

H. The Universal Postal Union (UPU)

The Postal Union was founded in 1874 by the first International Postal Congress held at Berne, before which international exchanges of mail had been regulated by numerous special agreements concluded between countries or groups of countries.

This first International Postal Treaty which entered into force in July 1875 considerably changed and simplified the existing state of affairs. It declared that the countries concluding the Treaty formed a single postal territory for the reciprocal exchange of mail between their post offices. For well-defined classes of mail (such as letters, postcards and printed matter) addressed to any part of the territory of the General Postal Union, each country was to charge uniform rates and all apportionment of charges between sender and receiver countries was abolished. Freedom of transit was guaranteed throughout the territory of the Union.

A congress of plenipotentiaries of the participating countries was to meet periodically with

a view to perfecting the machinery of the Union, introducing necessary improvements, and discussing matters of common interest. Twelve such congresses met up to the end of 1950.

In addition, several conferences or committees of representatives of postal administrations met, under the Union's auspices, to examine and discuss special technical questions referred to them by congresses or to prepare for congresses.

Provisions for the admission of new members were eased by the Paris Congress of 1878, which laid down that countries would be admitted to membership at their request without prior consultation among members being required. The name of the Union was changed from General Postal Union to Universal Postal Union.

On 1 July 1948 the Universal Postal Convention as revised by the Paris Congress in 1947

¹ For further information concerning UPU, see *L'Union postale universelle: Sa fondation et son développement, 1874-1949. Mémoire* (Berne: Bureau international de l'Union, 1950); reports of UPU to the United Nations and previous issues of the Yearbook.

entered into force. This Congress introduced a new article into the Convention providing that the Union would be brought into relationship with the United Nations in accordance with the terms of an Agreement, the text of which was annexed to the Convention.² As a result of this Agreement, and because of circumstances arising from the Second World War, the article relating to accession to the Convention was modified. Under the new terms, the Swiss Government has been required, since 1 July 1948, to submit each new request for admission to the members of the Union, and the country concerned is considered admitted only if its request is approved by at least two thirds of the members constituting the Union.

1. Purposes and Functions

The aim of the Union was laid down in article I of the Berne Treaty mentioned above. The terms of this article have been substantially maintained throughout the successive revisions which have taken place. They are as follows:

"The countries between which the present Convention is concluded form, under the title of the Universal Postal Union, a single postal territory for the reciprocal exchange of correspondence."

The Stockholm Congress of 1924 added the following sentence:

"It is also the aim of the Postal Union to provide for the organisation and improvement of the various international postal services."

The Paris Congress in 1947 further added to this sentence the words "and to promote the development of international collaboration in this sphere."

The functions of the Union are determined by the Acts drawn up by the Congresses. These Acts comprise:

(1) a main Convention laying down (a) the statute of the Union and (b) provisions governing the letter-post, which includes letters, postcards, printed matter, samples, commercial papers, small parcels and phonopost articles (e.g., phonograph records);

(2) seven accessory agreements covering insured letters and boxes, parcel post, cash-on-delivery articles, money orders, debt collection, transfers to and from postal cheque accounts and subscriptions to newspapers and periodicals. (Special provisions annexed to the main Convention and the parcel post agreement govern the optional transport of these articles by air. Similarly, a supplement to the money order agreement regulates the optional exchange of travellers' orders.)

Accession to the main Convention is obligatory for all members, but accession to the other agreements is optional. The performance of cer-

tain special services referred to in the Convention is therefore limited to arrangements between countries which have agreed to undertake them. The provisions of these Acts of the Union acquire the status of law in each country which ratifies them, and it is therefore the responsibility of each party to the Convention or to one of the agreements to ensure the application of the respective provisions. Each of these Acts is accompanied by executive regulations, which have also been adopted by the Congress but signed by representatives in the name of their respective postal administrations and not, as in the case of the Convention and the agreements, in their capacity as plenipotentiaries of their governments.

2. Organization

UPU is composed of the Universal Postal Congress, the Executive and Liaison Committee, and the International Bureau of the UPU. Special sessions of the Congress may be called at the request of two thirds of the members of the Union. Committees of a temporary character may be established by the Congress to study particular questions.

The Universal Postal Congress meets at the latest within five years from the date of entry into force of the Acts of the preceding Congress in order to revise these Acts or to complete them, if necessary. Each member is represented at the Congress by one or more plenipotentiary representatives, who are given the necessary powers by their governments. A member may also be represented by the delegation of another member, although no delegation may represent more than one country other than its own. Each member has one vote in the Congress. Every Congress fixes the place of meeting of the following Congress, which is convened, after consultation with the International Bureau, by the government of the country in which it is to meet. This government is also responsible for notifying all other members of the Union of the decisions taken by the Congress.

