Opening Remarks
by the Secretary General of ICAO
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar
to the
18th TRIP Symposium

(Montréal, Canada, 12 September 2023)

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Excellencies,

Distinguished Representatives to the ICAO Council,

Distinguished participants and delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is my great pleasure to welcome you today to the 18th ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) Symposium and Exhibition.

2. Our TRIP event theme this year is *Enhancing Traveller Mobility through Technology and Innovation,* and I am sure we are all very eager to learn more about how to advance that objective.

3. The last time ICAO hosted this event, air transport was still only just recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we're now in a much more positive situation, it is critical that we remain cognizant of how vulnerable the aviation sector is to disruptions that negatively impact passenger facilitation procedures and policies, including those relating to border checkpoint processing.

4. This is one of the key reasons why the implementation of the ICAO TRIP Strategy is so important. Many elements of the TRIP strategy are key to assuring smooth international passenger travel and its continued implementation will strengthen the resilience of global aviation.

5. The TRIP Strategy, and accordingly the agenda of this Symposium, is designed around five key components that help to expedite and secure international travel, namely:

   a. Evidence of Identity
   b. Document Issuance and Control
   c. Machine Readable Travel Documents
   d. Inspection Systems and Tools; and
   e. Interoperable Applications

6. Generally speaking, our TRIP components fall into two categories: the *issuance* of travel documents and the *inspection* of travel documents.

7. When we think of automation and the use of technologies, we most often associate that with the *inspection* part of the equation. Everyone wants to see tangible outcomes for the aviation and border control ecosystem – and those become visible when the travel document undergoes inspection.

8. As we increasingly migrate towards digital credentials and automate inspection procedures, we should also recall that the underlying integrity of a State's identity management and travel document issuance processes is just as vital to our facilitation objectives.

9. I would in fact like to take this opportunity to call on all of us to collectively re-emphasize the application of technology and innovation towards improving the integrity of the travel document issuance process. Any secure and integral travel document issuance process will need to ensure that the bearer is deemed legitimate. Technology like facial recognition can also be used to support

Evidence of Identity and *Document Issuance and Control.* These are key TRIP components related to **issuance of travel documents**.

10. I would like to highlight that enhanced trust in the integrity of the travel document issuance process of a State has a direct impact on the entry and visa requirements for their citizens when travelling abroad, as well as their ability to join trusted traveller programmes, or use automated border clearance solutions. Everyone boarding an international flight today has an interest in this topic.

11. Let me put it in another way: Travel document issuance and inspection are closely intertwined, and technology and innovation are needed at both ends of the equation.

12. As we move towards the Digital Travel Credential, or DTC, continuing to develop the specifications contained in ICAO Doc 9303, *Machine Readable Travel Document* will continue to be the only way to maintain global interoperability at borders, the cornerstone objective of passenger facilitation.

13. Let's also talk about the importance of verification.

14. In the area of ePassports, more than 165 of ICAO's 193 Member States are now issuing ePassports representing more than 1 billion ePassports in circulation.

15. According to ICAO Annex 9, both the physical and electronic components of the document need to be compliant with Doc 9303 MRTD specifications – this is vitally important to ensure global interoperability.

16. However, a significant number of States issuing ePassports have not joined the ICAO Public Key Directory (PKD).

17. The PKD is a tool that helps verify and authenticate ePassports at borders, and enables States and other aviation stakeholders to capitalize on the benefits that ePassports are meant to deliver. Joining and effectively using the ICAO PKD is nothing less than an essential element of effective border control management.

18. While the PKD and ICAO's biometric passport standards have been available to States for many years now, I would like to discuss the much more recent ICAO innovation that I just mentioned: The ICAO **Digital Travel Credential (DTC).**

19. **The DTC specifications** will be the cornerstone of tomorrow's passenger experience, providing a solution and pathway towards globally interoperable digital verification of identity, like the ICAO specifications that precede them.

20. I'd like to highlight that while the DTC is designed for verification at border controls, it could also be used to assert one's identity in other settings as well, just like physical passports are today. It is a leapfrog technology for proving your identity electronically in an incredibly vast range of potential scenarios worldwide.

21. ICAO Doc 9303 is the foundation of all this. Compliance with this document is the only means to securing global interoperability. For this reason, I am pleased to inform you today that ICAO is working closely with the experts of the TRIP Technical Advisory Group (TAG/TRIP) to establish a **new programme** aimed at better assuring such compliance.

22. The DTC is not the only significant innovation we've achieved recently.

23. The interoperability and verifiability of barcodes in the travel environment has been greatly improved with the introduction of the Visible Digital Seal, or VDS, which is a digitally signed barcode based on the ICAO trust framework that can be placed on a smartphone, or printed on paper.

24. Barcodes that are both easy to scan and verifiable are already playing an important aspect in the travel and border environment. As we move forward it will be important to create a common and globally interoperable structure and format for various types of barcodes used for cross-border purposes. ICAO VDS-based barcodes are cost-efficient, secure, trustworthy, privacy-protecting, interoperable, and built on existing technologies and standards, already deployed at borders and airports throughout the world.

25. I would now like to turn to passenger data.

26. **ICAO is a core partner of the UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme**, a flagship initiative of the UN Office on Counter-Terrorism, or UNOCT, and our role in assisting States with building passenger data programmes is a key reason why.

27. The presence today of UN Under-Secretary General for Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov is an illustration of the mutual importance we have for our partnership in this area.

28. ICAO is currently helping States put Annex 9 SARPs and the related Guidelines for Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) data into action, via a dedicated legal framework.

29. **Annex 9 places an obligation on States to implement capabilities to process both API and PNR data**.

30. ICAO, however, fully recognizes the challenge that implementing these Standards can entail for States.

31. That is why we've developed in-depth training programmes for Annex 9 and the TRIP strategy, including a considerable emphasis on passenger data, as a central feature in our "No Country Left Behind" initiative priorities.

32. This Symposium is in itself a prime example of that commitment to foster the implementation of the TRIP Strategy worldwide.

33. It provides such a versatile platform from which many of our digital aspirations for the facilitation of international airline passengers can be envisioned and realized together.

34. In that sense I would also like to thank Agnes Diallo, the Director General of eu-LISA for joining us today. The EU initiatives for developing an exit-entry and travel authorization system are big steps and will considerably improve passenger facilitation and border security.

35. Additionally, I would draw your attention to our cooperation with INTERPOL and the joint ICAO/INTERPOL Biometric Forum, which will be held later this week, on the afternoon of 14 September.

36. In conclusion, it is my honour to announce that the recipient of 2023 *TRIP Award of Excellence* is Mr. Rajesh Rajeshkumar.

37. It reflects the fact that Rajesh has been a leader within ICAO TRIP for nearly two decades.

38. He was the first operator of the ICAO PKD, and has been a longstanding contributor to both working groups of the TRIP Technical Advisory Group, the New Technologies Working Group and the Implementation and Capacity-Building Working Group.

39. His immense contribution to the development of Doc 9303 and ICAO's work is deeply valued by the ICAO Facilitation Section, as well as other TAG/TRIP experts.

40. On that inspirational note, I would now like to wish you all an enjoyable week in Montréal, and a productive and interesting Symposium.

41. I hereby declare this Eighteenth TRIP Symposium and Exhibition open.

42. Thank you.

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