

PAN AFRICAN POST DAY – 18TH JANUARY 2023

Theme: “The Post: An established promoter of cross-border e-commerce in Africa”



MESSAGE BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL

The PAPU General Secretariat extends New Season’s greetings and heartfelt compliments of the year 2023 to Your Excellencies, Esteemed Leaders, Fellow Members and Valued Partners of Africa’s Postal Fraternity.

As the year commences, I would like to take this opportunity to commend our Member States for the great strides made to incorporate postal development into their national development agendas. Our heartfelt gratitude is also extended to all partner organizations for their invaluable contributions in advancing the greater postal development agenda in our continent. Indeed, these actions are a token of recognition of the Post as a pivotal player of inclusive socioeconomic development by virtue of its extensive network of interconnected post offices delivering accessible, affordable and secure postal logistics, agency services and postal financial services both internationally and nationally, particularly to the unserved or underserved segments of our communities.

Africa’s Postal Leaders set aside PAPU Day each year to commemorate the establishment of its continental flagship organization on 18th January 1980 and celebrate the African Postal Customer around a theme approved by the Union’s Plenipotentiary Conference. Last year, the 42nd edition was held around the theme **“Harnessing synergies with players of the wider postal sector in Africa”**, the 43rd PAPU Day celebration is centered on the theme **“The Post: An established promoter of cross-border e-commerce in Africa”**. This year’s theme is a logical sequel to the 2017 theme: **“The Post: An essential infrastructure for the development of e-commerce in Africa”**.

Indeed, this speaks to the broader agenda of the digital transformation of the traditional Post into the “Smart Post” built on new technologies for holistic and integrated service delivery. The inexorable decline of letter-post volumes and the explosion of e-commerce small packet volumes, and the steady increase in parcel post volumes are confirmations of the trajectory in which the Postal Industry should redirect its efforts, re-capacitate its resources, and re-calibrate its approach in order to re-establish and reposition itself as a logistics giant leveraging its historical capital as a trusted logistics provider. The Post has to seize the opportunities offered by the promising e-commerce markets to boost their revenue sources and firm up on its relevance to the communities it serves. The more than 37,000 postal outlets spread across the continent are an ideal launching ramp for the Post to expand its reach through digitalization and pursuit of “smart post office” status. It is through the accessibility of postal applications and services through the internet and hand-held devices like smart phones, tablets, laptops etc. that the Post can be effective and efficient in service delivery in the Digital Economies that are being created in the Global Village where we all live.

As Africa’s Postal Fraternity, we have taken a number of initiatives aimed at captivating postal actors of our Member States to comply with cross-border e-commerce requirements in line with global and national customs and trade laws. In this respect, the Operational Readiness for E-

Commerce project (abbreviated ORE), sponsored by the Universal Postal Union and executed in partnership with PAPU and interested African Member States is currently in Phase 3. This project was initiated in 2017 to contribute to the development of cross-border e-commerce and has its core objective being that of assisting postal operators' enhancement of their end-to-end delivery performance. In the process, most key stakeholders and the customers get to be provided with greater visibility of their items being conveyed.

The ORE-3 Project that commenced through Workshops conducted during December 2022, is themed "Operational Efficiency and E-Commerce Development" and will be focusing on capacitating postal operators to modernize their operational equipment, tools and processes with a view to meeting the minimum operational requirements in the areas of visibility, data quality, supply chain integration, end-to-end reliability and security. The growing volumes of e-commerce transactions involving movement of parcel post items and small packets across borders brings to the fore the issue of operational efficiency as a top priority for postal operators in repositioning themselves for key roles in the e-commerce ecosystem. Improving last-mile delivery reliability and transactional visibility will go a long way towards building or recovery of consumer trust as well as earning appreciation for good postal service quality.

In today's world, e-commerce has to be considered in the broad sense of end-to-end delivery, since data-driven ecosystems call for our operators to build capacity to use technologies such as Blockchain in order to secure business and customer information. This will require seamless interactions through electronic data interchange with all actors along the supply chain, including carriers, customs, distributors, and customers. Similarly, cross-border e-commerce will equally require Africa's postal operators to interact with their counterparts from other countries via the online tools developed by the UPU's Postal Technology Centre, particularly on the .POST platform viz. IPS, IFS, CDS, and DPS, in order to foster cooperation, enhance their visibility and interconnect them with existing and potential partners or customers. The Post should therefore continue to roll out and deploy more sector-specific technological solutions to ensure that no dimension of postal activity is left behind in building its e-commerce market share.

The booming e-commerce market equally offers an opportunity to reposition philatelic products that tend to have lost momentum with the dwindling volumes of letter-post items. The recently-concluded African Philatelic Conference and Philatelic Exhibition held in Cape Town (South Africa) in partnership with WADP and FIP, redirected the spotlight on philately, not as a heritage activity to be henceforth relegated to the collectibles industry, but as a potential huge-revenue earner for the Post through online and cross border e-sales. The Conference presentations and discussions, plus the philatelic exhibitions also highlighted the role of philately as an instrument for the dissemination of national and international history as well as builder of sentiments of national and global citizenship.

In order to advance our common agenda on cross-border e-commerce, PAPU is actively engaged with the UPU and other partners to continue facilitating capacity building, technical assistance and institutional support for achieving country-specific performance and compliance to operational and technical standards. The year 2023 is an activity-packed year for PAPU, both on the continental and global fronts, with some of the highlights being the PAPU House inauguration (Arusha), participation at the Extraordinary UPU Congress (Saudi Arabia), 41st Ordinary Session of PAPU Administrative Council (Madagascar) alongside the international training workshops programmed for the year, starting with the EAD/CDS training workshop scheduled to take place in Zanzibar (Tanzania) from 21st to 23rd February 2023. Therefore, informed by the common value proposition of positioning the Post as the preferred promoter of cross-border e-commerce in Africa, all postal

players are called upon to use every capacity-building opportunity offered to expose their employees to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to pursue our historical role as pivotal players of inclusive socioeconomic development for the benefit of the citizenry of our beloved continent.

The dawn of a new year offers an opportunity to take stock of the journey travelled so far and to set new and even more ambitious targets. In building our ranks to take on the challenges ahead, it is our hope that 2023 will also witness the entry of new Member States into the PAPU Family as a culmination of the well-advanced and promising engagements the General Secretariat has been having with them. The more Members we have, the stronger our network collaboration will get and the further we can go in achieving our individual and shared aspirations.

At this juncture, I would like to once again wish Africa's Postal Fraternity, and all our valued partners and stakeholders, a happy, prosperous and highly fruitful year 2023. Together, let's establish the Post as the preferred partner of cross-border e-commerce in Africa!

Long live the Pan African Postal Union
Long live Africa's Postal Fraternity!
Long live Africa Solidarity!