



**OPERATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**

**PAPU/OTC/PPG/01/2025- Doc No.03**

**PROMOTION OF PHILATELY WORKING GROUP**

**20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025 (VIRTUAL)**

**TIME: 09:00 GMT**

**3<sup>rd</sup> AFRICAN PHILATELY CONFERENCE REPORT**

<b>1. Subject:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>3<sup>rd</sup> African Philately Conference Report</b></li></ul>	<b>References/Paragraphs</b>
<b>2. Decisions expected</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adopt the Report;</li><li>• Take note of the recommendations.</li></ul>	

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In pursuit of implementing the Promotion of Philately Working Group Action Plan, the 3<sup>rd</sup> African Philately Conference was held virtually from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

**2.0 MAIN AREAS COVERED IN THE REPORT**

The main areas covered in this report are:

- Objectives of the Conference
- Opening Ceremony
- Conference proceedings – Presentations
- Recommendations

**3.0 REPORT SUBMISSION**

The detailed report for the Conference is annexed herewith.



## 3<sup>rd</sup> AFRICAN PHILATELY CONFERENCE REPORT

5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2025 (ONLINE)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The 3<sup>rd</sup> African Philately Conference was held virtually from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025. The Conference, which was held under the theme, “**Digital Stamps: Offering a New Dimension in Philately**”, was aimed at providing participants with knowledge on digital stamps and an opportunity to exchange experiences and benchmark on best practices from industry leaders.

### 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference's overarching objective was to achieve worthwhile milestones in the world of philately, pave the way for innovative advancements in the African postal industry, and allow participants to exchange their experiences.

The specific objectives of the Conference included but were not limited to the following:

- a. To share knowledge on digital, crypto, and NTF Stamps, which are a new stepping stone in the world of collectibles, enabling postal organizations to reach new target groups and provide additional value to collectors;
- b. To explore how blockchain technology could be used to authenticate, understand the risks and mitigating factors as well as track the provenance of digital stamps, thereby offering a new dimension to collecting;
- c. To understand the definitions and taxonomy of today's digital philatelic products and ensure that stakeholders understand the types of products available and the latest developments;
- d. To benchmark and tap on success stories by industry leaders;
- e. To invest in capacity building to achieve digitalization of philatelic products in Africa in line with global trends.

### 3. PARTICIPATION

The Conference was attended by over ninety (90) participants from thirty-four (34) African countries namely: Angola, Botswana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Sudan, Tunisia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The facilitators were Philatelic Experts and Partners from across the globe, including Universal Postal Union (UPU), Stampfinity, Crypto Stamps.org, Ciphers.me, West Africa Study Circle, and Engineers Software Corporation.

Three Designated Operators, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Tunisia, shared their experiences implementing digital stamps.

## 4. OPENING CEREMONY

### 4.1 Promotion of Philately Working Group Chairperson

The Promotion of Philately Working Group Chairperson, Mrs. Funmilayo Esiri from Nigeria, officially opened the Conference. In her opening remarks, she pointed out the following:

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> APC is a follow-up to the two Conferences held before in Cape Town and Rabat;
- Convinced that the participants would benefit from the experts' knowledge;
- Encouraged Member States to continue sharing experiences and best practices on digital stamps;
- Thanked the General Secretariat for organizing the Conference.

### 4.2 PAPU Secretary General

The PAPU Secretary General, Dr. Sifundo Chief Moyo, delivered welcome remarks during the Conference. In his remarks, he emphasized the following:

- A high-level decision taken to make ***“the African Philately Conference an annual event”***;
- The PAPU General Secretariat successfully organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference in collaboration with Morocco from 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 in Rabat;
- The rising trend in digital technologies that had resulted in the production, sales, and collection of digital philatelic products & services;
- The overarching objective of the Conference was to achieve worthwhile milestones in the world of philately that will pave the way for innovative advancements in the postal industry in Africa as well as provide an opportunity for participants to exchange their experiences and share best practices;
- Several initiatives undertaken by the World Association for the Development of Philately (WADP) to promote and further develop philatelic products, hence the UPU being part of the conference to ensure that Africa is not left behind on global developments;
- Pledged PAPU General Secretariat's support to the Member States and their Designated Operators through the Promotion of Philately Working Group to guarantee the development and sustainability of the philatelic sector in Africa.

