



Universal Postal Union

Universal Postal Convention Final Protocol

Attestation

The English Translation Service operating in connection with the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union hereby certifies that the English translation of the Universal Postal Convention and Final Protocol (Beijing 1999) is an accurate rendering of the French original which is deemed the authentic text.



J. Scott

Head, English Translation Service

Universal Postal Convention

Contents

Part I

Rules applicable in common throughout the international postal service

Sole chapter

General provisions

Art

- 1** **Universal postal service**
- 2** Freedom of transit
- 3** Ownership of postal items
- 4** Creation of new service
- 5** Monetary unit
- 6** Postage stamps
- 7** Charges
- 8** Exemption from postal charges
- 9** **Postal security**

Part II

Rules applicable to letter post and postal parcels

Chapter 1

Provision of services

- 10** Basic services
- 11** Postage charges and air surcharges
- 12** Special charges

- 13 Registered items
- 14 Recorded delivery items
- 15 Insured items
- 16 Cash-on-delivery items
- 17 Express items
- 18 Advice of delivery
- 19 Delivery to the addressee in person
- 20 Items for delivery free of charges and fees
- 21 International business reply service
- 22 International reply coupons
- 23 Fragile parcels. Cumbersome parcels
- 24 Consignment service
- 25 Items not admitted. Prohibitions
- 26 Radioactive materials
- 27 Redirection
- 28 Undeliverable items
- 29 Withdrawal from the post. Alteration or correction of address at the sender's request
- 30 Inquiries
- 31 Customs control
- 32 **Customs clearance fee**
- 33 Customs duty and other fees

Chapter 2

Liability

- 34 Liability of postal administrations. Indemnities
- 35 Non-liability of postal administrations
- 36 Sender's liability
- 37 Payment of indemnity
- 38 Possible recovery of the indemnity from the sender or the addressee
- 39 Exchange of items
- 40 Exchange of closed mails with military units
- 41 Determination of liability between postal administrations

Chapter 3

Provisions specific to letter post

- 42 Quality of service targets
- 43 Posting abroad of letter-post items
- 44 **Admissible biological materials**
- 45 Electronic mail
- 46 Transit charges
- 47 Terminal dues. **General provisions**
- 48 **Terminal dues. Provisions applicable to exchanges between industrialized countries**
- 49 **Terminal dues. Provisions applicable to flows from developing countries to industrialized countries**

- 50** Terminal dues. Provisions applicable to flows from industrialized countries to developing countries
- 51** Terminal dues. Provisions applicable to exchanges between developing countries
- 52** Exemption from transit charges and terminal dues
- 53** Air conveyance dues
- 54** Basic rates and calculation of air conveyance dues

Chapter 4

Provisions specific to postal parcels

- 55** Quality of service targets
- 56** Inward land rate
- 57** Transit land rate
- 58** Sea rate
- 59** Air conveyance dues
- 60** Exemption from rates

Chapter 5

EMS

- 61** EMS

Part III

Transitional and final provisions

- 62** Obligation to provide the postal parcels service
- 63** Undertakings regarding penal measures
- 64** Conditions for approval of proposals concerning the Convention and the Regulations
- 65** Entry into force and duration of the Convention

Final Protocol to the Universal Postal Convention

Art	
I	Ownership of postal items
II	Charges
III	Exception to the exemption of literature for the blind from postal charges
IV	Basic services
V	Small packets
VI	Printed papers. Maximum weight
VII	Provision of the postal parcels service
VIII	Parcels. Maximum weight
IX	Maximum limits for insured items
X	Advice of delivery
XI	International business reply service
XII	Prohibitions (letter post)
XIII	Prohibitions (postal parcels)
XIV	Articles subject to customs duty
XV	Withdrawal from the post. Alteration or correction of address
XVI	Inquiries
XVII	Presentation-to-Customs charge
XVIII	Liability of postal administrations
XIX	Compensation
XX	Exceptions to the principle of liability
XXI	Non-liability of postal administrations
XXII	Payment of indemnity
XXIII	Posting abroad of letter-post items
XXIV	Terminal dues
XXV	Internal air conveyance dues
XXVI	Exceptional inward land rates
XXVII	Special tariffs

Universal Postal Convention

The undersigned, plenipotentiaries of the Governments of the member countries of the Union, having regard to article 22, paragraph 3, of the Constitution of the Universal Postal Union concluded at Vienna on 10 July 1964, have by common consent and subject to article 25, paragraph 4, of the Constitution drawn up in this Convention the rules applicable throughout the international postal service.

