

# ICAO TRIP

REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM

BUILDING **FUTURE RESILIENCE:**  
THE ROLE OF **SEAMLESS**  
AND **CONTACTLESS** TRAVEL



# Refugee Travel Documents: Ensuring Inclusion and Enabling Access

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**1922**

First travel documents for refugees issued by Fridtjof Nansen and the League of Nations

**1951-1954**

1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees and 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons

**1978**

UNHCR Executive Committee expresses the hope that “States will issue travel documents to refugees”

**Today**

Refugee travel documents need to be machine-readable conforming to ICAO standards, and to ensure international protection



## WHAT IS UNHCR DOING?

- For a long time, UNHCR printed booklets that many States used for refugee travel.
- Today, we continue to **support States to include refugees in their national systems for the issuance of travel documents** that are fit for purpose.

## WHY ISSUE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS FOR REFUGEES?

- This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century – **humans need to move**;
- **Cover labour shortages** by putting refugee skills into use;
- Provide **safety** and **dignity** to refugees and support them to **rebuild their lives**
- **Combat trafficking** and other unregulated systems

## WHY REFUGEES NEED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS?

**“Travel documents are the key to unlocking refugee potential. Without them, dreams of a better life are put on hold.”**

*Bahati, refugee student in Italy*

**“I imagine a future where refugees are not waiting for help; where they can use their travel document to work, travel, and live normal lives, just like anyone else.”**

*Prince, refugee working as IUNV at UNHCR*

# 2023 GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM – MULTISTAKEHOLDER PLEDGE ON REFUGEE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

We call States to issue and accept machine-readable refugee travel documents that:

- offer **protection** from refoulment;
- allow **return** to issuing country;
- can be used for **visa** applications;
- have a reasonable **length of validity**;
- can be **easily renewed** through **established procedures**;
- can be **accepted as ID** by financial and other institutions.



This is not about creating parallel systems – but about **including refugees** into national passport issuance systems.

## REMEMBER...

- **1 in every 200 people** is a refugee.
- UNHCR operates in **130 countries**.
- In many countries, UNHCR shares with governments a tool, called **proGres**, which is a repository of refugee **biometric data**
- UNHCR uses this data to **support refugee access** to services, including healthcare and education – **why not travel documents?**



## Looking at the technical level – what is needed?

- **Legal and administrative frameworks** that include refugees
- Issuance of **machine-readable** travel documents for refugees
- Planning with **passport companies** on document packages
- Financing and **funding mechanisms**
- **Scaling** staffing and resource **capacity**
- Understand and address **obstacles** for refugees (e.g. lack of breeder documents)

## WAY FORWARD...

- UNHCR wants to work with you as **experts** in travel and identity management to ensure that refugees are not left behind.

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