

Speech by Mr Edouard Dayan, Secretary General

At the opening of the plenary session

Doha, 24 September 2012 at 14.30

Mr Honorary Chairman of Congress,
Mr Chairman of Congress,
Excellencies,
Delegates and Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we open the 25th Universal Postal Congress. It is with great pleasure that I welcome you on behalf of the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union. And on behalf of all member countries, I would like to again thank our hosts in Qatar for their exceptional welcome and their many efforts to ensure that our Congress is a memorable one, and a great success.

Please allow me to express our regrets that Mr Wakrim cannot be with us as Doyen. We wish him a swift recovery.

I would also like to share the sadness and emotion felt by members of the International Bureau following the recent loss of our friend and colleague Jelto Stant. Jelto would have been among us here, and our thoughts are with his family and friends.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Congress opening today is the Congress of a new era for the Universal Postal Union, a new era that we have defined together. Since the 2008 Congress in Geneva, the transformation of the world has gained momentum. The economic and financial crisis has affected all countries, albeit in different ways, either directly or indirectly. The impacts of the crisis have spread to all areas of economic activity and all sectors – and the postal sector is no exception. All countries have had to re-examine their public spending priorities.

The crisis is also affecting international organizations, which are being called on to show their value, while at the same time demonstrating responsibility and professionalism in the management of their resources. The world has changed since Geneva: the crises are no longer just economic but also environmental; security issues and migration are becoming major concerns for countries; the cyber-economy, social networks, and information and communication technologies are now undeniable realities. This means that our context has changed over the past few years, presenting challenges for the postal sector and the UPU.

Our Congress marks the end of a four-year cycle that saw the parameters of the postal sector shift in response to the economic situation, changing consumer and business behaviours, electronic substitution, the growth of new areas of activity such as e-commerce and financial services, and the erosion of mail volumes. These new realities have known no borders and have extended to all postal operators worldwide, regardless of their level of development. There is no doubt about it: Operators that went down the path of diversification, innovation and creativity, and that opened up to

international markets, resisted the effects of the crisis and even experienced growth.

The Universal Postal Union was able to meet these same challenges over the past four years, and this Congress will be an opportunity to discuss what we have accomplished under the strategy adopted at the 2008 Congress. Over the next three weeks, we will be able to assess the progress made. I can already say that we have accomplished a great deal together, and that today our organization is stronger, more efficient, better managed and better equipped for the future – a future that we have anticipated and for which we are prepared. The crisis has presented an opportunity for the UPU to assess whether its strategic choices fit the current reality. There is no doubt that our actions, projects, methods and strategic choices have been relevant and have allowed the UPU to anticipate changes and adapt to them, and thus to support its member countries in this difficult period.

We have all had a share in these accomplishments – the member countries, the International Bureau, and the bodies of the Union. Indeed, I wish to thank those member countries that have not only participated in the UPU bodies but also provided additional resources, without which many projects would not have been possible. With the Chairman of the Council of Administration, Bishar Hussein, and the Chairman of the Postal Operations Council, Andreas Taprantzis, we have formed a unified team, driven by our desire to move forward together.

These joint efforts also included the Chairman of the Consultative Committee, Charles Prescott, who helped pave the way for greater involvement of the private sector and other broader postal sector players in our work and our success. We also cooperated with the UPU's restricted unions and their secretaries general, who served as essential liaisons at the regional level.

Finally, I could not neglect to mention the work accomplished by the staff at the International Bureau, and the cohesive team we formed, along with the Deputy Director General, Mr Huang.

These last four years, coloured as they were by the crisis, emphasized the need for the UPU to be even more proactive, even more open to its environment – to not only keep pace with the everyday reality in your countries, but to help you better understand the present and envision the future.

In this, the UPU cannot act alone. With the UPU a stronger presence than ever in the UN family, and through closer ties with our international partners, we have been able to put in place many projects in the last four years, and have positioned the postal sector at the heart of current issues: trade, economic development, e-commerce, bridging of the digital divide, migratory issues and money transfers, financial inclusion, the environment and sustainable development, security, urbanization and land use – to name just a few. All of these issues will also be at the heart of our discussions and debates over the next three weeks.

Our Congress will therefore be one that is open to the international environment and to public policy issues as they relate to the postal sector. The ministerial conference on 8 October will be an opportunity for policy makers to describe how they view the postal sector and its future, and how Posts can support governments' economic and social development policies. Several heads of international organizations will also be with us to share their vision of the sector and to discuss how it can help them implement their mandate, or, alternatively, how we – the postal sector and the UPU – can benefit from their activities and work more closely with them.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UPU gathered here in Doha has a solid record of activity that allows us to look to the future – a future that will be shaped by the strategy adopted by this Congress. This strategy, or roadmap, is the fruit of two years of cooperation that included the participation of around 170 countries. Those countries expressed their views on what should be the UPU's objectives and projects in the upcoming cycle.

This future strategy is yours. It belongs to you, the member countries, and reflects your expectations of the UPU. It is ambitious and builds on the very positive results that our organization has obtained over the past few years in helping to develop the entire postal sector, taking into account the particular situation of each member. The strategy is also driven by the UPU's major projects, which have enjoyed remarkable successes.

I am thinking here of the quality-of-service monitoring and the GMS project, of the exponential growth of the UPU's electronic network, the development of international postal payment services, the integration of the global supply chain, security, and the inclusion of our natural partners, like customs organizations and carriers. I am also thinking of "dot post", which gives international postal services a secure, integrated online environment, and which has today become a concrete reality.

As well, I could mention the development policy, the regional integration, the training activities, and the emergency assistance programme for countries in difficulty. Finally, the organization's governance, sound finances, professional management, and dynamic communication policy are also assets on our

balance sheet. All these elements will help form the foundation of the next cycle and will become the pillars of our future strategy and actions.

Mr Honorary Chairman of Congress,
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Excellencies,
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Congress that opens today must champion the values of our organization: universality, solidarity and communication among peoples, as stressed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki moon in his message. This Congress embraces the values of the postal community, but also heralds the future: that of a modernized, efficient and solid organization, and of global postal services at the heart of the economy, trade and the information society.