening in the areas of mobile technologies, postal financial services, logistics, e-commerce and more, delegates called for a renewed approach to how governments regulate the postal sector. “All of this [change] must be supported by enabling regulation,” noted Hussein.

## **Universal service obligation**

The conference also highlighted the importance of the universal service obligation as an essential infrastructure supporting inclusion objectives. The global postal network of some 663,000 post offices is a key asset in extending social, financial and economic inclusion for citizens and small and medium-size businesses everywhere.

Some 750 delegates representing 135 UPU member countries, including ministers, regulators, postal executives and other postal-sector stakeholders such as leaders of labour unions, trade and migration organizations and representatives of United Nations and other international organizations, attended the Strategy Conference, which was chaired by the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire.

Insights from the conference will feed the process aimed at drafting the UPU’s next world postal strategy to be delivered at the Universal Postal Congress in Istanbul, Turkey, in September 2016.