

25th CONGRESS

Report on the activities of the Council of Administration 2008–2012

3.2.3 Sustainable Development Project Group

I. The UPU and sustainable development 2009–2012 – Mandate and means of action

165 The UPU is seeking to raise the awareness of its member countries and their designated operators of the need to introduce, or give impetus to, strategies incorporating the three pillars of sustainable development (environment, economy, and social/societal issues), in order to ensure the social responsibility of the postal sector.

166 To that end, the 24th UPU Congress adopted recommendation C 27/2008 (Initiatives for the sustainable reduction of the negative environmental impact of the postal sector), through which it encouraged postal operators to reduce the negative environmental impact of their activities, as well as resolution C 34/2008 (Work on sustainable development), which set out the objectives of promoting sustainable development and social responsibility in the postal sector by conducting campaigns to raise awareness of environmental issues, developing actions to encourage social dialogue, and advocating the adoption of ethical operating practices.

167 The Sustainable Development Project Group and the UPU International Bureau (Environment and Sustainable Development Programme) were tasked with taking the necessary measures to achieve those objectives. A sustainable development fund was set up to carry out the related activities, with Japan

providing 700,000 CHF and France 130,000 CHF. Most of the money has been used to finance staff costs for running the programme, regional conferences on sustainable development and the study on carbon offsetting.

168 The International Bureau, as part of the mission assigned to it, created a network of national sustainable development correspondents, comprising over 160 member countries. This network is the principal channel of communication between the International Bureau, the Sustainable Development Project Group and the postal operators. Members of the network are regularly asked to provide input through questionnaires and are kept informed through contacts with the IB's sustainable development team.

169 In addition, the UPU organizes regional conferences and seminars to raise awareness of postal sector players on the environmental impact of their decisions, and to help them integrate sustainable development and its three pillars into their strategies as a driver of performance. In 2009, in cooperation with La Poste (France) and the Asian-Pacific Postal Union, the UPU held a seminar in Thailand. In the light of the success of this initial seminar, the UPU organized another one in 2010 with the Postal Union of the Americas, Spain and Portugal, and in 2011 with the African Postal Union. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNI Global Union have also collaborated in these activities.

170 The UPU uses the network of national correspondents and the regional seminars to encourage member countries and their designated operators to implement the 20 priority actions for the postal sector annexed to the definition of sustainable development adopted by the Postal Operations Council in 2007. It also conducts studies on the implementation of those priority actions, which relate to the three pillars of sustainable development.

171 In addition, the UPU disseminates information about best practices through:

- a sustainable development section on the UPU website (www.upu.int/en/activities/sustainable-development/about-sustainable-development.html);
- a quarterly newsletter published on the Internet.

J. The UPU and environmental protection

172 Since 2009, the UPU has expanded its efforts to make the postal sector more environmentally friendly. To that end, it has continually encouraged postal operators to adopt policies to protect the environment and fight climate change, since the means and resources used by Posts to transport, process and deliver mail have a direct impact on the environment.

173 Reducing the negative environmental impact of the postal sector is therefore a top priority. On the basis of the mandate assigned by the 24th UPU Congress, the IB created the greenhouse gas global overview and mitigation project in 2009. The purpose of the project is to measure and reduce the postal sector's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the IB carried out the first two inventories of the sector's emissions. The inventories established that designated operators of UPU member countries were responsible for at least 54 million tonnes of CO₂e each year (related to their vehicle fleets and buildings). A third inventory, broader and more detailed, was launched in 2011.

174 Through tools created by the International Bureau and the use of an internationally recognized methodology, the IB has enabled designated operators of over 120 member countries to ascertain the carbon footprint of their postal activities. Measuring this impact is an essential first step. The IB is working to make this service available to all member countries.

175 Moreover, the International Bureau has developed a number of tools for Union member countries, including:

- two guides on the measurement of greenhouse gas emissions;
- a compendium of Posts' best environmental practices;
- communication kits and training on the issue of carbon offsetting.

176 The UPU also launched a study on the implementation of a sector-wide carbon offset system, the latest provisional results of which were presented to the 2012 CA.

177 Through its Sustainable Development Project Group, the UPU fosters the exchange of information and best practices in the area of environmental protection, for example, by promoting alternative vehicles or giving presentations on "passive" (energy-efficient) buildings. Moreover, it coordinates the involvement of experts (from UNEP, in particular), who help make the sector more environmentally friendly.

178 The UPU has also worked with its restricted unions. In particular, it exchanges information with PostEurop on the environmental impact of Posts. It is also working with International Post Corporation in this same area.

