



SEVENTY- SEVENTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Abuja, 15-16 December 2016

DIRECTIVE C/DIR.1/12/16 ON POSTAL SECTOR REFORM AND REGULATION IN THE ECOWAS REGION

THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS,

MINDFUL of Articles 10, 11 and 12 of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty, establishing the Council of Ministers and defining its composition and functions;

MINDFUL of Article 33 of the said Treaty on the need to foster closer cooperation between their postal administrations, ensure, within the Community, efficient, speedier and more frequent postal services and harmonise mail routing;

MINDFUL of Supplementary Protocol A/SP1/06/06 amending the ECOWAS Treaty;

MINDFUL of the African Union's Agenda 2063 aiming to put in place an adequate infrastructure to support Africa's accelerated integration as well as Society's technological transformation and trade development;

CONSIDERING the generally inadequate political situation in West Africa, where nearly 40.57% of the population does not have access to postal services;

AWARE that the Community's postal sector is characterised by low mail volume, and a quality of service below the global standard set by the Universal Postal Union ;

CONSIDERING that despite its favourable position by virtue of its presence in rural areas, the post office is still not playing a significant role in extending banking services to communities;

RECOGNISING the need to consider postal infrastructure as key to national and regional economic development and that it is important to place the postal sector among Member States and the region's priorities;

C/DIR.1/12/16

HP

RECOGNISING FURTHER the need for a gradual and concerted liberalisation of the sector so as not undermine universal service providers;

CONVINCED that an efficient regional postal infrastructure will assist ECOWAS Member States attain the Sustainable Development Goals, namely, Goal 1 : «end poverty in all its forms everywhere »; Goal 4 : «ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning» ; Goal 9 : «build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation » and Goal 13 : «take urgent actions to combat climate change and its impacts» ;

CONVINCED also that postal services are an essential tool for the implementation of the African Union's Agenda 2063;

DESIROUS of ensuring an efficient organisation of the sector at sub-regional level as well as adopting the necessary mechanisms for its development;

ON THE RECOMMENDATION of the Second Ordinary Session of WAPCO Ministerial Conference held in Niamey on 20 and 21 June 2016;

PRESCRIBES

CHAPTER I GENERAL PROVISIONS

ARTICLE 1: DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of the Directive, these definitions shall be culled from the various Acts of the Universal Postal Union as adopted by its member countries at Congresses. The following terms shall have the meanings defined below:

- a. ***Postal services***: services relating to clearance, sorting, transmission and delivery of postal items;
- b. ***Postal item***: an item addressed in the form in which it is to be sorted, carried and delivered by the universal service provider or any other authorised postal operator. It also includes letter-post items, postal parcels, and money order;
- c. ***Universal postal service***: permanent provision of a postal service of specified quality at all points in their territory at affordable prices for all users;
- d. ***Basic postal services***.
Priority and non-priority items weighing up to 2 kilograms.

C/DIR.1/12/16

14

Letters, postcards, printed materials and small parcels weighing up to 2 kilograms.

Items for the blind weighing up to 7 kilograms.

Special bags, known as «M-bags», containing newspapers, magazines, books and similar printed materials sent to a single addressee at a single address, weighing up to 30 kilograms.

- e. **Public postal network:** the system of organization and resources of all kinds used by the universal service provider for the purposes of:
 - i. Clearing postal items covered by a universal service obligation from access points throughout the territory.
 - ii. Routing and handling those items from the postal network access point to the distribution center.
 - iii. Delivering to the addresses shown on the postal items.
- f. **Access point:** physical facilities (letter boxes, premises of the universal service provider), where postal items are deposited and withdrawn by users;
- g. **Designated operator:** any government or non-governmental entity officially designated by the Member State to operate postal services and fulfil the related obligations arising out of the Acts of the Universal Postal Union on its territory;
- h. **Clearance:** the operation of collecting postal items deposited at access points;
- i. **Distribution:** the process from sorting out at the distribution center to delivery of postal items to their addressees;
- j. **Cross-border mail:** mail from or to another Member State or from or to a third country;
- k. **Reserved services:** services which may be reserved by each Member State for universal service providers under conditions laid down in this directive, with the aim of maintaining and developing the universal postal service in the Community;
- l. **Authorizations and licenses:** acts of the regulatory authority setting out rights and obligations specific to the postal sector and allowing companies to offer non-reserved postal services

