



TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP ON MACHINE READABLE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS (TAG-MRTD)

NINETEENTH MEETING

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Agenda Item 2: Activities of the NTWG

Agenda Item 2.3: Towards better Practice in National Identity Management

TOWARDS BETTER PRACTICE IN NATIONAL IDENTITY MANAGEMENT (Guidance for Passport Issuing Authorities and National Civil Registration)

(Presented by the New Technologies Working Group (NTWG))

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Over the past several years, many nations of the world have invested time, money and great expectations in enhanced travel document programs, especially in machine readable ePassports employing biometrics. By all accounts, the current generation of ICAO-compliant travel documents is the best and most secure the world has ever known. The travel document community can take great pride in these accomplishments. However, there is a threat that affects virtually all issuing authorities that can undermine, or indeed, subvert this important work: national identity management, that is, the kinds of documents, civil registry systems and other media that are used to verify and/or validate an applicant's identity. Currently, much of the judgments that countries reach regarding issuance of travel documents are based in large part on the representations of the applicant in validating their bona fides. At this year's Fifth ICAO Symposium, speaker after speaker called for improvements and concerted effort on addressing and improving this situation.

1.2 In managing identity for the benefit of their communities and citizens, National Civil Registration and passport issuing authorities must:

- Establish identity;
- Confirm citizenship;
- Assess entitlement.

1.2.1 While the latter two areas are primarily sovereign matters determined by national laws and policies, all of the issues involved in establishing identity are universal, common and shared.

1.2.2 Every applicant for a certificate or identity card or travel document is making a claim to a particular identity. The first step of the issuing authority is to test the claim, in other words, to establish identity.

1.2.3 The claim to an identity is tested by the national authority checking:

- what does the applicant “know” about the identity that is claimed;
- who “is” the applicant;
- what does the applicant “have” to support the claimed identity.

1.2.4 It is only through effective checks in all three areas that a high level of assurance of identity can be achieved.

1.3 Testing what the client “knows” about the identity they are claiming will usually involve completion of an application form, information which can be checked at an interview. Corroborating checks may extend to confirmation that the claimed identity is actually being used in the community – a process sometimes described as checking the social footprint or social context. Identifying and articulating better practice in this area is a task identified in ICAO’s 2020 Vision.

1.3.1 Checking who the client “is” will usually involve the collection and comparison with prior records of unique biometric information. For passports, photographs and signatures were the traditional biometrics. With ICAO’s development of the ePassport, digital facial and fingerprint and/or iris images allow automation of biometric comparisons at issuance and at border clearance.

1.4 The primary subject of this paper is the final category, the testing of what applicants “have” to support their claim to a particular identity. The civil registration and identity documents which accompany an application for a travel document and the application for an identity card which entitles passport issuance will be referred to generally and in this paper as breeder documents.

1.5 Breeder documents are the fundamental physical evidence accepted by national authorities to establish a *prime facie* claim to an identity. This paper calls for a global focus on this problem, outlines several possible paths forward to improve the foundations on which the world’s travel documents rely and seeks TAG endorsement to carry out this work.

2. BACKGROUND AND PRESENT STATUS

2.1 The threat of an individual presenting a genuine passport that was issued on the basis of false breeder documentation is very real. In today’s document issuing environment, presentation of these false documents and false claims of entitlement will be rewarded with a travel, residence or identity document that has far more credibility than ever before, a document that in many countries contains a chip with biometric information of the bearer. Today’s documents contain advanced security features of great capability and when present, generally attest to the veracity of the documents themselves, and, hence, the bearer. With the advances that have been made in the documents themselves, there is a much quicker and widespread presumption on the part of inspection authorities to “accept” the legitimacy of the documents and thereby, the bearer.

2.2 In addition to introducing improved security features and biometrics with chip technologies, many countries have also moved from a decentralised to a centralised personalisation system. A change that allows issuing authorities to apply high-quality personalisation techniques and

respond quickly to the latest developments in the area of document fraud. The introduction of new security features, production methods and personalisation techniques has made the most recent generation of identification documents more difficult to forge. Moreover, improved staff training has increased the likelihood of a forged or counterfeit ID document being detected.