The Executive and Liaison Committee is composed of nineteen member States elected by the Congress to function during the period between Congresses. At least half of the members of the Committee must be re-elected at each Congress,

² For texts of the Universal Postal Convention of Paris, 1947, the Final Protocol of the Convention and the Agreement between the United Nations and UPU, see Y.U.N., 1947-48, pp. 893-908.

but no country can be elected by three successive Congresses. The Committee normally holds one session a year; its seat is at Berne. Its functions include:

(1) the maintenance of close relations with members of the Union, with a view to improving the international postal service;

(2) the study of technical questions affecting that service and the transmission of the results of such studies to the members of the Union;

(3) the establishment and maintenance of working relations with the United Nations, specialized agencies and other international organizations;

(4) the control of activities of the International Bureau.

The Committee elects from among its own members its President and four Vice-Presidents, and appoints, on the recommendation of the Swiss Government, the Director and other top-ranking personnel of the International Bureau.

The International Bureau of the UPU, operating at Berne under the supervision of the Swiss Supervisory Authority, serves as the organ of liaison, information and consultation for members of the Union. In particular, it:

(1) assembles, publishes and distributes information of all kinds which administrations have to communicate to one another in order to carry on the various international postal services;

(2) gives opinions, at the request of the interested parties, on questions in dispute;

(3) notifies members of requests for amendments to the Acts of the Congress and of changes adopted;

(4) makes the necessary preparations for congresses and conferences; and

(5) in general, undertakes studies, consultations and other matters as requested by members of the Union.

The Bureau also serves postal administrations as a clearing house for the settlement of postal accounts, especially those relating to transit payments and reply coupons.

3. Activities during 1951

The membership of UPU increased to 92, excluding Germany, which is temporarily prevented from adhering to the Convention and the Agreements of the Union, with the deposit by Cambodia and Vietnam of their instruments of accession to the Universal Postal Convention.

During 1951 the Union continued to pursue its aim of providing for the organization and improvement of the various international postal services and promoting the development of international collaboration in this sphere.

The Executive and Liaison Committee held its fifth session at St. Gallen, Switzerland, from 21 May-1 June. Other meetings held during the year were: the second plenary meeting of the Technical Transit Committee, at Pontresina, Switzerland, from 6-15 June; the Joint Conference between UPU and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) at Cairo from 22 January-5 February; the first meeting of the IATA-UPU Liaison Committee, at Cheltenham, England, from 18-21 September; and two meetings of the Sub-Committee on Postal Parcels, at Pontresina in June and at Cheltenham in September.

UPU devoted much attention during the year to problems of airmail.

The Joint Conference between representatives of UPU and the IATA was held in order to study the question of air transportation rates and bring together the points of view of the postal administrations and the air transport companies on other airmail questions.

This Conference considered in particular the question of transportation rates, on which UPU pressed for a general reduction. One of the subjects which received much discussion was that of "gateways" (which involves shifting mail from one service to another over a given route to produce a lower average transportation charge). This system was opposed by the air companies, but a number of administrations wished to retain it. Some concessions were made by the air companies, and a resolution was adopted by which members of IATA would be recommended to adopt the following rates for air carriage of mail: (1) Category B routes: a maximum of 6 gold francs per ton-kilometre; (2) Category A routes: a maximum of 3 gold francs per ton-kilometre; (3) where a combination of A and B rates is in force ("gateways") either an application of a single basic rate of 5.25 gold francs per ton-kilometre, in no case to be combined with another rate, or the maintenance of the existing combination of A and B rates of 3 and 6 gold francs per ton-kilometre. It was understood that postal administrations would no longer claim any extension of Category A rates. AO mail (articles other than letters, cards, postal orders and collections) and newspapers would remain at present rates (1.50 and 1 gold franc per ton-kilometre respectively), while parcel post would be reduced from 1.50 to 1.25. IATA agreed to reduce the rate of 5.25 to 5 gold francs per ton-kilometre as soon as a sufficient number

of postal administrations had abandoned the system of rate combinations. The agreement was to be valid until 1 July 1953.

The Conference suggested that it should be proposed to the UPU Congress to be held in Brussels in 1952 that the existing categories A and B be eliminated, and that two new categories with different rates for non-surcharged mail and surcharged mail be established.

The Conference also expressed its desire for the creation of an IATA/UPU liaison committee.