Part I

Rules applicable in common throughout the international postal service

Sole chapter

General provisions

Article 1

Universal postal service

1 In order to support the concept of the single postal territory of the Union, member countries shall ensure that all users/customers enjoy the right to a universal postal service involving the permanent provision of quality basic postal services at all points in their territory, at affordable prices.

2 With this aim in view, member countries shall set forth, within the framework of their national postal legislation or by other customary means, the scope of the postal services offered and the requirement for quality and affordable prices, taking into account both the needs of the population and their national conditions.

3 Member countries shall ensure that the offers of postal services and quality standards will be achieved by the operators responsible for providing the universal postal service.

Article 2

Freedom of transit

1 The principle of the freedom of transit is set forth in article 1 of the Constitution. It shall carry with it the obligation for each postal administration to forward always by the quickest

routes and the most secure means which it uses for its own items, closed mails and à découvert letter-post items which are passed to it by another **postal** administration.

2 Member countries which do not participate in the exchange of letters containing perishable biological substances or radioactive substances shall have the option of not admitting these items in transit à découvert through their territory. The same shall apply to letter-post items, other than letters, postcards and literature for the blind which do not satisfy the legal requirements governing the conditions of their publication or circulation in the country crossed.

3 Freedom of transit for postal parcels to be forwarded by land and sea routes shall be limited to the territory of the countries taking part in this service.

4 Freedom of transit for air parcels shall be guaranteed throughout the territory of the Union. However, member countries which do not operate the postal parcels service shall not be required to forward air parcels by surface.

5 If a member country fails to observe the provisions regarding freedom of transit, other member countries may discontinue their postal service with that country.

Article 3¹

Ownership of postal items

1 A postal item shall remain the property of the sender until it is delivered to the rightful owner, except when the item has been seized in pursuance of the legislation of the country of destination.

Article 4

Creation of new service

1 **Postal** administrations may by mutual consent create a new service not expressly provided for in the Acts of the Union. Charges for a new service shall be laid down by each administration concerned, having regard to the expenses of operating the service.

Article 5

Monetary unit

1 The monetary unit laid down in article 7 of the Constitution and used in the Convention and the other Acts of the Union shall be the Special Drawing Right (SDR).

Article 6

Postage stamps

1 Only postal administrations shall issue postage stamps attesting payment of postage according to the Acts of the Union. Postal prepayment impressions, franking machine impressions and impressions made by a printing press or other printing or stamping process in accordance with the provisions of the Letter Post Regulations may be used only with the authorization of the postal administration.

2 The subjects and designs of postage stamps shall be in keeping with the spirit of the Preamble to the UPU Constitution and of decisions taken by the Union's bodies.

¹ See Fin Prot art I.

Article 7¹ Charges

1 The charges for the various international postal and special services shall be set by the postal administrations in accordance with the principles set out in the Convention and the Regulations. They shall in principle be related to the costs of providing these services.

2 The charges collected, including those laid down for guideline purposes in the Acts, shall be at least equal to those collected on internal service items presenting the same characteristics (category, quantity, handling time, etc).

3 Postal administrations shall be authorized to exceed any charges appearing in the Acts, including those laid down for guideline purposes:

3.1 if the charges they collect for the same services in their internal service are higher than the ones laid down;

3.2 if this is necessary to cover the costs of operating their services or on any other reasonable grounds.

4 Above the minimum level of charges laid down in 2, postal administrations may allow reduced charges based on their internal legislation for letter-post items posted in their country. They may, for instance, give preferential rates to major users of the Post.