## 5. CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

### 5.1 UPU Presentation: Digital Philatelic Products

Mr. Stephane Cuennet of the UPU Philately and International Reply Coupons Programme and the WADP Secretariat presented on philately's digitalization. The main points from the presentation were:

- The Taxonomy of digital philatelic products, i.e., Digital stamps, NTF stamps, and Crypto stamps;
- UPU, through the World Association for the Development of Philately (WADP), helps Designated Operators (DOs) implement digital stamps;
- Stamps are fast evolving, and UPU, through WADP, is making sure they support DOs;
- A Working Group on Digital Philatelic Products Standards and Regulations was created under the WADP to study the issue of digital stamps and advise Member States and partners;
- 5 countries in Africa have issued either NTF or crypto stamps to date. These are Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Ghana, Namibia and Seychelles;
- Crypto and NTF Stamps pains and challenges;
- Free membership for the WADP Numbering System (WNS);

- Overview of WADP activities and benefits to Member States;
- 11/45 PAPU Member States are Members of the WNS;
- Membership to WNS ensures that DOs' legally issued stamps are registered, making it easier to identify illegal issues;
- The WNS, therefore, serves as a primary reference tool for checking postage stamp issues, helping to safeguard the philatelic industry against illegal issues;
- UPU Competition Class which is exclusive to WADP members, is organized every year since 2008;
- Members may connect to the philatelic markets through conferences and workshops;
- Service Providers recommended by WADP;
- Digital tools developed by the WADP.

## **5.2 Stampfinity Presentation: Blockchain**

Mr. Michael Dorner Luc Mangin, from Stampfinity made a presentation that covered the following main points:

- The presentation theme was 'How to bring Philately into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century';
- Stampfinity is a UPU-approved service provider for the issuance of crypto stamps;
- The organization has issued several crypto stamps for different Designated Operators, e.g., Austria, Netherlands, UAE, Belgium, Ghana...etc.;
- Blockchain technology ensures that stamps cannot be copied- counterfeit protected;
- The advantages of integrating stamps into the blockchain technology;
- Crypto stamps come in the form of cards (credit cards)
- Stampfinity is open to African DOs that would like to participate in issuing crypto stamps.

## **5.3 Crypto Stamps. Org Presentation: Crypto Stamps**

Mr Luc Mangin from Crypto Stamps.org, who is a stamp collector, shared his experience in collecting stamps:

- Started the business of collecting stamps in 2021;
- The organization collects both traditional and digital stamps;
- The portfolio of physical stamps, digital stamps with QR codes, NTF stamps, and crypto stamps.

## **5.4 Engineers Software Corporation Presentation: Philatelic Virtual Exhibition and Marketing of Digital Stamps**

Dr. Olivier Lompo, General Manager of Engineers Software Corporation, made a presentation on their work which covered the following:

- Overview of digital stamps;
- Use of technology to convert physical stamps into digital stamps;
- Leveraging on Artificial Intelligence in philately business;
- Development of virtual exhibition platforms;
- Digital marketing of philatelic products.

## **5.5 West Africa Study Circle Presentation: Digital Philately and the Collector**

Mr. Paul Redhead of the West Africa Study Circle presented the stamp collection from a collector's perspective. The presentation covered the following:

- Overview of what philately is to the collector;
- What drives collectors;
- Collectors and digital philately;
- Potential benefits and challenges.

## **5.6 Ciphers.me presentation: A Bright Future for Philately**

Mr. Patrick Terranea, a Web3 Engineer from Ciphers.me, made a presentation which covered the following main points:

- Ciphers.me is a fairly new player, launched in November 2023 in cooperation with Dutch security printer Royal Joh. Enschede and Deutsche Post AG;
- Every postal organization in the world can publish their crypto stamps;
- Every collector in the world can create a free account and securely collect crypto-stamps;
- Philately has entered a new era as classic stamp collecting meets digital stamp collection;
- Platform for marketing and selling stamps- one-stop shop for postal operators;
- Designing and in-house production of digital stamps;
- Different products the company offers and markets;
- Ciphers .me is prepared to discuss the possibility of issuing a crypto stamp for African Designated Operators in collaboration with PAPU;
- Offered to conduct a training workshop for PAPU Member States on implementing crypto stamps.

## **5.7 Sharing of Experiences by Designated Operators**

The Designated Operators of Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Tunisia shared their experiences implementing digital stamp projects.

### **5.7.1 Côte d'Ivoire - NTF Stamp**

Côte d'Ivoire was the first African country to issue an NTF stamp in 2022 in collaboration with Stampsdaq. Plans are underway to issue a crypto stamp in 2025/2026.

### **5.7.2 Ghana - Crypto Stamp**

Ghana was the first African country to issue a crypto stamp in 2024 in collaboration with Stampfinity.

### **5.7.3 Tunisia - Digital stamps**

Tunisia issued hybrid stamps with QR codes since 2021. Plans are underway to introduce crypto stamps.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a) Encourage Designated Operators to join the WNS to benefit from the membership.
- b) Benchmark on other Designated Operators' experience in the implementation of digital stamps in line with global trends;
- c) Consider issuing a joint crypto stamp for African Designated Operators in collaboration with recommended partners.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> African Philately Conference was successfully concluded. The Conference was insightful and allowed the participants to learn from industry leaders and global philatelic partners and share experiences and best practices through interactive presentations and discussions.