- m. **National Regulatory Authority:** the body designated by a Member State as the competent regulatory authority to ensure compliance with this Directive and national legislation on the postal sector.
- n. **Sender:** a legal or natural person responsible for originating postal items;
- o. **Addressee:** a legal or natural person to whom postal items are addressed;
- p. **Users:** any legal or natural person benefitting from postal service provision as a sender or an addressee;
- q. **Terminal dues:** remuneration of the universal service provider by the operator providing universal postal service for originating letter-post items, for processing and distribution;
- r. **Postal addressing:** formal description of the structure of the country's model addresses. The formal description includes:
 - i. Definition of address types and their structural components on a line.
 - ii. Description of address elements collected.
 - iii. Presentation of addresses on postal items.
 - iv. Abbreviations, punctuation or standard accented characters.
 - v. Information on whether the element is mandatory or optional.
- s. **Postcode:** a code of letters and digits used as part of a postal address to aid the sorting of mail.

ARTICLE 2: Objective and Scope of Application

1. The main objective of the Directive is the reconciliation of the concerted, gradual and controlled liberalisation of the postal market in the ECOWAS region, ensuring sustainable provision of quality universal service and development of operators providing universal service.

C/DIR.1/12/16

2. To this end, the present directive lays down the common principles to the region's postal sector as follows:
 - a. Definition of universal postal service in the Community.
 - b. Criteria for reserving certain postal services to universal service providers.
 - c. Principles for defining and implementing possible mechanisms to provide funding for the universal postal service.
 - d. Elements of a harmonised and efficient reform process of the postal sector in the ECOWAS region.
 - e. Principles establishing a common methodology for analysing the postal market in the ECOWAS region and creating a regional database accessible to all Member States.
 - f. The establishment of a mechanism to monitor compliance by operators providing universal postal service with their obligations to provide universal service in the Community.
 - g. Principles for developing a harmonised regional policy to train staff of the designated operators.

CHAPTER II

UNIVERSAL POSTAL SERVICE

ARTICLE 3: DEFINITION AND CONTENT

1. To further enhance the principle of unity of the postal territory as enshrined in the Universal Postal Union Convention, Member States shall provide a universal service involving the permanent provision of a postal service of specified quality at all points in their territory at affordable prices for all users.
2. To that end, each Member State shall adopt the necessary measures to ensure that universal service includes at least the following services -
 - a) Clearance, sorting, transport and delivery of postal items weighing up to 2 kilograms.
 - b) Services for registered or insured items.
 - c) Clearance, sorting, transport and delivery of postal items weighing up to 30 kilograms.

C/DIR.1/12/16



3. Each Member State may include a service other than those mentioned above, provided that it does not conflict with the provisions of this directive in particular with respect to the scope of liberalization of the postal market in the Community. The Member State concerned shall inform WAPCO of the rights and obligations assigned to the universal service provider in this regard.
4. The minimum and maximum dimensions for the postal items in question shall be those laid down in the Universal Postal Convention and the Agreement concerning postal parcels adopted by successive congresses of the Universal Postal Union.
5. The weight limits of universal postal service coverage may be reduced by each Member State or collectively in the Community when circumstances so require.
6. Universal service as described in this directive shall include both national and cross-border services.
7. Each Member State shall ensure that universal service is provided and shall notify WAPCO of measures taken to fulfill this obligation.

ARTICLE 4 : ACCESSIBILITY

1. Member States shall agree that access to universal postal service must be defined from the needs expressed by customers. Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the following requirements for access to universal service are ultimately met:
 - a. The average area covered by an access point shall not exceed 800 km², subject to each country's geographic conditions.
 - b. The number of inhabitants or potential users by access point shall not exceed 50 000 inhabitants.
 - c. The number of potential users that can receive mails shall not be below 95% (home delivery, mailbox delivery, post office counter delivery or third party delivery).
2. Furthermore, each Member State shall take the necessary measures to ensure that universal service meets the following requirements:

C/DIR.1/12/16

- a. An identical service to users under comparable conditions.
- b. A service made available without any form of discrimination whatsoever, especially without discrimination arising from political, religious or ideological considerations.
- c. A service adapted to technological, economic and social developments as well as changes in users' needs.

