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INTERNATIONAL BUREAU
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UPU NEWS RELEASE

Romania will host 2004 UPU Congress

Berne, Switzerland/Bucharest, Romania, 11 February 2003

The Universal Postal Union has fixed the venue for the 23rd Universal Postal Congress. The UPU and the Government of Romania announced that the next UPU Congress will take place in the Romanian capital of Bucharest in 2004. This follows an earlier decision by Côte d'Ivoire to withdraw from organizing the Congress in Abidjan as a result of the current political situation in the country. The dates of the Congress still need to be finalized but the event will probably take place during the second half of September/beginning of October 2004.

The Chairman and CEO of the Romanian Post Office (*Posta Romana*), Gabriel Mateescu, says it is a great honour for his country and his postal administration to organize this high level international forum of postal services and to introduce so many foreign guests to Romanian hospitality. Mateescu says Romania is geared to welcome the large UPU Congress delegation to Bucharest since it has all the necessary meeting facilities, hotel accommodation and transport infrastructure in place. He pointed out that Bucharest has successfully hosted a number of large international events in recent years, including the 2002 Prime-Ministers' Summit of NATO candidate countries, the 2001 Ministerial Council of the OSCE, and the 2002 Pan-European Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society. Romania was one of the 22 founding members of the UPU in 1874.

UPU Director General Thomas E. Leavey voiced his satisfaction with the decision. "The Government of Romania, together with the national postal operator *Posta Romana*, has the organizational capabilities, infrastructure and resources to organize an international event of this size. In addition, it will be the first UPU Congress ever held in Eastern Europe. The Congress will have special importance for Romania as it prepares for entry into the European Union." Leavey pledged the support of the UPU's 189 member countries to assist Romania in making the Congress a great success.

The Palace of Parliament in Bucharest will serve as the main Congress venue. Apart from being the headquarters of the Romanian Parliament, the 330 000 square meter building with some 1000 halls and rooms also hosts a state-of-the-art International Conference Center that can comfortably accommodate the meetings of the UPU Congress.

The Universal Postal Congress is the supreme authority of the UPU and brings together plenipotentiaries of all member countries. It meets every five years. Although

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Congress' main function is legislative, it has in recent years focused much of its attention on strategic and broad policy issues. Some 2000 delegates attended the previous UPU Congress in Beijing, Peoples Republic of China, in 1999.

About the UPU

The Universal Postal Union is the primary forum for cooperation between postal services. As a specialized agency of the United Nations, the organization fulfils an advisory, mediating and liaison role, and renders technical assistance where needed. It sets the rules for international mail exchanges and makes recommendations to stimulate growth in mail volumes. The UPU's main objective is to improve the quality of the international mail service and to make postal services accessible, affordable, reliable and secure for all the citizens of the world.

The postal services of the UPU's 189 member countries form the largest physical distribution network in the world. More than five million postal employees work in 660 000 postal outlets to ensure that some 430 billion mail items are processed and delivered each year to all corners of the world.