



## **TurkmenTEL 2024, Turkmenistan Digital Forum**

**Keynote speech by Mr Masahiko Metoki, Director General, Universal Postal Union – delivered on site on his behalf by Mr Mario Gonzalez-Montiel, Europe and CIS Region Programme Manager and UPU head of delegation**

14 November, 14.30–14.40

Distinguished Guests, Esteemed Colleagues,

It is a pleasure to join you here at the TurkmenTEL 2024 Digital Forum, and it is a great honour for me to deliver this speech on behalf of Mr Masahiko Metoki, Director General of the Universal Postal Union, on the topic of fostering international dialogue and cooperation to advance digital transformation.

The rapid acceleration of digital innovation is redefining how we live, work, and connect. At the Universal Postal Union, or UPU, we see digital transformation as an opportunity and a responsibility – one that requires coordinated action and mutual support across nations, industries, and communities to be truly inclusive and sustainable.

In our increasingly interconnected world, digital transformation is not simply about adopting new technologies. It also means using these technologies to build inclusive societies, sustainable economies, and accessible networks. For the postal sector, digital transformation means reimagining our traditional role to meet the needs of an evolving digital economy, enabling seamless and reliable commerce across borders. The UPU, as a United Nations specialized agency and a global network uniting 192 member countries, is committed to promoting international cooperation and multilateralism to ensure that the digital dividends reach everyone, everywhere.

Digital transformation has redefined our global landscape, reshaping economies and industries at a pace never before seen. It offers unprecedented possibilities for social and economic advancement. However, achieving the full potential of digital innovation requires more than technological and digital infrastructure investment. It calls for collaboration – meaningful, sustained collaboration that involves open dialogue, shared resources, and a commitment to developing interoperable systems that work across borders. This is especially important as we consider the gaps in digital access, digital literacy, and infrastructure that still prevent many communities and countries from participating fully in the digital economy. Through initiatives like Connect.post, which will be further discussed tomorrow, the UPU has been working to bring postal networks online worldwide, ensuring that even the most remote areas are included in the digital economy.

For the UPU, collaboration begins with fostering international dialogue on standards, policies, and best practices. Postal networks are unique in their scope; they serve as national critical infrastructures with global reach. To modernize the postal sector in a way that meets today's demands, we need policies and standards that ensure efficient and secure cross-border interactions. Our work to develop common frameworks and global standards enables postal operators to adopt digital solutions that not only serve their own countries but are also interoperable with international partners. This cooperation is particularly crucial in facilitating cross-border e-commerce and the digital financial services that depend on the reliability and security of postal networks.

The impact of digital transformation on e-commerce is a critical area that underscores the importance of global cooperation. E-commerce is growing rapidly, and the postal sector plays a key role in supporting this growth by delivering packages across continents, managing customs clearance, and ensuring last-mile delivery in urban centres and remote villages alike. For e-commerce to thrive on an international scale, postal operators must navigate complex regulatory environments, customs procedures, and diverse consumer expectations. Through the UPU's collaborative efforts, we work with customs authorities, logistics providers, and governments to streamline processes, simplify regulations, and promote transparent standards that enhance cross-

border trade. This enables businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises, to reach global markets and foster inclusive economic growth.

The role of digital infrastructure in supporting resilient supply chains has also become increasingly relevant. Recent global disruptions have shown the vulnerability of traditional supply chains. Through digital transformation, we can create more flexible, transparent, and resilient systems. At the UPU, we are encouraging member countries to enhance digital infrastructure in postal networks, facilitating faster, more reliable logistics that support both national and global economies.

In conclusion, fostering international dialogue and cooperation is a necessity if we are to build a digital future that is inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. The digital landscape will continue to evolve, and with it, the demands and expectations of individuals, businesses, and nations. At the UPU, we remain committed to working hand-in-hand with governments, private sector partners, and international organizations to drive a digital transformation that serves everyone. Together, we can create a global digital ecosystem where the opportunities of the digital economy are accessible to all, where innovation strengthens cooperation, and where our collective prosperity is shared.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to the dialogue and partnerships that will emerge from this forum as we shape a more connected, collaborative, and inclusive digital future.