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**AGENDA ITEM 5: AVIATION SECURITY AND
FACILITATION**

**CREW IDENTIFICATION AND THE FRAMEWORK
PROVIDED BY ANNEX 9**

(Presented by the International Air Transport Association)

SUMMARY

The expedited movement of flight and cabin crew across international borders is essential to maintaining an efficient and economically viable international air transport system. Crew members generally pose low aviation security and immigration risks: they are subject to recurrent background checks, systematic security screening, and are admitted temporarily for clearly defined duty-related purposes.

Annex 9 – Facilitation mandates visa-free entry for crew holding a Crew Member Certificate (CMC). However, despite the longstanding framework pertaining to CMC, the uptake remains limited, both in terms of issuance by States and recognition by border control authorities. Conversely, many States already implement visa waiver practices for crew members based on a combination of identification and qualification documents, not limited to the CMC, and on the aviation security measures that crew are subject to.

This working paper provides an overview of global practices related to crew entry requirements and supports the pressing need to modernize Annex 9 provisions. The aim is to align the ICAO framework with current State practices and technological advancements in secure identification.

CREW IDENTIFICATION AND THE FRAMEWORK PROVIDED BY ANNEX 9

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Facilitating and expediting crew movements is essential for the efficiency and predictability of international air transport. Recognizing this, many States apply facilitation measures that distinguish crew from passengers, including exemptions from visa and travel authorization requirements.

1.2 Historically, Crew Member Certificates (CMCs) were introduced as a facilitation instrument. However, under the current framework established by Annex 9 to the Chicago Convention, the CMC has inadvertently become a limiting factor. Specifically, Standard 3.71 requires States to waive visa requirements solely for crew members holding a valid CMC. Despite the inclusion of the CMC provision in Annex 9 since its First Edition in 1949, only 17 Member States¹ currently issue such certificates. Consequently, the vast majority of international crew—those not in possession of a CMC—fall under Recommended Practice 3.71.1, which merely encourages States to waive visa requirements for them. This disparity in implementation undermines the original objective of global facilitation for aircrew.

1.3 Chapter 3, Section M of Annex 9—concerning the identification and entry of crew and other aircraft operator personnel—requires revision and modernization to align with the prevailing practices of the majority of Member States and air operators. In contemporary operations, a combination of crew identification and professional qualification documents, together with aviation security measures and technologies, enables States to verify crew identity and assess potential threats without necessitating the issuance of a visa or an electronic travel authorization (eTA). Documents commonly carried by crew while on duty include, but are not limited to, a valid passport, pilot license, crew member identification card, company-issued identification, airport restricted area access pass, and cabin crew attestation.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 In accordance with the note to Standard 3.67 of Annex 9, CMC is intended to serve as a secure form of identification for crew members, while their professional qualifications are reflected in the respective licenses. However, the limited uptake of the CMC among States suggests that its identity function has not been prioritized and is surpassed by passports that are much more secure. Among the reasons cited by authorities for not issuing CMC are the costs related to such program and the resources required to manage it, while this document offers limited benefits to crew worldwide.

2.2 Since 1997, CMCs have been expected to be issued in the form of machine-readable cards, consistent with the specifications set out in Doc 9303, Part 5. These specifications have seen no updates in recent years, raising the question of whether they remain fully aligned with current technological capabilities and facilitation needs.

2.3 States have instead prioritized enhancing the security of passports, which remain the most widely recognized, secure and interoperable identity document for international travel. The progressive development of technical specifications under ICAO Doc 9303 has resulted in the introduction of the ePassport, currently regarded as the most secure form of travel document. A significant proportion of crew members are holders of such passports². As a result, the identification function envisioned for the CMC has, in practice, been overtaken by the superior security features and broad international acceptance of the ePassport. In this context, the provisions contained in Annex 9,

¹ Czech Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Panama, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Türkiye, UAE, Vietnam. This list may not be exhaustive.

² As per ICAO data, 160 Member States issue ePassports.

Chapter 3, Section M merit review and modernization to ensure alignment with current practices and technological advancements.

2.4 From a border control standpoint, the use of the CMC as a basis for visa exemption appears to have limited application. This observation is supported by an analysis conducted by IATA as part of an endeavour of the Control Authorities Working Group (CAWG), drawing on data collected between late 2024 and early 2025 from a range of sources, including IATA [Timatic](#) data³, Member States, aircraft operators, and other organizations such as IFALPA. As of August 2024, an assessment of crew entry requirements published by 121 States in the IATA Timatic database reveals the extent of CMC recognition for facilitation purposes.