The decisions taken by the Joint Conference were considered by the Executive and Liaison Committee at its session in May-June. The Committee adopted a definition of "gateway" which it invited IATA to accept. It was defined as "a combination of A and B rates for mail dispatched from or to a point on a category A route carried by an international airline and generally in the same aircraft. The term also applies to mail carried by one or more inter-continental airlines using category A service for one stage in between two stages where category B service is used."

As recommended by the Conference, the Committee established an IATA/UPU Liaison Committee to consider the establishment of a new system for paying the airlines and to consider the standardization of distances. A working group also studied the question of the payment of carriage charges in the case of the destruction of the mail and the question of air carriage of insured mail.

A first meeting of the IATA/UPU Liaison Committee was held at Cheltenham, England, from 18-21 September. It discussed the organization of future air mail, the unification of kilometeric distances between airports, transport by airplane of insured consignments, payment of transport charges in case of the destruction of the plane, free transport of collector bags, regulation of charges between the postal administrations and the air companies, and the application of the single basic rates adopted by the Joint Conference at Cairo.

In addition to air mail problems, various other questions were considered by the Executive and Liaison Committee.

On the basis of a referendum taken among the administrations of the Union, as decided by the Committee in 1950,³ the Director of the International Bureau had invited Nationalist China to be represented. The Committee adopted a resolution, by 10 votes to 6, with 3 abstentions, in which it decided, in deference to the

opinion expressed by the majority of the members of the Union, to abide purely and simply by the results of the referendum.

The Committee was also concerned with the revision of the texts of the Convention and the Agreements for submission to the Brussels Congress in 1952. In particular it considered the revision of the texts of the Paris Convention and the Parcel Post Agreement, and methods to simplify the international exchange of postal parcels, and the bringing into harmony, in so far as exemption from postal charges is concerned, of the Acts of UPU and those of the Geneva conventions for the protection of prisoners of war.

The Committee also examined various suggestions put forward by different administrations of the Union. It considered various questions concerning relations with the United Nations, and dealt with a number of internal questions such as the publication of new brochures on technical postal subjects, the completion of the general catalogue of information of all kinds concerning postal matters and documents obtainable on loan, the development of the film library of the International Bureau, the introduction, by UPU, of the universal decimal classification, the approval of the Bureau's report of activities for 1950, and internal organization.

The Technical Transit Committee, meeting in June, was principally concerned with examining the most equitable bases for fixing territorial and maritime transit payments.

On the basis of the work of its study group which met at Axenstein, Switzerland, in September 1950, it considered all the rates of payment, postal and commercial, communicated by the administrations in reply to a questionnaire sent to them. It used these as a basis for calculating the curves of world mean rates weighted by taking account of the two factors involved, length of distance and weight of mail; on the basis of these curves it drew up draft schedules. In view of increases in prices, however, the Committee asked the International Bureau to approach the administrations which had replied to the questionnaire and to compute new curves and corresponding schedules in the light of any changes which had occurred in postal expenses and transport charges. These would be submitted to the Congress to be held in Brussels in 1952. The Committee also examined subsidiary ques-

³ See Y.U.N., 1950, p. 968.

tions relating to transit, as well as certain proposals concerning transit which were referred to it either by the Paris Congress or by the Executive and Liaison Committee. Following the Committee's studies, the Brussels Congress will have at its disposal all the material necessary to elaborate a permanent system for the regulation of transit charges.

The Sub-Committee on Postal Parcels, which was established by the Executive and Liaison Committee in 1950, met in June and September and revised the agreement concerning postal parcels and agreed in principle to the incorporation of air mail provisions for postal parcels in the main Parcels Agreement. It also discussed various suggestions aimed at enabling as many non-signatory countries as possible to adhere to the provisions of Acts concerning postal parcels but was not able to resolve the difficulties involved.

The International Bureau of UPU, in accordance with article 26 of the Universal Postal Convention, continued to serve as an organ of liaison, information and consultation to the countries of the Union. Thus, in 1951, it published and sent to administrations 313 circulars, 123 bulletins, 40 circular letters, 4,520,300 international reply coupons, 745,425 postal identity cards, 6,900 postal travel vouchers, 700 proposals for modification of the Acts of the Union submitted by the administrations for examination at the Brussels Congress. It also edited or re-edited and transmitted to the administrations the following compilations, lists, documents, etc.: report of the 1951 session of the Executive and Liaison Committee, a detailed general account of transit charges for 1950; a general clearing account of international reply coupons for 1950; report of the activities of the International Bureau for 1951; a list of heads of postal administrations and senior officials; equivalents in national currencies of the charges and dues given in gold francs in the Convention and the Agreements; lower rates charged in restricted unions or under special agreements; official collection of general data on the application of the 1947 Convention and its detailed regulations; list of names of countries, colonies, territories, etc., of the world, with their geographical situation; list of steamship lines; directory of post offices; complete statistics of postal services in 1949; statistics of the outward traffic in the international postal service; general list of information concerning air mail services; time-tables and latest arrival times for airplanes; second report of the Tech-

nical Transit Committee; revised texts of the Acts of Paris concerning postal parcels. It also continued to issue its review *L'Union Postale* and published five technical postal service studies.