ARTICLE 5: QUALITY OF SERVICE

1. Member States shall agree on the following minimum service quality standards:
 - a. Within and between major cities: D +2 for 90%.
 - b. Between the capital and rural areas: D+5 for 85%.
 - c. Between two rural areas: between D+5 and D+7 for 75%.
 - d. Between two capitals of Member States: D+5 for 85%.
2. These standards must change over time and get closer to UPU global standard. Economic differences between regions do not justify the definition of single national standard.
3. Member States shall direct the National Regulatory Authority or an independent body to measure the quality level of universal service to users. They shall take the necessary measures to ensure that accurate and up-to-date information on results obtained is regularly provided to users.
4. Member States shall also adopt measures to regularly provide this information to WAPCO for dissemination in the Community.
5. Member States shall agree that harmonised postal addressing elements and guiding principles for the establishment of postcodes are adopted in the region to create the conditions for the implementation of standards laid down in this directive.
6. To this end, Member States shall take the necessary measures to develop a postal addressing system in the Community, within a maximum period of three (3) years, from the adoption of this directive. Past and current national experiences should serve as basis for the development of this Community postal addressing system and postcodes.

C/DIR.1/12/16

ARTICLE 6: PRICES

1. Member States shall agree on the need for a reform of the tariff structure. They shall adopt measures to ensure that prices of each service included in the provision of the universal service are affordable and must be such that all users have access to the services offered.
2. Each Member State shall consequently adopt measures to:
 - a. Reduce the price of renting mailboxes, particularly in rural areas where economic development is less significant.
 - b. Take the necessary steps to ensure that the price of stamps (in large part at least) is able to offset reduction in mailbox fees and fund efforts to improve quality.
3. Member States may decide that a single tariff should be applied across the Community, along the lines of those done for International Express Money Order (IEM).
4. Member States shall take the necessary measures, within five (5) years after the adoption of this directive, to establish mechanisms for determining the costs inherent in the provision of universal postal service and fix prices based on costs. They shall also take measures to ensure that accountability in the provision of universal service is in line with arrangements for cost calculation (cost accounting).
6. National Regulatory Authorities shall ensure that the accounting system set up by the universal service provider, as verified by a qualified independent body, complies with the requirements laid down in this directive.

ARTICLE 7: FINANCING OF THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL SERVICE

1. Each Member State shall provide for long-term financing mechanisms to ensure the continuity of the universal service provision.

C/DIR.1/12/16



2. Several mechanisms may be envisaged to finance the universal postal service. These mechanisms could be used alone or in combination in order to achieve the desired objective.
3. Whenever possible, services may be reserved by Member States. These services shall include clearance, sorting, transport and delivery of items of domestic correspondence, whether by accelerated delivery or not.
4. Each Member State may set up an equity fund for the universal postal service where it is established that the obligations as defined in this directive constitute unfair financial burdens for the universal service provider. In this case, the fund shall be financed by postal operators on the market and may be one of the conditions for granting licenses or authorisations for operating non-reserved services.
5. Member States undertake to ensure regular, rigorous, autonomous and participatory functioning of the bodies responsible for managing the equity fund of the universal postal service when they are set up, in order to ensure confidence of private operators vis-à-vis the process.
6. The management of the fund shall be entrusted to an independent entity of the beneficiary universal service provider.
7. Balancing subsidies, pre-arranged operating subsidies or investment subsidies (for extending the network) may be concurrently granted by a Member State when they are necessary to ensure the financial sustainability of the universal service provider. These subsidies shall be granted in accordance with the concession agreement allocated to the universal service provider. The duration and declining level of the subsidies shall be set as part of the signing of an agreement between the Member State and the universal service provider.
8. Each Member State may directly seek or support a request by the universal service provider in order to secure funds to develop the postal network, especially for the extension of the physical network and development of its electronic and financial dimensions.

