



## **FACILITATION (FAL) DIVISION — TWELFTH SESSION**

**Cairo, Egypt, 22 March to 2 April 2004**

### **Agenda Item 2: Facilitation and security of travel documents and border control formalities** **2.1: Machine readable travel documents (MRTDs)**

#### **THE VALIDITY OF MACHINE READABLE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS**

(Presented by the Secretariat)

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Using the example of a machine readable passport (MRP), this paper explains why it is not advisable or practicable to manually extend the validity of machine readable travel documents (MRTDs) by manual means, and proposes a Standard that advocates against attempts of the manual extension of the validity of MRTDs.

1.2 The validity of any passport is indicated by its date of expiry. In the MRP, the date of expiry is one of the mandatory identification details (data elements) included in both its visual inspection zone (VIZ) and machine readable zone (MRZ). It is the MRZ which is the keystone of modern inspection systems and which, containing data in OCR-B font validated by check digits, serves to verify the entire passport's status as a valid document.

1.3 In the case of a passport that is not machine readable, an issuing State customarily has been able to extend its validity at its discretion by means of a rubber stamp and/or a hand-written notation. In the absence of guidance to the contrary, some States' passport issuing authorities have continued this practice after migrating to machine readable passports, resulting in problems and inconvenience for the passport holder when travelling across national borders.

#### **2. CONSEQUENCES OF MANUAL "EXTENSION" OF MRPs**

2.1 The manual extension of MRPs is not technically practicable because the specifications for MRPs (Doc 9303, Part 1), do not permit alteration of the data in the MRZ, including the expiration date. Thus, if an MRP is manually extended from the date on the data page (presumably by means of a rubber stamp on a separate page), its intended new expiration date will not agree with the date contained in the machine readable zone; as a result a receiving State's inspection authority using a machine reader may question the validity of the passport and refuse entry to the holder. For the same reason an airline operator reading the passport by machine for purposes of capturing advance passenger information data and noting that it has "expired", may refuse to board the holder. Furthermore, mechanical devices providing "self-service" immigration inspection would also reject such a passport. In short, participation in

accelerated border control systems is not available to the holder of an MRP which has been manually altered.

2.2 In view of the foregoing, in order to avoid negating the benefits derived from their substantial investment of resources in issuing MRPs, issuing States are urged not to attempt to extend the validity of these documents by manual means. In modern passport production systems, the only practical way to update an MRP is to issue a new one. It is proposed that ICAO formalize this advice in the context of Annex 9 and related guidance material.

### 3. ACTION BY THE DIVISION

3.1 The Division is invited to recommend the adoption of the following Standard in Chapter 3 of Annex 9:

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#### **B. Documents required for travel**

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3.4 Contracting States shall not attempt to extend the validity of their machine readable travel documents by a rubber stamp or other manual means.

~~(3.11 Note 1)~~ *Note.— Specifications for machine readable travel documents (Doc 9303, Series) do not permit alteration of the expiration date and other data in the machine readable zone.*

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