The Bureau also distributed during the year a total of 828,648 postage stamps and printed and embossed stamps.

4. Budget

Each Congress fixes the maximum figure for the ordinary annual expenses of the International Bureau. These expenses, as well as extraordinary charges resulting from sessions of the Congress, conferences or committees, and the charges which arise from special work entrusted to the Bureau, are met in common by all the members of the Union. These are divided, for this purpose, into seven classes, of which each contributes to the expenditures in the following proportion:

First class:	25 units
Second class:	20 units
Third class:	15 units
Fourth class:	10 units
Fifth class:	5 units
Sixth class:	3 units
Seventh class:	1 unit

In case of a new accession to the Convention, the Government of the Swiss Confederation determines, in agreement with the government of the member concerned, the class to which it will belong from the point of view of contributing to the expenses of the Bureau.

Pursuant to the decision of the Paris Congress of 1947, the annual ordinary expenses of the International Bureau must not exceed 500,000 gold francs (equivalent to approximately 714,826 Swiss francs), and those of the Executive and Liaison Committee 100,000 gold francs (equivalent to approximately 142,857 Swiss francs). To these sums must be added the expenses resulting from the special work assigned to the Bureau.

The Swiss Administration supervises the expenses of the International Bureau and advances the necessary funds. These sums must be repaid by the debtor administrations as quickly as possible and at the latest before the end of the year on which the account is rendered. If this time is exceeded, the sums due are charged interest at the rate of 5 per cent per year, from the date of the expiration of the period.

As of 31 December 1951, countries were classified as follows for the apportionment of contributions:

1st class: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, India, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Pakistan, Spain, Union of South Africa, USSR, United Kingdom, United States

2nd class: None

3rd class: Algeria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, French Overseas Territories and Territories administered as such, Indochina, Mexico, Netherlands, Indonesia, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukrainian SSR, United Kingdom Overseas Colonies Protectorates and Territories under Trusteeship, United States Possessions, Yugoslavia

4th class: Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Korea, Norway, Portugal, Portuguese Colonies in West Africa, Portuguese Colonies in East Africa Asia and Oceania

5th class: Austria, Bulgaria, Byelorussian SSR, Ceylon, Chile, Colombia, French Morocco, Greece, Iran, Peru, Spanish Morocco, Tunisia

6th class: Afghanistan, Albania, Bolivia, Burma, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Israel, Luxembourg, Netherlands Antilles and Surinam, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Thailand, Uruguay, Venezuela, Vietnam

7th class: Belgian Congo, Cambodia, Iceland, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Philippines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Spanish Colonies, Syria, Vatican City, Yemen

Contributory shares covering the ordinary and extraordinary expenses for the year 1951 were fixed as follows:

CLASS OF CONTRIBUTION	CONTRIBUTORY SHARES	
	(gold francs)	(Swiss francs)
1st class: 25 units	26,530.00	37,900.00
2nd class: 20 units	21,224.00	30,320.00
3rd class: 15 units	15,918.00	22,740.00
4th class: 10 units	10,612.00	15,160.00
5th class: 5 units	5,306.00	7,580.00
6th class: 3 units	3,183.60	4,548.00
7th class: 1 unit	1,061.20	1,516.00

Receipts and expenditures for the year 1951 may be summarized as follows:

RECEIPTS

	Swiss francs
Ordinary:	
Sale of documents and other receipts	58,699.77
Extraordinary:	
New directory of post offices, advance sale	49,660.60
Contributions from members (including surplus of contributions for 1950)	1,407,183.17
TOTAL RECEIPTS	1,515,543.54

EXPENDITURE

Ordinary:	
Personnel	471,722.75
Premises	24,774.04
Supplies	196,321.89
Miscellaneous	2,426.52
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Expenses of the Executive and Liaison Committee	142,267.41
Surplus of contributions for 1951 (to be added to the receipts for 1952)	775.39
Special payment to the Pensions Fund	78,665.33
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TOTAL ORDINARY EXPENDITURE	916,953.33
Extraordinary:	
Special work	496,824.36
Brussels Congress	32,250.15
Technical Transit Committee	69,365.70
Advertising of new directory of post offices	150.00
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TOTAL EXTRAORDINARY EXPENDITURE	598,590.21
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TOTAL OF ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY EXPENDITURE	1,515,543.54