5 No postal charge of any kind may be collected from customers other than those provided for in the Acts.

6 Except where otherwise provided in the Acts, each postal administration shall retain the charges which it has collected.

Article 8² Exemption from postal charges

1 Principle

1.1 Cases of exemption from postal charges shall be expressly laid down by the Convention.

2 Postal service

2.1 Letter-post items relating to the postal service sent by postal administrations or their offices, **whether by air, surface or surface airlifted (S.A.L.) mail**, shall be exempt from all postal charges.

2.2 Letter-post items relating to the postal service shall be exempt from all postal charges, with the exception of air surcharges, if they are:

2.2.1 exchanged between bodies of the Universal Postal Union and bodies of the Restricted Unions;

2.2.2 exchanged between bodies of those Unions;

2.2.3 sent by such bodies to postal administrations or their offices.

2.3 Parcels relating to the postal service shall be exempt from all postal charges if exchanged between the following:

2.3.1 postal administrations;

2.3.2 postal administrations and the International Bureau;

¹ See Fin Prot art II.

² See Fin Prot art III.

- CONFIDENTIAL
- 2.3.3 post offices of member countries;
 - 2.3.4 post offices and postal administrations.
 - 2.4 Air parcels, with the exception of those originating from the International Bureau, shall be exempt from air surcharges.
 - 3 Prisoners of war and civilian internees
 - 3.1 Letter-post items, postal parcels and postal financial services items addressed to or sent by prisoners of war, either direct or through the offices mentioned in the Letter Post Regulations, shall be exempt from all postal charges, with the exception of air surcharges. Belligerents apprehended and interned in a neutral country shall be classed with prisoners of war proper so far as the application of the foregoing provisions is concerned.
 - 3.2 The provisions set out under 3.1 shall also apply to letter-post items, postal parcels and postal financial services items originating in other countries and addressed to or sent by civilian internees as defined by the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war, either direct or through the offices mentioned in the Letter Post Regulations.
 - 3.3 The offices mentioned in the Letter Post Regulations shall also enjoy exemption from postal charges in respect of letter-post items, postal parcels and postal financial services items which concern the persons referred to under 3.1 and 3.2, which they send or receive, either direct or as intermediaries.
 - 3.4 Parcels shall be admitted free of postage up to a weight of 5 kilogrammes. The weight limit shall be increased to 10 kilogrammes in the case of parcels, the contents of which cannot be split up and of parcels addressed to a camp or the prisoners' representatives there ("hommes de confiance") for distribution to the prisoners.
 - 4 Literature for the blind
 - 4.1 Literature for the blind shall be exempt from all postal charges, with the exception of air surcharges.

Article 9

Postal security

- 1** Postal administrations shall adopt and implement a proactive security strategy at all levels of postal operations to maintain and enhance customer confidence in the postal services in order to ensure a competitive edge in the market.
- 2** This strategy shall aim to:
 - 2.1** raise quality of service as a whole;
 - 2.2** increase employee awareness of the importance of security;
 - 2.3** create or reinforce security units;
 - 2.4** share operational, security and investigative information on a timely basis; and
 - 2.5** propose to legislatures, wherever necessary, specific laws, regulations and measures to improve the quality and security of worldwide postal services.

Part II

Rules applicable to letter post and postal parcels

Chapter 1

Provision of services

Article 10¹

Basic services

1 Postal administrations shall provide for the acceptance, handling, conveyance and delivery of letter-post items. **They shall also provide the same for postal parcels either as laid down in the Convention, or, in the case of outward parcels and after bilateral agreement, by any other means which is more advantageous to its customers.**

2 Letter-post items shall be classified according to one of the following two systems. Every postal administration shall be free to choose the system that it applies to its outward traffic.

3 The first system shall be based on the speed of treatment of the items. The latter shall therefore be divided into:

3.1 priority items, ie items conveyed by the quickest route (air or surface) with priority; weight limits: 2 kilogrammes in general, **but 5 kilogrammes in relations between administrations admitting such items from their customers**, 5 kilogrammes for items containing books and pamphlets (optional service), 7 kilogrammes for literature for the blind;

3.2 non-priority items, ie items for which the sender has chosen a lower rate, implying a longer delivery time; weight limits: same as those in 3.1.

