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UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Fifth meeting of the Regional Group for Africa  
of the United Nations Advisory Committee  
on the Application of Science and Technology  
to Development (UNACAST)

Addis Ababa, 19-22 October 1970

Activities of the Universal Postal Union

Meeting of the Regional Group for Africa  
of the United Nations Advisory Committee  
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Activities of the Universal Postal Union

The Universal Postal Union's activities in the field of science and technology are exercised by its Consultative Council for Postal Studies (CCPS) which was established at the Union's fifteenth congress held at Ottawa in 1957. The members of the Council are the Postal Administrations of the 142 member countries. The Council holds a plenary meeting at the Congress held by the Union every five years, and elects a Consultative Council composed of thirty countries. The Consultative Council elects a Chairman and six Vice-chairmen who form its Steering Committee. The Vice-chairmen of the Council preside over the work of the following six committees:

- Committee 1 : Technical studies (Chairman: Germany);
- Committee 2 : Use of modern methods and techniques in the postal service (Chairman: United Kingdom);
- Committee 3 : Problems relating to the modernization of postal operations in young countries (Chairman: Pakistan);
- Committee 4 : Human problems (in particular, training and optimum utilization of staff) (Chairman: Argentina);
- Committee 5 : Economic problems (Chairman: USSR);
- Committee 6 : Specific problems relating to postal operations (Chairman: Tunisia).

The following members of the Consultative Council were elected at the last UPU Congress held at Tokyo:

Germany, United Kingdom, United States of America, Upper Volta, Argentina, India, Indonesia, Australia, Iran, Italy, Belgium, Japan, Cameroon, Morocco, Nigeria, China, Norway, Colombia, New Zealand, Pakistan, France, Netherlands, Poland, United Arab Republic, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Thailand, Tunisia, Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, i.e., six African countries.

Six priority studies were adopted and working parties were set up within the following committees to deal with them:

Committee 1:

- UPU member country identification code for postal and other purposes.

**Committee 4:**

- Personnel matters and work organization in the post.

**Committee 5:**

- Determining the standard and form of services provided for the public; criteria and methods.
- Main lines of development and technical progress in the postal services of industrialized countries during the next ten to twenty years.

**Committee 6:**

- Safety of money and valuables held or conveyed by the postal service. Handling - safe custody - conveyances (by vehicle or employee).  
First part: security of high-value items carried by air mail.
- Role of savings and remittance services in countries' economic and social development.

In addition to the CCPS, the UPU at its Fifteenth Congress, held in Vienna in 1964, set up a Training Committee to deal with personnel matters, including technical assistance to young countries in the professional training of postal workers. In principle, the Committee meets once a year, during the annual session of the Union's Executive Council. It is composed of eight members, half of whom are nominated by the Executive Council and half by the CCPS Consultative Council. It is presided over by the Chairman of the Executive Council. The secretariat of the Committee is provided by the Director-General of the International Bureau of the Union. The organization of training is decentralized and at present provided mainly for officials in the operative services and for medium-level staff. Training for higher officials should for the time being consist of practical training and courses which they can take in the developed countries, and, in particular, of the large number of seminars organized under the auspices of UPU in the regions, including Africa, and for which the International Bureau awards many fellowships. It would also be in the interests of African administrations to avail themselves of the training activities of two institutions sponsored by the United Nations: the African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development, at Tangier, and the Institute for Economic Development and Planning, at Dakar.

For a long time, and unfortunately only too often, it has been customary to consider the postal service a mere public service or rather a social service of the government, as if it were solely intended to serve the public administration, more or less as in former days. The important economic, cultural and social role it was to play in the life and development of each country was not realized. Obviously it is not simply an administrative public service but a very complex communications, transport and business agency which deserves to be properly organized and managed in accordance with modern scientific

principles. If the word "internal" is between inverted commas, the reason is that, despite the circumstances in individual countries which have to be taken into account (if unscientific errors are to be avoided), the postal service transcends frontiers and knows no limits.

In conclusion, in view of Africa's needs and present situation, the Governments of ECA member countries should be appealed to to pay greater attention to the development of their postal services and to the application of science and modern technology in this field.

#### Reinforcement and co-ordination of activities

The UPU would be in favour of any reorganization that would lead to better co-ordination in the application of science and technology. It should be recognized, however, that the selection of priorities and the execution of programmes are activities that fall within the competence of the governing bodies of the specialized agencies of a technical character.

#### Means of ensuring reinforcement and co-ordination

The contemplated reorganization would not necessarily have to result in the establishment of new co-ordinating machinery because there already exists within every United Nations organization a committee or other similar body responsible for scientific and technical matters.

If a subsidiary intergovernmental body were set up within the General Assembly, while retaining the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology in its present role, it would be appropriate to revise the above Committee's mandate as well as that of the other bodies directly attached to the United Nations and concerned with general matters.

It should be mentioned that among the matters of general interest being examined within the United Nations, two appear to be related to the Union's activities: the transfer of operative technology to under-industrialized countries and the use of computers for development.

The International Bureau is keeping a close watch on the various studies being conducted in these fields by the United Nations organizations. The UPU attended thirty-five of the seventy meetings of the United Nations and one of the thirteen meetings of specialized agencies, from 1 March 1969 to 30 April 1970.