ANNEX. MEMBERS, OFFICERS AND HEADQUARTERS

(As of 31 December 1951)

A. MEMBERS OF UPU*

Afghanistan	Cambodia ⁶	El Salvador	French Morocco ⁵
Albania ⁵	Canada ⁵	Ethiopia	French Overseas Territories
Algeria	Ceylon	Finland ⁵	and Territories admin-
Argentina	Chile ⁵	France ⁵	istered as such ⁵
Australia ⁵	China ⁵		
Austria ⁵	Colombia		
Belgium ⁵	Costa Rica		
Belgian Congo ⁵	Cuba		
Bolivia	Czechoslovakia ⁵		
Brazil	Denmark ⁵		
Bulgaria ⁵	Dominican Republic		
Burma	Ecuador		
Byelorussian SSR ⁵	Egypt ⁵		

⁴ The nomenclature in use by UPU, as translated from the French, has been used to designate members. This, in some cases, differs from the official nomenclature of the United Nations.

⁵ These members had deposited their instruments of ratification of the Universal Postal Convention by 31 December 1951.

⁶ These members had deposited their instruments of accession to the Universal Postal Convention in 1951.

Germany ⁷	Portugal ⁵
Greece	Portuguese Colonies of West Africa
Guatemala	Portuguese Colonies of East Africa, Asia and Oceania
Haiti	Romania ⁵
Honduras	San Marino ⁵
Hungary ⁵	Saudi Arabia
Iceland ⁵	Spain
India ⁵	Spanish Colonies
Indochina	Spanish Morocco
Indonesia ⁵	Sweden ⁵
Iran	Switzerland ⁵
Iraq	Thailand
Ireland ⁵	Tunisia ⁵
Israel	Turkey ⁵
Italy ⁵	Ukrainian SSR ⁵
Japan	Union of South Africa ⁵
Jordan	USSR ⁵
Korea, Rep. of	United Kingdom ⁵
Lebanon ⁵	United Kingdom Overseas Colonies, Protectorates and Territories under Trusteeship ⁵
Liberia	United States ⁵
Luxembourg ⁵	United States Possessions
Mexico ⁵	Uruguay
Netherlands ⁵	Vatican City
Netherlands Antilles and Surinam ⁵	Venezuela ⁵
New Zealand ⁵	Vietnam ⁵
Nicaragua	Yemen
Norway ⁵	Yugoslavia ⁵
Pakistan	
Panama	
Paraguay	
Peru ⁵	
Philippines ⁵	
Poland ⁶	

B. MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND LIAISON COMMITTEE

Argentina	Netherlands
Australia	Portugal
Brazil	Sweden
China	Switzerland
Colombia	Turkey
Czechoslovakia	USSR
Egypt	United Kingdom
France	United States
India	Yugoslavia
Mexico	

C. MEMBERS OF THE TECHNICAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE

Argentina	Peru
Canada	Poland
China	Portugal
Denmark	Union of South Africa
Egypt	USSR
France	United Kingdom
India	United States
Italy	Yugoslavia
Netherlands	

D. OFFICERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND LIAISON COMMITTEE

President:

France (Joseph-Jean Le Mouël)

Vice-Presidents:

United Kingdom	Brazil
USSR	China

Secretary-General:

Fritz Hess (Switzerland), Director of the International Bureau

E. OFFICERS OF THE TECHNICAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE

President:

Sir David Lidbury (United Kingdom)

Secretary:

F. Deprez (Switzerland), Counsellor of the International Bureau

F. OFFICERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF UPU

Director:

Fritz Hess (Switzerland)

Vice-Director:

Fulke R. Radice (United Kingdom)

Counsellors:

F. Deprez (Switzerland)
A. Guillaume (France)
E. Kem (Switzerland)

First-Class Secretaries:

A. Vuilleumier (Switzerland)
M. Rahi (Egypt)
W. Schlaefli (Switzerland)

G. HEADQUARTERS

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⁵ These members had deposited their instruments of ratification of the Universal Postal Convention by 31 December 1951.

⁶ These members had deposited their instruments of accession to the Universal Postal Convention in 1951.

⁷ Germany is temporarily prevented from adhering to the Convention and the Agreements of the Union by virtue of Art. XVII of the Final Protocol of the Universal Postal Convention.