



PAN AFRICAN POST DAY, 18 JANUARY 2021

Theme: THE POST: BUILDING RESILIENCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

MESSAGE BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL

"Inventing management amidst the unforeseen"

Since February 2020, the entire world has been in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, arguably considered by many as the gravest shock our planet has witnessed in decades. In addition to hundreds of thousands of lives lost, the global economy has plunged into its worst recession since the 1930s, characterized by job and income losses, and further aggravated by temporary or permanent shutdowns as well as contraction of activities of businesses for some companies .

Unfortunately, the global postal industry as a whole and Africa's postal sector in particular has not been spared by this downward economic spiral. In a study conducted by the PAPU General Secretariat in June 2020, the impact on the continent's postal industry was comprehensively assessed. The findings were that the postal sector as a whole and designated operators in particular have been faced with a host of challenges that have had a devastating impact on their activities.

More especially, these unforeseen circumstances have led to the closure of airports (both national and international) and land borders, restriction of movement of workers, customers and vehicles, social distancing, health risks for workers, additional costs for providing personal protective equipment (PPE), depletion of resources for funding universal service (with the emergence of new government priorities), a proliferation of public demands for much-needed basic postal services at community level, among many other implications.

This has resulted in low volumes of inbound and outbound items, declining customer traffic at post offices, dwindling sales and revenues, downsized volumes, growing customer queries and complaints, inadequate supply of PPE, just to name a few.

With the uncertainties surrounding COVID-19 pandemic, we can expect the global postal industry in general, and the African postal sector in particular, to continue being quite volatile with no significant growth this year, as the impact of the pandemic, which has spared no one, cannot be taken lightly. Indeed, the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has become an "existential" threat to humans and organizations alike across all continents.

It is therefore imperative for the postal sector, which has been severely tested, to rebuild momentum and take multifaceted approaches to cushion the shock, protect the postal industry, and enhance its capacity to anticipate and manage similar crises in the future.

Fortunately, amidst this unprecedented adversity, Africa's postal sector has displayed its resilience. In the process, we have seen postal workers in several PAPU Member States brave the pandemic at the risk of their very own lives to deliver mail and provide much-needed basic services by building on a broad array of solutions, some more ingenious than others. We wish to seize this opportunity to commend and applaud these brilliant initiatives.

Ladies and gentlemen, fellow postal workers, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how vital a service the Post is for numerous countries in times of crisis.

In this respect, the issue of crisis management must be seen as germane to corporate strategy, because the major crises facing companies today all share the common denominator of testing their capacity for resilience and sustaining the trust bestowed on them by all stakeholders. Managing a company successfully in times of intense difficulty like these involves preparedness for potential catastrophes through crisis management simulation drills. Ultimately, universal service obligations and the imperative of survival dictate that any postal organization worthy of the name must remain in regular business against all odds, or at least, resume operations as soon as possible.

I am therefore urging all postal workers to come up with new management models informed by an ongoing exploration of potential challenges, including appropriate communication plans, to address short-term and unforeseen challenges. This should incorporate the ability of companies to cater for unforeseen immediate and more or less long-lasting challenges to their business models through actions such as management reconfiguration (based on autonomy, responsibility, creativity, cooperation/collaboration, critical thinking, communications, intuition and agility), rethinking strategic, technological, marketing and human orientations with a view to actualizing new paths towards growth and sustainability.

I am confident that with forward-looking or predictive management strategies, we will be able to sail through these unforeseen and turbulent times, because history has shown us and continues to reveal that human beings have always known how to overcome troubles and afflictions of crises by leveraging on collective intelligence, adaptation and innovation. Indeed, every progress achieved by humankind thus far has been nothing but the fruit of contradictions surmounted successfully.

The onus is therefore on Africa's postal sector to muster its forces in order to accelerate the process of organizational transformation in the face of these crises. We must continue to look further afield and envision how the crisis will continue to affect the competitive and economic environment, as well as identify the needs of society in the coming years.

Ultimately, all stakeholders will need to help postal industry companies to become pro-active in the face of the crisis, becoming more agile and resilient, and not just responsive thereby depleting their energy and capabilities when faced with the currently recurrent vagaries and vicissitudes in our environment.

Drawing on the lessons of this pandemic to better anticipate future crises through the concept of feedback based on professional ethos, should be one of our key objectives in rethinking management amidst the unforeseen. In other words, the overarching aim is to develop a full-fledged and multidimensional "Strategic Watch" that incorporates the commercial, competitive, legal, fiscal, economic, financial, scientific, technological, social and societal facets.

On our part, PAPU will continue to play its pivotal role in building **A SINGLE AFRICAN POSTAL TERRITORY** at all times and in all circumstances, as its contribution towards achieving the common and constant aspiration of Africa's people for inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development, a pre-eminent objective of the newly-established *African Continental Free Trade Area*.

With these few remarks, I would like to wish you, once again, a very happy, peaceful and prosperous year 2021, crowned with every success.

Long live Africa!!!
Long live Africa's postal sector!!!

Younouss Djibrine
Secretary General