10

CHAPTER III

RESERVED AND NON-RESERVED SERVICES

ARTICLE 8: SERVICES THAT MAY BE RESERVED

1. To ensure the continuation of the universal service, each Member State may reserve services relating to clearance, sorting, transport and delivery of items of domestic correspondence, whether by accelerated delivery or not, weighing not more than 1000 grams for domestic correspondences and 500 grams for accelerated delivery, the price of which shall be less than three (3) times the price for an item of correspondence in the first weight step.
2. Exceptions to these limits should be permitted in the case of free postal service for blind and partially sighted persons.
3. Member States shall decide on the gradual liberalisation of these services taking into account economic, social and technological developments in the Community, as well as the financial balance of the universal service provider in order to guarantee access to universal service to all users of postal services.
4. National Regulatory Authorities shall be responsible for monitoring and supervising the implementation of these provisions within their national territory. Each Member State shall disseminate relevant information within the Community to allow for a periodic review of the situation of the region's postal sector.

ARTICLE 9: CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE PROVISION OF NON-RESERVED SERVICES

1. Member States may grant individual authorizations and licenses for the operation of non-reserved postal services which do not fall within the scope of the universal postal service.
2. Member States shall agree that the granting of authorizations or licenses may be subject to the payment of contribution to the equity fund for the universal postal service, when the Member State decides to establish one at national level. It shall also be subject to the obligation not to infringe the exclusive rights granted to the universal service provider.

C/DIR.1/12/16

142

3. Member States shall establish harmonized procedures for granting authorizations or licenses for the operation of non-reserved postal services which do not fall within the scope of the universal postal service.
4. The harmonization measures for granting authorizations or licenses shall be adopted by Member States at WAPCO level to ensure that users and providers of postal services have access to public postal network under transparent and non-discriminatory conditions. The harmonization measures shall relate in particular to criteria to be observed by the postal operator, the manner of publication and appeal procedures.
5. National Regulatory Authorities shall be responsible for granting authorizations and licenses within their national territory by applying the regional harmonized procedures related thereto.

CHAPTER IV

UNIVERSAL POSTAL SERVICE PROVIDER

ARTICLE 10: APPOINTMENT OF THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL SERVICE PROVIDER (UPS)

1. Each Member State shall ensure that universal service provisions meet the conditions necessary for the fulfilment of universal service obligations and identify the operator responsible for it.
2. The Member State shall, in accordance with Community law, define the obligations assigned to the universal service operator and inform ECOWAS thereof. The universal service operator shall provide the following:
 - a. Tamper proof warranty on postal items entrusted to it;
 - b. Security of postages and installations open to users of postal services.
 - c. Compliance with the basic requirements of accessibility on the national territory as well as on quality and price.
 - d. An identical service for users in similar conditions.
 - e. A continuous and non-discriminatory service, save for unforeseeable circumstance, and not subject to political, religious and ideological conditions.
 - f. Have the potential for improvement in line with development in the economic, social and technological environment as well as users' needs.

C/DIR.1/12/16



3. Each Member State shall allocate the operational rights of the universal service based on a concessional agreement. The concession is defined as a contract that mandates the universal service operator to execute the universal service provision at its own cost, with or without subsidy, as well as with or without interest guarantee. The selected provider shall receive payment from the universal services rendered, which entitles it to collect commissions. The concession agreement comprises the following conditions, among other things:
 - a. The type, characteristics and areas of coverage of the network.
 - b. Continuity, availability, service quality, neutrality, security and accessibility to services provided.
 - c. Type and characteristics of services provided.
 - d. Technical provisions to access the network.
 - e. Setting of tariffs for universal service provisions.
 - f. Operational modalities for fair competition.
 - g. Relations with users and other postal operators.
 - h. Duration, modalities for withdrawal, cancellation and renewal of concession.
 - i. Maintenance of an analytical accounting system for determining costs of universal service provisions.
4. Each Member State shall mandate the national regulatory authority to ensure the smooth management of the universal service and impose sanctions for lapses. In that regard, the national regulatory authority has the right to impose sanctions, or if the need arises, terminate the concession by taking over the project without any form of compensation.
5. The service granted must be remunerative and cover its real costs. If the State unilaterally defaults in this arrangement, it must be capable of restoring the service in the interest of service and that of its co-contracting party.