4 The second system shall be based on the contents of the items. The latter shall therefore be divided into:

4.1 letters and postcards, together called "LC"; weight limit: 2 kilogrammes, **but 5 kilogrammes in relations between administrations admitting such items from their customers**;

4.2 printed papers, literature for the blind and small packets together called "AO"; weight limits: 2 kilogrammes for small packets, **but 5 kilogrammes in relations between administrations admitting such items from their customers**, 5 kilogrammes for printed papers, 7 kilogrammes for literature for the blind.

5 Special bags containing printed papers (newspapers, periodicals, books, etc) for the same addressee at the same address shall, in both systems, be called "M bags"; weight limit: 30 kilogrammes.

6 The exchange of parcels whose individual weight exceeds 20 kilogrammes shall be optional, with a maximum individual weight of 50 kilogrammes.

7 As a general rule, parcels shall be delivered to the addressees as soon as possible and according to the provisions in force in the country of destination. When parcels are not delivered

¹ See Fin Prot arts IV, V, VI, VII and VIII.

to the addressee's address, the addressee shall, unless this is impossible, be advised of their arrival without delay.

8 Any country whose postal administration does not undertake the conveyance of parcels may arrange for the provisions of the Convention to be implemented by transport companies. It may, at the same time, limit this service to parcels originating in or addressed to places served by these companies. The postal administration shall remain responsible for the execution of the Convention and of the Parcel Post Regulations.

Article 11

Postage charges and air surcharges

1 The administration of origin shall fix the postage charges for the conveyance of letter-post items throughout the entire extent of the Union. The postage charges shall cover delivery of the items to the place of address provided that this delivery service is operated in the country of destination for the items in question.

2 The charges applicable to priority letter-post items shall include any additional costs of fast transmission.

3 Administrations that apply the system based on the contents of letter-post items shall be authorized:

3.1 to collect air surcharges for letter-post airmail items;

3.2 to collect for surface air-lifted "S.A.L." items with reduced priority surcharges lower than those which they collect for airmail items;

3.3 to fix combined charges for the prepayment of airmail items and S.A.L. items, taking into account the cost of the postal services rendered by them and the cost of the air conveyance.

4 Administrations shall set the air surcharges to be collected for air parcels.

5 The surcharges shall be related to the air conveyance dues and shall be uniform for at least the whole of the territory of each country of destination whatever the route used; in calculating the air surcharge for a letter-post airmail item, administrations shall be authorized to take into account the weight of any forms used by the public which may be attached to the item.

6 The administration of origin may allow, for letter-post items containing:

6.1 newspapers and periodicals published in its country, a reduction of not more than 50% **in principle** of the tariff applicable to the category of items used;

6.2 books and pamphlets, music scores and maps, provided they contain no publicity matter or advertisement other than that appearing on the cover or the fly leaves, the same reduction as that provided for under 6.1.

7 The administration of origin may apply to non-standardized items charges different from those applicable to the standardized items defined in the Letter Post Regulations.

8 The reductions in charges pursuant to 6 shall also apply to items conveyed by air, but no reduction shall be granted on the portion of the charge intended to cover the costs of such conveyance.

Article 12 Special charges

1 No delivery charge may be collected from the addressee in respect of small packets weighing less than 500 grammes. Where domestic small packet items weighing over 500 grammes are subject to a delivery charge, the same charge may be collected in respect of incoming international small packets.

2 **Postal** administrations shall be authorized to collect in the cases mentioned below the same charges as in the domestic service.

2.1 Charge on letter-post items posted after the latest time for posting, collected from the sender.

2.2 Charge on items posted outside normal counter opening hours, collected from the sender.

2.3 Charge for collection at the sender's address, collected from the sender.

2.4 Charge, for withdrawal of a letter-post item outside normal counter opening hours, collected from the addressee.

2.5 Poste restante charge collected from the addressee; in the event of return to sender or redirecting of a parcel, the amount passed on may not exceed the amount set in the Postal Parcels Regulations.

