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**Photos: Nawras Alfawal**

1. Anna Tibaijuka introduces the addressing declaration
2. Delegates at the Qatar National Congress Centre
3. UPU Deputy Director General Guozhang Huang
4. UPU Director General Edouard Dayan
5. Inside Hall 1, Qatar National Congress Centre

# Countries declare good intentions

How addressing infrastructure contributes to social and economic development and can transform lives in developing countries was discussed at the 25th Universal Postal Congress in Doha, Qatar.

By Christina Maria Paschyn

The UPU's member countries have adopted an addressing declaration, which reaffirms their commitment to improving and expanding addressing systems in their own lands and across the globe.

Anna Tibaijuka, Tanzanian minister of lands, housing and human settlements development, presented the declaration to delegates. "In a world undergoing fundamental changes, including tremendous population growth in urban areas, which mostly affects developing countries, it is our responsibility as local, national or international leaders to make sure that nobody is left behind," Tibaijuka said. "I myself am convinced that the implementation of addressing systems will result in improvements in public services, such as sanitation, hygiene and water supply, and in many more fundamental services," she added.

The declaration summarizes the main conclusions of the recently released publication linked to the UPU's "Addressing the world – an address for everyone" initiative. One is that addressing systems can help establish legal identities for marginalized individuals, such as people living in rural areas or informal settlements.

This is a particularly pressing concern as some four billion people worldwide are currently excluded from the rule of law and, therefore, cannot claim their basic rights as citizens because they lack a legal identity, says the United Nations Development Programme's Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor. Addresses can also improve the distribution of business and governmental services and resources.

## Reaching all

South African Minister of Communications Dina Pule, voiced her support for the declaration. "The postal business should be truly universal. I believe the right to communicate for every human being has become of fundamental importance in the modern era."

Pule described South Africa's success in expanding its addressing system: it provided addresses to some six million additional households from 2005-9 and implemented geo-coding for each address in the country. "[Addresses] improve emergency services to rural communities and education services. Without an address, it is nearly impossible to access these services," she explained.

While mail volumes are declining worldwide, South Africa is bucking the trend, said Pule. During the past five years, the country has experienced a four-to-five-per cent growth in its national mail volumes because of an increase in business-to-consumer correspondence.

## Legal identity

A representative of the UPU Consultative Committee described how addresses contribute to national wealth by providing families and businesses with a legal identity through which to access bank and money-lending services. "I call it the virtualist cascade: with addresses, a thousand rural families [in South Africa] can now buy furniture on credit. The furniture stores in nearby towns need more clerks, delivery people, furniture, and the suppliers to the stores need more craftsmen to make more furniture," he explained. "New addresses can make new economic activity."

The potential of addresses to generate revenue and enhance countrywide prosperity extends to developed nations as well. Denmark, for instance, decided in 2002 to forgo fees for its address database as long as businesses disclosed the revenues they earned through using the data. The country calculated that, during a period of four years, the database cost about four million EUR (five million USD) to maintain. But its benefit to businesses exceeded this overhead: during the same period, the 1,200 largest users of the database reported direct sales of about 72 million EUR.

Other delegates highlighted how improved addressing infrastructure had benefitted their respective countries. A representative from Saudi Arabia described how technological innovations, such as GPS-devices and smart phones, have enabled the Gulf kingdom's national Post to identify addresses better and deliver mail more efficiently. Likewise, a delegate from Ecuador extolled her nation's recent efforts to implement a six-digit postal code system for the country's 14 million inhabitants. The new system, she said, "will consolidate the postal revolution in our country". **CMP**

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