

**Regional Seminar on MRTDs and Traveller Identification Management
12-14 November 2013, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso**

Opening Remarks

Mr. Gaoussou Konate, ICAO Deputy Director, Dakar Office

Excellencies

Dear colleagues

Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Secretary General of ICAO, Mr. Raymond Benjamin, I am delighted to welcome you all to this Regional Seminar on MRTDs and Identification Management for the Africa Region.

This seminar has been organized by ICAO, with the support of the Government of Burkina Faso. Our generous hosts have put every effort to make this seminar a success. In particular, our Burkina Faso partners contributed with good ideas how to make the Seminar innovative and relevant to the needs of the region.

Let me start with major policy developments that shape ICAO's work related to travel documents and their relevance to aviation. This has been a defining year to the MRTD Programme and the global traveller identification community. The ICAO Traveller Identification Programme Strategy – known in short as ICAO TRIP Strategy – was endorsed by the 38th Session of ICAO Assembly just over a month ago.

The Strategy responded to the needs and expectations of Member States, and provided a framework for achieving the maximum benefits of travel documents in the future. It brought together all elements of identification management, while building on ICAO leadership in matters related to Machine Readable Travel Documents.

The key point of the ICAO TRIP Strategy is a recognized need for a holistic and integrated approach to traveller identification management. An approach that links the five elements of traveller identification and border controls into a coherent framework. An approach that contributes to States' capacity to uniquely identify individuals by providing authorities with tools and guidance how to establish and verify the identity of travellers.

ICAO recognizes the benefits of traveller identification management to aviation security and facilitation. This Seminar provides an excellent opportunity for examining various components of the ICAO TRIP Strategy and discussing the ways of its implementation.

Historically, the ICAO MRTD Programme started as a subset of the Facilitation programme, aimed at producing global specifications for inter-operable travel documents. This aim has been already achieved. Now we are moving to greater challenges. We explore how the ICAO TRIP Strategy – relying on all the trust and credibility the MRTD programme has generated - can contribute further to the global efforts of enhancing security and aviation growth through effective identification management.

Having a good policy is vital – but it is not sufficient. The remaining big challenge on our joint agenda is implementing the TRIP Strategy in practice.

Current ICAO TRIP standards and specifications are quite elaborate. A number of lesser developed States find it difficult to fully comply with such ICAO requirements. This is caused mainly by the lack of technical expertise, shortage of funds, or often both. A number of States face capacity gaps and challenges in the area of MRTDs, identification management and border controls. There has been also a growing demand for capacity-building assistance in those areas world-wide.

ICAO has been exploring ways how to intensify assistance through capacity-building projects and technical consultations. This Seminar is a great opportunity to discuss challenges you may be facing and explore options for ICAO assistance in the future.

I encourage States present here to maintain a dialogue with ICAO about their current and newly-emerging traveller identification challenges. The more we know what your needs are, the better placed ICAO will be to develop an effective technical assistance strategy. Our close cooperation and ongoing technical dialogue are key to success. Also, participants to the Seminar, are encouraged to have more exchange with the facilitators on the ICAO PKD for future enrolment benefits of their respective States.

I am also pleased to say that Seminar speakers and facilitators - drawn from ICAO working groups and partner international organizations - are top experts in their field. Special thanks

are due to government and industry experts that make up the ICAO Technical Advisory Group on Machine Readable Travel Documents (TAG/MRTD). I invite you all to make the most of our Seminar and the expertise available here. Ask questions, share your challenges and experiences, question established views, and contribute with your knowledge to our ongoing professional debate.

In closing I would like to take this opportunity to thank our generous hosts, the Government of Burkina Faso, which provided enormous assistance and support in organizing this important regional event.

I sincerely thank you for having taken the time to join us here this week, and I wish you all a very engaging and fruitful Regional Seminar.

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