C/DIR.1/12/16

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CHAPTER V

POSTAL SECTOR REFORM

ARTICLE 11: GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR AN HARMONIZED REFORM OF THE POSTAL SECTOR

1. Member States shall take measures to apply the harmonized process of reform for the postal sector and modernization of the operator in charge of the universal service.
2. Member States are aware that there are several actors interested in the postal sector, with forward-looking and modern vision on the current and future conditions of postal activity. They are also aware that it is mandatory and important for each of these actors to be involved in the process of reform.
3. In that regard, Member States recognize the importance of the Postal Development and Reform integral Plan (PDRIP), an approach proposed by the Universal Postal Union, which enables countries to have a master plan/road map. Member States shall also recognize the need to take due account of current studies in the International Bureau and particularly the postal development integrated index to formulate the PDRIP.
4. Member States shall be committed to take the PIDEP as the model, endorsed by the Postal Development Integrated Index (2IPD), to initiate/correct their process of reform of the sector and modernization of the operator in charge of universal postal service operation.

ARTICLE 12: POSTAL REFORM PROCEDURE

A. Member States shall ensure that the reform process entails the following four major components:

1. **Analysis of the postal sector situation.**

This would involve the analysis of the situation of the postal sector within the context of the global environment. This constitutes an indispensable element for public authorities as well as experts who need a reference framework for their works, because it gives an overview of postal activity and its structures.

C/DIR.1/12/16

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The study of basic information of postal services of countries in order to access the legal context, national postal market and services provided by the public operator particularly regarding universal postal service.

2. Identification of objectives and strategy.

The second phase consists of identifying the major objectives of reform and its benefits to the numerous stakeholders involved in the postal sector. The objectives shall be clear and coherent, capable of illustrating the advantages of reform at the national level.

3. Components of the reform:

The implementation of the reform process is based on three elements comprising the areas necessary for the production of results sequel to a logical and coherent process.

- a. Identification of the universal postal service provider: necessary measures for adopting decisions relating to the universal postal service (scope, content, quality standards, price and funding)
- b. Formulation and dissemination of sectoral policy by the government: identification of factors that would determine the establishment of reform and development of services. Member States shall recognise to that effect, the need for gradual liberalisation and competition based on an appropriate policy that can sustain the Universal Postal Service.
- c. Establishment of an adequate legal framework for the development of the sector: At this stage, the way forward for the establishment of an appropriate legal framework, introduce the implementation of the regulation and the condition for its evolution is defined.
- d. Modernisation of services and operator of the universal postal service : by measures necessary to transform the public operator and the services thereof particularly the universal postal service.

C/DIR.1/12/16

10/2

4. Costs estimates and funding

Once the activities for each section have been identified, it would be necessary to structure the plan of action comprising a country's Reform Plan. It would be necessary to define short, medium and long-term actions as well as a sequential and strategic order of priority.

Each of the action plan shall have the following elements:

- a. Job description, including specifications on the scope and duration.
- b. Technical requirements and profile of staff in charge of its implementation.
- c. Conditions for implementation deadline.
- d. Cost of each action.

Once the cost of the plan has been determined, the next step would be the determination of the sources of potential funding, either from own resources from the budget of the Member State, budgets of the regulator or the operator, or government funds derived from State-owned finance agencies of reform development.

B. The implementation of the reform (time-table, structures)

1. For an effective and adequate implementation of reform actions, Member States shall take necessary measures to establish a specific organizational structure and appoint a person in charge of coordinating the actions and works of the various participating entities. They shall ensure the elaboration of a schedule for the implementation of short, medium and long-term actions.
2. Member States shall take adequate measures to include the development of postal services as an essential component of «National Development Plans», given the significant role this sector plays in the socio-economic development of ECOWAS countries.

CHAPTER VI REGULATION OF THE POSTAL SECTOR

ARTICLE 13: THE OBJECTIVE OF POSTAL REGULATION

The main objective of the regulation is to create an enabling environment for the promotion of an efficient market through fair competition, within a regulatory environment covering the activities of the various stakeholders, namely, operators, services provided, users and regulator, which are all taking due note of the need to ensure and keep the objectives of the universal postal service.

