

**MINISTER JOSEPHINE TEO'S STATEMENT AT UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION  
(UPU) MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE IN ABIDJAN, 10 AUG 2021**

Excellencies, delegates of the 27<sup>th</sup> UPU Congress. A very good day to everyone in Abidjan, and colleagues around the world. Thank you to our gracious hosts, Côte d'Ivoire, for your kind hospitality and thoughtful arrangements.

The last 18 months have been challenging for everyone. Many countries are still fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. International cooperation has become even more important. We must work together to bring the virus under control. Until then, the conditions for recovery remain shaky.

We all wish to get back onto the path of open and inclusive growth for our people. This will be difficult. But it can be made easier with the support of the United Nations agencies, including that of the UPU.

The UPU leadership has been working tirelessly to steer the global postal sector through major disruptions to its operating context. Even before COVID-19, it was clear business that could not go on as usual. The trend was obvious and irreversible - letter mail was declining and parcel volumes were rising. Consumers have higher expectations. They want more speed and reliability, with the same affordability.

But there are also valuable opportunities provided through digital transformation. Consumers themselves are going digital. Postal operators need to re-think their business and overhaul their services end-to-end. Regulators, too, must not stand still.

There is nothing like a crisis to spur action. When COVID-19 struck Singapore, our postal regulator, the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) worked closely with our designated operator, SingPost, to review service delivery.

Registered mail delivery became contactless. SingPost developed a mobile app that gave customers 24/7 tracking capabilities. Technology was used to overcome manpower and operational constraints.

As a result, there were no major disruptions to public postal services. Standards were upheld. We did this while ensuring postal workers and the public were protected through public-health and safety measures. Importantly too, changes like contactless delivery solutions and on-demand mail tracking services are here to stay.



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During this period, the Singapore Government also pushed ahead with the plan for a nationwide parcel locker network, to better manage the surge in e-commerce and parcel volumes. This network serves as public infrastructure for last-mile delivery of parcels to be more efficient and sustainable.

Singapore is happy to share our experiences as we continue to transform our postal sector. In addition, we firmly believe cohesive efforts at the global level are critical, through the UPU and its network of 192 members.

I am therefore heartened to note that despite being unable to meet physically, the Council of Administration, the Postal Operations Council, and other UPU working groups have continued to hold virtual discussions.

Singapore is also glad to have made contributions as the co-chair of the Remuneration Working Group. In the lead-up to the Congress, our facilitation helped member countries reach consensus on many complex proposals. Earlier this year, Singapore was also honoured to be elected to the UPU Express Mail Services Board to help member countries ensure high-quality and competitive express mail services worldwide.

Since the mid-1990s, we have been part of the governing board of the Asia Pacific Post cooperative, supporting the efforts of member countries in the region to improve the quality of services and develop new business opportunities. We have conducted workshops and courses, and hosted study trips by postal operators.

Singapore remains strongly committed to the vision and the work of the UPU. For this reason, we are seeking re-election to the Postal Operations Council, where we have enjoyed the strong support and camaraderie of colleagues. Should we have the honour to be re-elected, it would be a privilege to help advance the UPU's goal of a more inclusive and representative Union, that helps the postal sector transform for a brighter future.

This year's Congress comes at a critical juncture in our global efforts to fight the pandemic. We have an interest to help one another recover and grow again. Since 1874, the UPU has overcome many challenges. Your mission to facilitate global communication between the citizens of the world through efficient, accessible, and quality postal services remains as relevant as when you were first established.

Singapore reaffirms our commitment to support the UPU's mission to pave the way forward. Thank you, and I wish everyone a fruitful Congress.