2.6 A storage charge for any letter-post item weighing more than 500 grammes and for any parcel of which the addressee has not taken delivery within the prescribed period. This charge shall not apply to literature for the blind. In the case of parcels, it shall be collected by the administration which effects the delivery, on behalf of the administration in whose service the parcel has been kept beyond the prescribed periods; in the event of return to sender or redirection, the amount passed on may not exceed the amount set in the Postal Parcels Regulations.

3 Where a parcel is normally delivered to the addressee's address, no delivery charge may be collected from the addressee. Where delivery to the addressee's address is not normally provided, the advice of arrival should be delivered free of charge. In this case, if delivery to the addressee's address is offered as an option in response to the advice of arrival, a delivery charge may be collected from the addressee. This should be the same charge as in the domestic service.

4 Postal administrations prepared to cover risks of force majeure shall be authorized to collect a charge for cover against risks of force majeure the maximum amount of which is set in the **Letter Post** Regulations.

Article 13 Registered items

1 Letter-post items may be sent as registered items.

2 The charge on registered items shall be paid in advance. It shall be made up of the postage charge and of a fixed registration charge the maximum amount of which is set in the Regulations.

3 In cases where exceptional security measures are required, **postal** administrations may collect from the sender or from the addressee, in addition to the charge mentioned under 2, the special charges provided for by their internal legislation.

Article 14

Recorded delivery items

- 1 Letter-post items may be sent by the recorded delivery items service in relations between administrations which agree to provide this service.
- 2 The charge on recorded delivery items shall be paid in advance. It shall be made up of the postage charge and of a recorded delivery charge fixed by the administration of origin. This charge shall be less than the registration charge.

Article 15¹

Insured items

- 1 Priority and non-priority items and letters containing securities, valuable documents or articles as well as parcels may be exchanged with insurance of the contents for the value declared by the sender. This exchange shall be restricted to relations between postal administrations which have declared their willingness to admit such items, whether reciprocally or in one direction only.
- 2 In principle, the amount of the insured value shall be unlimited. Every administration may limit the insured value, so far as it is concerned, to an amount which may not be less than the amount set in the Regulations. However, the limit of insured value adopted in the internal service shall be applicable **only if it is equal to or higher than the amount of the indemnity set for the loss of a registered item or of a parcel weighing one kilogramme. The maximum amount shall be notified in SDR to the member countries of the Union.**
- 3 The charge on insured items shall be paid in advance. It shall be made up:
 - 3.1 for letter-post items, of the ordinary postage charge, the fixed registration charge laid down in article 13.2 and an insurance charge;
 - 3.2 for parcels, of the principal charge, an optional dispatch charge and an ordinary insurance charge; any air surcharges and charges for special services shall be added to the principal charge; the dispatch charge shall not exceed the registration charge for letter-post items.
- 4 Instead of the fixed registration charge, postal administrations may collect the corresponding charge of their internal service or, exceptionally, a charge the maximum amount of which is set in the Letter Post Regulations.
- 5 The maximum amount of the insurance charge shall be set in the Letter-Post Regulations.
 - 5.1 For letter post, this charge shall apply whatever the country of destination, even in countries which undertake to cover risks of force majeure.
 - 5.2 For parcels, any charge for cover against risks of force majeure shall be set so that the sum of this charge and the ordinary insurance charge do not exceed the maximum amount of the insurance charge.
- 6 In cases where exceptional security measures are required, administrations may collect from the sender or from the addressee, in addition to the charges mentioned under 3, 4 and 5, the special charges provided for by their internal legislation.
- 7 **Postal administrations shall have the right to provide their customers with an insured items service in accordance with specifications other than those defined in this article.**

¹ See Fin Prot art IX.

Article 16**Cash-on-delivery items**

1 Certain letter-post items and parcels may be sent cash-on-delivery. The exchange of cash-on-delivery items shall require prior agreement between administrations of origin and destination.