ARTICLE 14: THE NATIONAL REGULATORY AUTHORITY

1. In applying this directive, Member States shall create a national authority charged with the responsibility of regulating the national postal market.
2. Member States shall agree to provide the conditions necessary for this authority to exercise its powers without interference.
3. Member States shall ensure that rules are introduced to preserve the interests of users of postal services and control their application by the national regulatory authority.
4. Member States shall ensure that the national regulatory authorities shall possess the following qualities: play the following roles:

a. High quality universal postal service provider.

Define quality standards by defining the terms of frequency of postal and basic services distribution such as letters and postal parcels, security and access to basic postal services.

Define the criteria for the development and extension/reduction of universal postal service to meet the technological, economic and social environment of the country as well as any additional requirements of postal services users.

Monitor the functioning of mechanisms established for funding the universal postal service (application of reserved services, use of compensation funds and allocation of State subsidies).

Institute a mechanism to control and monitor the provision of the universal postal service by the operator in charge of universal service obligations.

C/DIR.1/12/16

14

Monitor the activities of postal operators to ensure that they do not interfere in reserved services.

b. Create an enabling competitive environment for the relevance and viability of the postal network.

Promote a fair competition to enact rules of transparency and equity.

Conduct surveys to determine the level of satisfaction of users of postal services and encourage postal operators to meet the needs of users adequately.

Provide equitable remuneration of universal postal service operator, which takes due account of costs incurred.

Give its opinion on costs of services that forms part of the universal postal service and encourage the service provider to establish a universal accounting service that will determine the costs incurred.

Promote operators partnership particularly access to postal network.

c. Protect the interest of users

Establish an information mechanism for Government and users on the performance of postal operators.

Dealing with users' complaints against operators particularly in cases involving loss, theft, damage or non-compliance with service quality standards.

Fair resolution of disputes, with provision, where it is deemed justifiable for a system of reimbursement and/or compensation.

5. Each Member State may define, as far as the provisions of this present directive would permit, other duties in line with their national situation.

C/DIR.1/12/16

6. Member States shall take measures to promote the emergence of a regional postal market. They shall enact common rules to regulate the Community postal market.

7. Member States shall agree, in that regard, on the need to establish an entity comprising national regulation authorities of ECOWAS member countries.

CHAPTER VII

COMMUNITY POSTAL MARKET

ARTICLE 15: ANALYSIS OF THE POSTAL MARKET

1. Member States shall agree on the need to carry out regular analysis of the regional postal market. The market analysis shall constitute the following:
 - a. Market size of postal products and services;
 - b. Status of the harmonization of postal policies and regulation in the region;
 - c. Major operations registered in the market at a given period;
 - d. SWOT analysis of major market stakeholders;
 - e. Description of services and products with rapid growth;
 - f. Possibilities of launching new e-compliant concepts;
 - g. Potential distribution scenarios and circuits for e-commerce operators;
 - h. Prospects for postal services and products by 2020;
 - i. Country by country decoding of government policies that affect the sector;
 - j. Mechanism for the definition of postal products and services in West Africa;
 - k. Links between strengthening the postal networks and local socio-economic development.

ARTICLE 16: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

1. Member States shall advise the ECOWAS Commission to present an annual report on the analysis of the Community Postal Market to the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, no later than 31 December 2018.

C/DIR.1/12/16

2. The ECOWAS Commission shall envisage provisions, in the likelihood of amendment to this directive, and conform it to development in the Community market.
3. Each Member State may carry out a national survey at a pre-determined frequency. This analysis shall address the items defined in this directive. The Member State shall take necessary measures to submit its findings on the study of the local market to the ECOWAS Commission.
4. Member States shall reserve the right to enact laws restricting the distribution of the findings obtained, save for authorised ECOWAS statutory bodies.

CHAPTER VIII

INTERCONNECTION OF MEMBER STATES POSTAL NETWORKS

ARTICLE 17: TERMINAL DUES

1. For ensure an across the borders universal service provision, Member States shall encourage the universal service providers to agree on the terminal dues for inter-Community cross-border mail.
2. Member States shall undertake to have a common position during discussions on terminal dues to the Universal Postal Union.

