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only<sup>1</sup>**

## 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**  
**2.4: Advance passenger information (API)**

### CONSIDERATIONS ON API SYSTEMS

(Presented by the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC)<sup>2</sup>)

#### SUMMARY

This working paper presents to the Division proposals on API systems, recognizing the need to develop standards and recommended practices.

Action by the Division is in paragraph 4.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Over recent years individual States and their border agencies have been focussing their efforts on enhancing the effectiveness of border control operations. Following recent acts of terrorism, in particular the events of 11 September 2001, a rapidly increasing number of States are taking steps to introduce Advance Passenger Information (API) systems or have already done so. While these projects are at different stages of maturity, it is generally recognized that there is a need to develop internationally agreed standards to guide this development.

1.2 This paper limits its consideration to those instances where passenger information is collected and transmitted by carriers to border control agencies in the country of destination in advance of flight arrival. It does not address the development of systems which seek to obtain information from airline passenger name records (PNR). Nor does it address advance passenger processing (APP), which entails the collection and transmission of data elements in advance of flight departure and the provision of a response in respect of each passenger to the carrier.

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<sup>1</sup> French version provided by the European Civil Aviation Conference.

<sup>2</sup> Albania, Armenia, **Austria**, Azerbaijan, **Belgium**, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, **Denmark**, Estonia, **Finland**, **France**, **Germany**, **Greece**, Hungary, Iceland, **Ireland**, **Italy**, Latvia, Lithuania, **Luxembourg**, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, **Netherlands**, Norway, Poland, **Portugal**, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, **Spain**, **Sweden**, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, **United Kingdom** (the 15 Member States of the European Union (EU) appear in bold).

1.3 The current ICAO Recommended Practice on API is taken from the Eleventh edition of Annex 9 published in July 2002:

“3.34 Where appropriate, Contracting States should introduce a system of Advance Passenger Information (API), which involves the capture of certain passport or visa details prior to departure, the transmission of the details by electronic means to the public authorities, and the analysis of such data for risk management purposes prior to arrival in order to expedite clearance. To minimize handling time during check-in, document reading devices should be used to capture the information in machine readable travel documents. When specifying the identifying information on passengers to be transmitted, Contracting States should only require information that is found in the machine readable zones of passports and visas that comply with the specifications contained in Doc 9303 (series) Machine Readable Travel Documents. All information required should conform to specifications for UN/EDIFACT PAXLIST message formats.”

## 2. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

2.1 Since the adoption of Recommended Practice 3.34, more countries have begun to turn their attention to the development of API systems. This new global attitude is evidenced by the establishment of a raft of international working groups with a remit to progress development in the areas of API and information exchange. For example, the original WCO/IATA Guidelines on API have been updated this year by the WCO Permanent Technical Committee Working Group and IATA; the result of that work being the production of a jointly agreed new API data set standard with which ICAO has associated itself.

2.2 Another such group is the Four Countries Conference (4CC), established by the immigration authorities of Australia, Canada, the UK and the USA to consolidate progress in the various international fora and to consider issues associated with the adoption of standards for the development of interoperable systems. This work is now being progressed by a sub group of the IATA/Control Authorities Working Group (IATA/CAWG) which has drawn up a revised statement of principles intended to act as a guide to any State intending to set up an API system. These guidelines will endorse the WCO/IATA/ICAO recommendation that the UN/Edifact message format be used at the standard for data transmission.

## 3. CONSIDERATION

3.1 Against a backdrop of rising passenger figures, resource constraints for many border control authorities and an increased terrorist threat, there has been a discernible shift in emphasis away from isolated, unilateral immigration control systems towards enhanced international cooperation and a multilateral approach to passenger processing.

3.2 API is an intrinsic part of this developing strategy and its purpose and value is widely shared and acknowledged. It can:

- a) support passenger processing functions and facilitate a reduction in the processing time of *bona fide* (non-targeted) passengers;
- b) provide data for risk management purposes;
- c) provide a tool for identifying passengers who are a known immigration or security threat;
- d) provide for more effective allocation of border control and law enforcement resources;

- e) provide intelligence to assist in the identification of trends in immigration abuse;
- f) support local and international initiatives to combat the movement of inadequately documented arrivals; and
- g) be a catalyst for closer inter-agency cooperation.

3.3 However in developing API systems, a number of basic issues need to be considered. These include the following:

- a) standardization of the data elements;
- b) legal basis of API (including data protection);
- c) financing of implementation;
- d) impact on check-in procedures of carriers; and
- e) interoperability of systems.

#### 4. ACTION BY THE DIVISION

4.1 The Division is invited to:

- a) note the work being done in the field of API taking into account the guidelines and principles produced by WCO/IATA/ICAO and IATA/CAWG;
- b) recognize the urgent need for an internationally coordinated approach to API; and
- c) request ICAO to take the lead in developing international standards and recommended practices for API.

— END —