179 To benefit from the expertise of its partners and promote its actions, the UPU has increased its involvement within the United Nations, participating in a number of discussions and working groups on environmental issues:

- UN Environment Management Group, to prepare for the meetings of the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination.
- High-level Committee on Programmes Working Group on Climate Change, for the organization of international conferences such as COP15/COP17 and Rio+20.
- Issue Management Group on Sustainability Management, for the IB's carbon inventory and the preparation of the related emissions reduction strategy.
- International Civil Aviation Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, World Trade Organization, World Meteorological Organization and United Nations Environment Programme.

180 The Union has raised the awareness of its stakeholders (postal customers, member countries, operators, partners) on the issue of climate change by participating in two worldwide campaigns. The first involved printing the slogan "UNite to Combat Climate Change" on over 10 million international reply coupons in circulation between 2009 and 2013, to raise awareness among the general public. The second was the UN "Seal the Deal" campaign, launched to urge negotiators to sign a global climate agreement.

181 Finally, to set an example, the International Bureau decided to become a showcase for sustainable development. Numerous measures have been taken to reach the objective of a 20% reduction in emissions by 2012. These efforts have been praised by UNEP, which identified the actions taken by the UPU as an example to follow at the UN Climate Change Conference in 2009 (COP15 – Copenhagen). The UPU participated in that conference.

K. Economic and social/societal pillars of sustainable development

182 The campaign to raise awareness of how HIV/AIDS is spread was officially launched in Geneva on 7 July 2009. This campaign, initiated by the UPU, is being conducted in cooperation with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the ILO, and UNI Global Union. Around 20 countries have joined the campaign or announced their participation.

183 This awareness campaign has three phases:

- Phase 1 aims to raise the awareness of post office customers. Seven pilot countries participated in this phase.
- Phase 2 involves raising the awareness of postal workers. The ILO, in cooperation with the various campaign partners, has developed an educational tool for postal employees. Tests are under way, with the official launch of this phase in the first half of 2012.
- Phase 3 involved inviting designated operators of Union member countries to include in their 2011 philatelic programme a stamp or series of stamps to mark the 30th anniversary of the fight against AIDS. Some 20 countries issued commemorative stamps.

184 The UPU also volunteered to serve as a pilot organization for tests related to the Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work adopted by the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination in 2007. A report was prepared with the help of the ILO, and relevant tools were shared through the ILO's

interactive platform. The ILO and the UPU then agreed to develop an action plan and to cooperate in its implementation.

185 A workshop with representatives of both organizations was held at UPU headquarters in September 2009 for the purpose of developing the action plan. The workshop also aimed to familiarize the participants with the concept of decent work and some of the related themes, namely, gender equality, staff training, HIV/AIDS in the workplace and social dialogue. These issues were identified as responsibilities of the UPU.

186 During that workshop, it was agreed that all future actions should build upon existing activities, to increase the results in terms of employment and decent work. The following action plan was defined:

- Develop online training on decent work, and in particular on social dialogue, employee health, HIV/AIDS, gender equality and staff training.
- Develop training material on HIV/AIDS in the workplace.
- Continue to organize seminars on sustainable development.
- Continue participating in regional seminars on social dialogue.
- Put the UPU's network of national sustainable development correspondents into contact with ILO employees based in the corresponding countries.

187 As part of the Sustainable Development Project Group's work programme, the International Bureau, in cooperation with France, has been conducting studies on the implementation of the 20 priority actions for the postal sector. These studies revealed significant progress in two main areas between 2008 and 2010. In particular, they demonstrated an increase in the importance of sustainable development for staff, and greater staff involvement in activities related to sustainable development. The results of the 2010 study are described in document CA C 2 SDPG 2011.1–Doc 11.

188 Given the results of the studies conducted, the project group felt that it was necessary to continue studying the progress made, including the changes in behaviour, in implementing the 20 priority actions.

189 Furthermore, in the last study, only two in ten designated operators said they had adopted a green procurement policy. To help designated operators in this area, the Environment and Sustainable Development Programme identified the best environmental practices, including those in the area of green procurement. A UNEP training tool was posted on the UPU website to help train staff responsible for procurement. This training was given to IB staff as part of activities aimed at making the organization a showcase for sustainable development. The IB also analyzed the role the UPU could play in encouraging designated operators to adopt environmentally and socially responsible procurement policies, and prepared a draft Congress resolution on the subject.

190 All these actions and projects have enabled the postal sector to be a player in the new "green economy". They have also made it possible to improve the sustainability of postal operations. This work should thus be continued and even expanded over the next few years.

L. Conclusion

191 Sustainable development has become an essential element of postal development. To guarantee the quality and sustainability of postal operations, it is necessary to take economic, environmental and social/ societal factors into consideration. To that end, the work on sustainable development must be carried forward, with a view to continuing the activities to implement the actions adopted.