2.3 These kinds of improvements have resulted in an increasingly prevalent global shift from document fraud to identity fraud. Although look-alike fraud is still quite common, it is expected that the use of biometrics will help to impede this type of crime. Over the next few years, a large number of identity, travel, residence and other identity documents will contain a biometric identifier that will enable verification, within an automated environment, and remotely if desired. We live in an increasingly global context that more and more relies on high-quality identity documentation, which includes all underlying civil and administrative systems and processes. Although we have taken extensive and successful steps to improve the quality of identity documents, there remains to be addressed the foundations upon which these documents ultimately reside. This includes the documents themselves as well as the registries and other databases that form the cornerstone for verification.

2.4 Therefore, as well as the documents themselves that are the “usual suspects” used by applicants for travel documents, such as birth certificates, cards of national identity and driving licenses, often, though not universal, the information that is captured in these and other breeder documents also resides in a database of national content. While the existence, quality and ease of accessing such databases vary dramatically from country to country, increasingly governments have been focusing on these sources of information either in lieu of or in addition to the documents themselves. While this is a very useful approach to verifying the legitimacy of entitlement claims, there are sometimes limitations of a legal or privacy nature that impedes the use and utility of these databases. Some countries are beginning to link these data sources, for example birth and death records, to serve as automatic checks and verifications. This initiative seeks to acknowledge the importance of these secure sources of information and to offer suggestions on their use in addition to the documents themselves.

3. POSSIBLE AVENUES FORWARD

3.1 To limit the impact and effect of this endemic and pervasive vulnerability as much as possible, it is essential that the document community develop and articulate best practices, successful approaches and where feasible, minimal security norms for civil status documents and the databases on which they depend. This should be viewed in the same context as that in which we have defined minimum security specifications for travel documents, though this initiative must and shall acknowledge the realities and sensitivities of sovereignty that are present in all of these functions. This reality must be considered and respected, but cannot inhibit or preclude the pursuit of these critical enhancements.

3.2 There are two fundamental vehicles that the ICAO TAG has used to develop, assess, articulate and convey guidance and technical specifications: Document 9303 and the Technical Report. While ICAO has the authority and capability to develop and publish travel document standards as outlined in Annex 9, the nature of breeder documentation does not neatly fall within that mandate. However, since the veracity and validity of the documents issued within the context of 9303 depend on breeder documentation, ICAO does have a *responsibility* to take any and all measures available to improve this foundation. Therefore, the first approach should be considered in the manner that the present 9303 contains informative material that is not mandatory standards; material such as that cited above regarding minimum security expectations for travel documents. While admittedly requiring a careful approach, this “standards” concept should be explored. Second, historically, the New Technologies Work Group has focused on a number of specific issues and matters and addressed them through drafting

Technical Reports. These work items have frequently, though not always, eventually been codified into document 9303. The contents of a Technical Report (TR) can be either normative or informative with respect to the relationship to 9303. With respect to the subject of breeder documentation, whose breadth and scope and sovereignty implications suggest that standards might not be appropriate, the use of a Technical Report could be the vehicle to capture and memorialize best practices and other forms of guidance. Work on a TR could also serve to underscore the specific nature of the breeder document problem and provide ways in which issuing authorities could enhance their abilities to assess such documents and minimize the negative impacts such documents can have on decision making.

3.3 The path forward must be an integral component of the larger spectrum of government direction, purpose, policy and need, consistent with the ICAO Business Plan as well as the just-introduced 2020 Vision Forum. In summary, this path will seek:

- To address the global threat to travel document integrity caused by entitlement judgments that are affected by the weaknesses of the current reliability on breeder documentation;
- To focus broad international attention on the importance and magnitude of these threats with a view toward their mitigation and ultimate elimination; and,
- To create a forum and foundation for the development of the worldwide security enhancement of breeder documentation, in the spirit that Annex 9 focuses on travel documents.

In addition, it should be noted that work will be required as well over time in the other two areas of focus for establishing identity as enumerated in 1.3 above. Specifically, testing what the client “knows” and checking who the client “is”.

4. **ACTIONS BY THE TAG/MRTD**

4.1 The TAG/MRTD is requested to:

- a) acknowledge the importance of the breeder documentation issue and the necessity to undertake a review for enhancement and improvement; and,
- b) authorize the New Technology Work Group to engage in work directed to those ends and to develop approaches as outlined above with the view of returning to TAG for further clarification and sanction if and as when needed.

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