In the Name of Allah, the most Companionate, the most Merciful
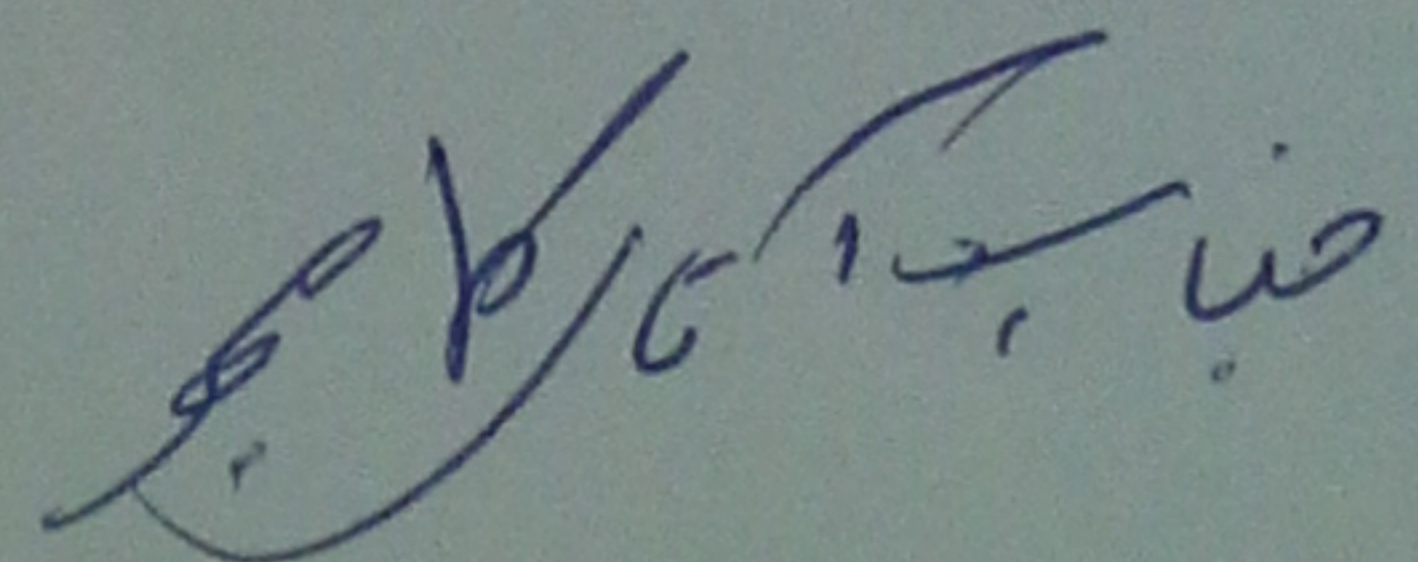
Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Guests,

First, let me welcome all of you to the international exhibition of ICAO, in the beautiful Kish Island. I am really happy and delighted to participate in this seminar and consult with aviation and communication activists. I would like to avail the opportunity and raise some points regarding the importance of passports as well as their role in facilitating people-to-people communications and expansion of aviation industry.

There is no doubt that when we are talking about international communications among human beings, ICAO ranks first, because this air transport system bears the responsibility of more than 70% of delivering international exchanges. While taking into account the importance of travel security, communication facilitation has always been one of the most serious concerns of experts in this field.

Rapid developments taken place in recent years have greatly affected international communications of human beings. Globalization has increased international relations, and human beings, through different forms of trade, residence, education and migration, are crossing borders and expect to do this in the most convenient manner.

On the other hand, states, in line with exercising their statehood functions, are entitled to monitor country's inbound and outbound movements. Accompanied by the unwanted waves of migration, expansion of insecurity and terroristic threats has led to the exponential expansion of control over foreign nationals.

Striking a balance between the will of people to facilitate communications and concerns of states to bring order and establish security within their territories has changed into one of the most complicated issues in the contemporary world,

but I am happy to say that ICAO, as a civil organization, enjoys a good history of paying attention to this issue.

Identity authentication and assuring security and safety of international travels, which have been significantly addressed by ICAO, are among the concerns of individuals as well as states. Using modern technologies to issue travel documents has gained popularity in international level and we are all witnessing transformation in issuing travel documents (biometric passports) and anti-forgery systems.

While recognizing the necessity of facilitating provision of services and at the same time establishing security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been one of the pioneers in developing travel documents. In this regards, Iran has participated actively in Public Key Directory (PKD), developed to facilitate authenticating the identity of international travelers. We believe that establishing a transparent and comprehensive system accessible to all countries would be effective and useful in increasing security for people and would significantly decrease crimes related to forgery, insecurity and terrorism resulting from illegal entrance.

Increasing the number of border controls, moving towards using more electronic travel documents and defining a universal unique serial number based upon biometric identifiers for all human beings are necessities of communication development nowadays. This is to inform you that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been issuing e-passports in its Passport Department for 10 years. E-passports have very significant and useful benefits, including easy travel, prevention of document forgery and possibility of setting up a databank. For the Islamic Republic of Iran, the main features of e-passports are active participation in international arena, transparency, promotion of Iranian passports' security and using the modern technology.

While playing an important role in the region and being located at the heart of regional developments, Iran is more interested to ensure convergence and maximum interaction with the international community. Issuing valid travel documents in accordance with the latest standards is a policy implemented by

Iran in recent years by joining the international bodies like PKD, having active participation in MRTD sessions, cooperating with ICAO, increasing border cooperation with its neighboring countries and facilitating cross-border traffic.

To properly implement the international procedures corresponding the travel documents, in addition to E-Passport Plan, a significant number of measures have been taken to collect the information of those foreign nationals applying to visit Iran and provide them with more facilities. CSCA, the central web site to issue passports, was established in Feb. 2016 in the respective Ministry and as a result, those embassies of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the highest numbers of applications are on our agenda to use the same system, and hopefully by the efforts made by our technical colleagues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this will be done during this year. It is noteworthy that at the current time, two diplomatic missions of the Islamic Republic of Iran were opened in Turkey and they are issuing e-passports.

It is clear that all the measures taken in order to maintain the strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to identify and authenticate the identity of Iranian nationals (especially those living abroad) is one of the crucial criteria to have an e-government. Probably, terrorist threats and activities in the Middle East have accelerated the process of authenticating identity and approving originality during implementation and it is one of the current concerns of states.

Directors and experts in this field have not neglected ensuring conformity with provisions of Annex 9 and implementation of Document 9303. Despite the imposition of unfair sanctions against the country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, through establishing convergence with other relevant bodies in the country, is among the countries enjoying e-passport technology.

Although there are some countries that have not joined this organization due to some political and security considerations, the Islamic Republic of Iran, based on its interactive approach and to ensure constructive engagement with all international bodies and their Member States, has, through proposing some initiatives and showing interests, tried to promote its level of relations with these bodies and other countries. The Islamic Republic of Iran has signed more than 80

consular MOUs and visa waiver programs with different countries and a number of regular annual consular meetings are held with different countries at the Consular Deputy Minister or Consular Director General levels. One of the functions of the Consular Directorate is to seize opportunities to promote and maintain the level of consular interactions with all countries.

With regard to the defined strategy within the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has put explaining its foreign policy and maintaining relations with all countries and international bodies on the top of its agenda. It should be mentioned that consular affairs, as a leading part and a point of connection with external systems, contains significant information and analyzing it would be very effective for decision-making.

In conclusion, I wish success for this important seminar and thank you for your attention.