ARTICLE 18: TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR THE USE OF NEW PRODUCTS

1. Member States shall undertake to harmonise their technical standards and regulations with a view to promoting the interconnection of their national networks.
2. Setting of standards shall be determined by the decision taken by the Universal Postal Union.
3. Member States shall agree to take necessary provisions to offer, among other things to the public, the following online postal services, set out in the Regulations of the Universal Postal Union.
 - a. The e-mail, which is an email service where email messages and information are transmitted by universal service providers.

C/DIR.1/12/16

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- b. The recommended email, is a secured email service that shows the capacity to send and handle email message and through a protected communication system between authentic users.
 - c. The electronic certification postmark, that proves beyond reasonable doubt that it is electronic, at a given moment, where many stakeholders have taken part.
 - d. Postal electronic mailboxes, where messages are transmitted online by a certified sender as well as the distribution and storage of email messages and information to an authentic addressee.
4. Member States shall also take measures to locate and monitor cross-border mail.
 5. Member States shall encourage universal service providers to use products and services that promotes the financial involvement of the populations (micro-finance, virtual savings accounts, etc.) through in particular the support of the NTIC.
 6. They shall promote the principle of technological neutrality particularly the technical measures used as the means of interconnection among the various national networks.

CHAPTER IX

ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

ARTICLE 19: ALLIANCES, CO-ENTERPRISES AND PARTNERSHIPS

1. Member States shall recognize the need to establish national or cross-border alliances/partnership, among the universal service provider or with other partners who are more qualified in a given area for example, the Information Technology and Communication (ITC).
2. Member States shall encourage universal service providers to invest in partnerships with the private sector for better efficiency and provision of services and products.

C/DIR.1/12/16

10K

CHAPTER X
COMMUNITY STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICY

ARTICLE 20: PRINCIPLES FOR A HARMONIZED STAFF TRAINING

1. Member States shall agree to adopt a common training policy for staff of the universal service operators and ensure that the course contents meets the needs of the evolving Community postal market.
2. Member States shall ensure in particular that the following principles on staff training are observed:
 - a. Promotion of proposed short and affordable training systems for operational staff.
 - b. Harmonization of training for middle ranking and senior managerial staff in regional vocational centers and institutes.
 - c. Management training for managers, in collaboration with schools or institutions where these trainings are offered in the region.
 - d. Short-term courses in specialized areas (computer, marketing, project management, etc.).
 - e. Research into ways of minimising costs for training at the national and regional levels.
 - f. Encourage online long-distance training particularly online courses of the Programme «Train Post» developed by the Universal Postal Union.
 - g. Promoting continuous learning and re-training of all categories of staff.

ARTICLE 21: TRAINING FUNDS

1. Member States shall ensure that postal operators contribute funds for training, performance evaluations or validations of skills and experience.
2. Member States shall stipulate that at least 1.05% of the gross wage bill of each postal operator shall be allocated for training its staff.
3. Each Member State is obliged to inform the ECOWAS Commission of provisions taken in applying this directive and the results obtained.
4. The ECOWAS Commission may ultimately propose an amendment to the directive on staff training policy.

C/DIR.1/12/16

CHAPTER XI
FINAL PROVISIONS

ARTICLE 22: ENTRY INTO FORCE

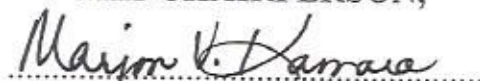
1. Member States shall ensure the entry into force of the legislative, regulatory and administrative provisions necessary for compliance with this directive no later than twenty-four (24) months after its notification by the Commission, and shall notify the Commission promptly.
2. Member States shall be obliged to refer to this directive during its official publication, when adopting provisions that conform to it.
3. A Member State shall maintain or introduce more liberal measures than those envisaged in this directive in as far as these measures are in line with the ECOWAS Treaty.

ARTICLE 23: PUBLICATION

1. This Directive **C/DIR.1/12/16** shall enter into force upon signature.
2. This directive shall be published by the Commission in the Official Journal of the Community within thirty (30) days of its signature by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. It shall also be published by each Member State in its Official Gazette within the same time frame upon notification by the Commission.

DONE AT ABUJA, THIS 16TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2016

**FOR THE COUNCIL
THE CHAIRPERSON,**


.....
MARJON V. KAMARA

SIGNED ON THIS 7th. DAY OF March..... 2017 AT MONROVIA

C/DIR.1/12/16