- 99 States or 81,81% have a visa-free policy towards crew and require a combination of documents to identify crew. The most frequent combination of documents required is: a passport, a crew ID card or CMC, and a general Declaration. 25 of these States do not require a passport upon presentation of a Crew ID Card or CMC only, sometimes in combination with a General Declaration.
- Out of the 22 countries requiring a visa on crew, seven of them waive the visa requirement only for crew holding a CMC, and apply a visa to other crew. Some States do apply a visa on crew even if they are holding a CMC, and therefore do not recognize this document at all.

2.5 While this data is preliminary and summarized, it illustrates the low uptake on the CMC and that a majority of border authorities do not require this document at all for waiving visa purposes.

2.6 In comparison to passengers, crew members generally present a low immigration risk. Their entry into a State is purpose-driven, limited in duration, and governed by operational schedules determined by their employer rather than personal intent. The time spent in the territory of a State typically corresponds only to what is required for the performance of duty-related tasks. While specific statistical data may be limited, operational evidence suggests that crew members are not commonly associated with overstaying or asylum-seeking behavior. Additionally, upon arrival, crew usually make use of dedicated border control channels separate from those used by passengers and are often readily identifiable through their uniforms.

2.7 Crew are routinely subject to recurrent background security checks and systematic screening at the point of departure. These measures are conducted on a regular basis by the State responsible for the oversight of the aircraft operator. In accordance with Annex 9, Standard 3.70, crew identity cards and CMCs may only be issued following the completion of a background check conducted by, or on behalf of, the relevant public authority. This requirement is consistent with the provisions of Annex 17, Standard 3.5.2, and is subject to verification under the Universal Security Audit Programme – Continuous Monitoring Approach (USAP-CMA).

2.8 Importantly, crew members contribute directly to the safeguarding of civil aviation by undertaking specific operational security responsibilities. These include conducting aircraft searches and pre-departure checks in accordance with Annex 17, Standard 4.3.1; ensuring the continuous protection of the flight crew compartment as prescribed in Standard 4.3.3; and applying behavioural detection techniques to monitor passengers for indicators of potentially threatening or disruptive conduct. These functions are integral to the overall safety and security of aircraft operations.

2.9 In updating Annex 9, Chapter 3, Section M, consideration should be given to the incorporation of modern technologies that facilitate the advance identification of crew members—such as the transmission of crew-related Advance Passenger Information (API). In parallel, a number of States are actively pursuing the digitalization of crew credentials. Notably, ICAO Annex 1 – Personnel Licensing contains Standards related to the issuance of electronic personnel licenses (EPLs) for pilots, which can be electronically authenticated. These technological advancements should be taken into account as part of any effort to modernize the relevant provisions of Annex 9.

³ IATA Timatic is a provider of real-time information on travel document requirements for international air travel.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The current provisions of Annex 9 concerning the identification and entry of crew members, particularly those centred on the CMC, is obsolete and does not reflect the diversity of practices adopted globally, nor do they account for recent advancements in secure identification technologies. A relevant number of Member States have implemented facilitation measures for crew entry based on a combination of identification and professional qualification documents, most of which operate independently of the CMC framework.

3.2 In view of the consistently low immigration and security risk profile associated with crew members, coupled with their critical operational role in ensuring the secure and efficient functioning of civil aviation, there is a strong rationale for reviewing and updating the existing regulatory framework. Such an update would support greater alignment with contemporary practices and emerging technological capabilities.

3.3 Modernizing Chapter 3, Section M of Annex 9 would enable the recognition of a broader and more representative set of documents used by States to identify crew members along with the aviation security measures crew are subject to, further to take into consideration the developments pertaining to digital credentials. Such an update would enhance facilitation outcomes while maintaining high security standards.

4. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

4.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) Consider supporting the request of IATA, to be presented at the 42th Session of the ICAO Assembly, for ICAO to initiate a comprehensive review of Chapter 3, Section M of Annex 9, with a view to modernizing its provisions to recognize the wider range of documents used by States for granting visa-free crew entry when on duty and the developments with regards to digital credentials.

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