

2017.8.23 New International Reply Coupon

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) introduced the newest design of its International Reply Coupon (IRC) in early 2017. The design resulted from an international competition conducted by the UPU amongst its member countries, and is the work of Vietnamese graphic artist Nguyen Du. It displays the competition theme “The Post and Sustainable Development” with a pair of hands and a dove against an Arctic backdrop. The image of the yellow stamp on blue represents the future of the postal system.

It has been the practice since 2002 that UPU countries use a standard IRC design, which is adapted for each country by the addition of a couple of minor notations. These designs have each had either a 3 or 4 year tenure before being replaced by its successor. The new design (above right) is called the Istanbul model, so named because it was adopted at the 26th Universal Postal Congress that took place in Istanbul, Turkey on 7 October 2016, replacing the one known as the Doha model.

The UPU announcement did not state a date from when member countries could start using the new design, but presumably it was at some time between 2017.4.15, the deadline date for initial orders, and 2017.12.31, the final date on which the Doha model was still valid. The Istanbul model will remain valid until 2021.12.31.

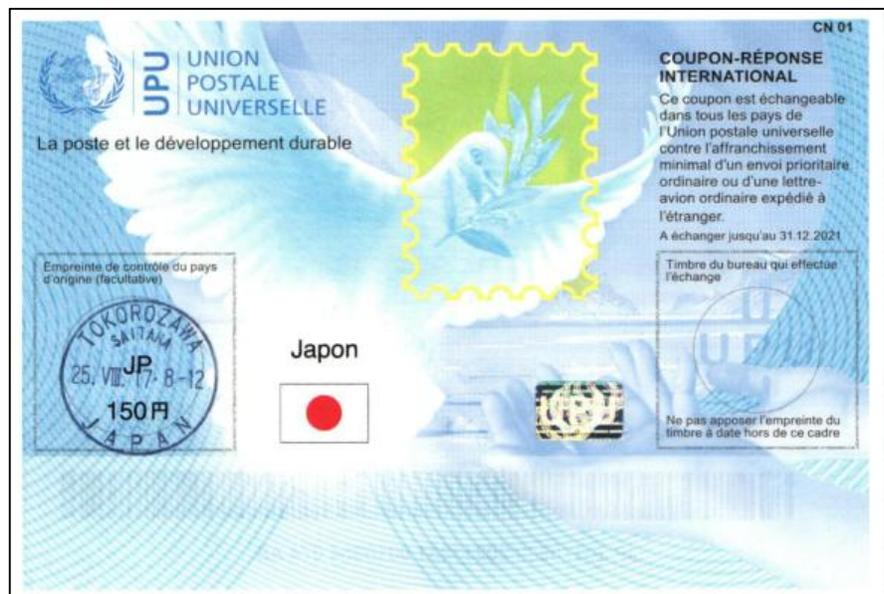
A similar veil of secrecy seems to have surrounded the adoption of the new design in Japan. In 2013 Japan Post issued a 2013.8.14 public announcement stating that Japan would adopt the Doha model from 2013.09.01, and that the last day of sale of the Nairobi model (the one it replaced) would be 2013.8.31.⁽¹⁾

We first became aware that Japan Post had started selling the new model when ISJP member Mr. Y. Suzuki sent us a scan (right) of one he had purchased at the Tokorozawa post office on 2017.8.25. Mr. Suzuki stressed in his note to us with the scan that it had been sold “without prior official notification”. Mr. Suzuki



asked the postmaster about this, and received the reply that an internal only announcement had been issued on 23 August stating that post offices could sell the new IRC model when they received them, but no earlier than 2017.8.23. In addition, this internal memo stated that post offices were not allowed to sell copies of the previous type after 2017.8.31.

In terms of changes, there really hasn't been much since the previous 2013 model except for the new illustration and the new French slogan 'La poste et le développement durable' (“Post and sustainable development”). There has also been a slight change in design, but not size or placement, to the hologram at the lower right. As has been the case in a number of previous models there are only two specific adaptations that Japan Post has made to the generic model. The first is the selling price in Japan, JP 150 ¥ (Japan ¥150), printed inside the box where the datestamp is applied, and just to the right outside the box is the word Japon (the French name for Japan) with the Japanese national flag below it. ■



¹ See report at JP 68/316-317.