Article 17**Express items**

1 At the sender's request, letter-post items for countries where the administration performs the service shall be delivered by special messenger as soon as possible after their arrival at the delivery office. Any administration shall have the right to confine this service to priority items, to airmail items and, when this is the only means used between two administrations, to surface LC items.

2 Administrations which have various streams of letter mail shall enter express items into the fastest internal letters stream upon their arrival at the inward office of exchange and thereafter handle these items in the speediest manner possible.

3 Express items shall be subject, in addition to the postage, to a charge which may not be less than the amount of postage prepayable on an unregistered priority/non-priority item, as the case may be, or on an unregistered single rate letter and not more than the amount set in the Regulations. This charge must be fully paid in advance. For parcels, it is payable even if the parcel cannot be delivered by special messenger but only the advice of arrival.

4 When express delivery involves special demands, an additional charge may be collected in accordance with the provisions relating to items of the same kind in the internal service. For parcels, this supplementary charge shall be paid even if the parcel is returned to sender or redirected; however, in such cases, the amount passed on may not exceed the maximum set in the Postal Parcels Regulations.

5 If the regulations of the administration of destination permit, addressees may ask the delivery office for express delivery immediately on arrival of items which are intended for them. In that case the administration of destination shall be authorized to collect, on delivery, the charge that applies in its internal service.

Article 18¹**Advice of delivery**

1 The sender of a registered item, a recorded delivery item, a parcel or an insured item may apply for an advice of delivery at the time of posting by paying a charge the maximum amount of which is set in the Regulations. This advice of delivery shall be returned to him by the quickest route (air or surface).

2 However, for parcels, administrations may restrict this service to insured parcels if such restriction is provided for in their internal service.

Article 19**Delivery to the addressee in person**

1 At the sender's request, and in the service between those postal administrations which have given their consent, registered items, recorded delivery items and insured items shall be

¹ See Fin Prot art X.

delivered to the addressee in person. Administrations may agree to allow this option only for such items accompanied by an advice of delivery. In all cases, the sender shall pay a charge for delivery to the addressee in person the maximum amount of which is set in the Letter Post Regulations.

Article 20

Items for delivery free of charges and fees

1 In the service between postal administrations which have notified their agreement to that effect senders may, by means of a previous declaration at the office of origin, undertake to pay the whole of the charges and fees to which the **letter-post and parcel-post** items are subject on delivery. So long as a **letter-post** item has not been delivered to the addressee, the sender may ask after posting that the item be delivered free of charges and fees.

2 Senders shall undertake to pay the amounts which may be claimed by the office of destination. If necessary, they shall make a provisional payment.

3 The administration of origin shall collect from the sender a charge, the maximum amount of which is set in the Regulations, which it shall retain as payment for services rendered in the country of origin.

4 In the case of a request made after posting of a letter-post item, the administration of origin shall also collect an additional charge the maximum amount of which is set in the Regulations.

5 The administration of destination shall be authorized to collect a commission charge the maximum amount of which is set in the Regulations. This charge shall be independent of the presentation-to-Customs charge. It shall be collected from the sender on behalf of the administration of destination.

6 Every **postal** administration may restrict to **registered and insured letter-post** items the service of delivery free of charges and fees.

Article 21¹

International business reply service

1 **Postal** administrations may agree with each other to participate in an optional international business reply service (IBRS). **All administrations shall, however, be obliged to operate the IBRS "return" service.**

Article 22

International reply coupons

1 Postal administrations shall be permitted to sell international reply coupons issued by the International Bureau and to limit their sale in accordance with their internal legislation.

2 The value of the reply coupon shall be set in the Letter Post Regulations. The selling price fixed by the **postal** administrations concerned may not be less than this value.

3 Reply coupons shall be exchangeable in any member country **for postage stamps and, if not precluded by the internal legislation of the country of exchange, for postal stationery or postal prepayment marks or impressions** representing the minimum postage prepayable on an unregistered priority letter-post item or an unregistered airmail letter sent abroad.

¹ See Fin Prot art XI.