

**61ST CONFERENCE OF
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION**

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

**DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL
AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO) PUBLIC KEY
DIRECTORY (PKD) ADVANCING AIR TRANSPORT
FACILITATION**

(Presented by the ICAO Secretariat)

INFORMATION PAPER

SUMMARY

The ICAO PKD programme operates the PKD system through which the public key data needed for authentication of ePassports, eID cards, digital barcodes and Digital Travel Credentials is shared between issuers and verifiers internationally. A new PKD system was launched in March 2026 that has new services and is easier to use than previously. The programme, through increased ICAO Secretariat operational efforts, training and capacity building, as well as enhanced community support offerings, is helping new and existing participants to connect to and use the new system. Given the value of PKD data in increasing efficiency and security in modern border management and in implementation of future seamless travel initiatives, States and document-issuing authorities should consider joining PKD, benefitting the new offerings and support infrastructure to quickly onboard. Existing participants should ensure full and active use of PKD to share their own public key data and implement efficient and effective document authenticity checks where relevant.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ICAO PKD programme operates a large-scale Information Technology platform for the global sharing of public key data needed for authentication of electronic and digital travel documents. Document-issuing authorities upload the data to the PKD system, facilitating convenient, trustworthy and cost-effective sharing with verifying authorities, for example authorities for border management, law enforcement, migration management, etc. Authentication of documents using data from the ICAO PKD is quick, reliable and requires no expert training. In fact, authentication can be executed based on self-service document scanning. As a result, such authentication is vital for any use of automated systems, as per ICAO Annex 9 — *Facilitation*, as well as being highly useful and effective during manual controls.

1.2 The PKD programme was established in 2007 for sharing the data needed to authenticate electronic passports (ePassports). Since then, ICAO has specified new document formats that include digitally-signed data issued based on Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) services. PKD offerings have since been expanded to support distribution of data for the authentication of eID cards, digitally signed barcodes placed on physical visa stickers, Digital Travel Authorizations / eVisas, emergency travel documents and health documents and Digital Travel Credentials (DTCs).

1.3 States and document-issuing authorities / organizations opt in to the programme on a fee-paying basis to attain the relevant benefits. As of June 2026, there are 110 participants, including 18 APAC States and 2 Special Administrative Regions of China.

1.4 The programme is governed by a Board comprising 15 participants, currently including 4 APAC States. All participants are invited to an annual plenary meeting where information is shared among participants, collaborative relationships are established and decisions are taken around policy advancement and spending of PKD funds. The next plenary meeting will take place in Victoria, Seychelles from 20 to 22 October 2026.

1.5 The community-based governance approach and extensive recent growth in participation has enabled the programme to become a community of practice for participants to share information and insights, support each other through best-practice sharing and provision of direct support and lead deliberations on advancement of the PKD and PKI-related matters within the ICAO PKD ecosystem. In recent years, PKD has coordinated a community support programme—the PKD Data Quality Coach initiative—that partners experienced members with requesting States as part of a mentorship and support relationship while also organizing regular workshops, webinars and seminars to boost global community capacities and capabilities in the domain of PKI and PKD.

1.6 In March 2026, a new PKD system was launched, replacing the system that had been in operation for the last 10 years. This new system offers user-friendly interfaces, expanded service offerings and improved statistical reporting for users. The ICAO Secretariat has taken leadership of more extensive user support and management processes as well as security management within the new system, assuring enhanced trust in operations and improved user service. All existing participants have migrated to this new system and started to take advantage of the extended offerings while new participants are being onboarded to it directly to immediately benefit from the new services and capabilities.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Air transport facilitation is growing in importance as State authorities, aircraft and airport operators and others active in the field seek to handle greater volumes of passengers while limiting necessary investment in bricks and mortar facilities and keeping processing times reasonable. In competitive transport environments, investment in improved customer service also becomes imperative. The COVID-19 pandemic also demonstrated the value in investing in seamless and contactless travel capabilities that remain resilient to unexpected events, including public health emergencies.

2.2 Use of ePassports, DTCs and other electronic and digital documents specified by ICAO underpins current and future seamless travel at global level. Electronic authentication of these documents is a critical first step in their use, as indicated by ICAO when it specified that such authentication is

mandatory in Doc 9303, *Machine Readable Travel Documents*. Thus, full availability of the public key data needed for such authentication, and proper use of the ICAO PKD as the only global tool that facilitates such data availability, becomes critical.

2.3 Participation in ICAO PKD brings immediate benefits by increasing international trust in one's travel documents through improved authentication capabilities. For verifying authorities, it improves the efficiency and effectiveness of document checks while raising the possibility of using automated systems. States building capacities in electronic authentication using ICAO PKD data are also gaining important capabilities that will be required for the next phases of seamless travel initiative globally.

2.4 The new ICAO PKD system renders ICAO PKD more convenient and easier. The newly-available interfaces are amenable to use by non-experts. New statistical reporting tools help users to ensure timely uploading and downloading of full data. New data contents ensure that all data required for full verification of the entire chain of trust of all electronic and digital documents specified by ICAO is available.

2.5 Increased support being provided to participants by the ICAO Secretariat and the ICAO PKD community is helping users to better onboard to and fully use PKD, attaining all benefits for the different authorities involved. It is in the interests of the entire community that more participants share more data and use the system fully, meaning that new and existing participants can rely on strong support as required to achieve their goals.

2.6 PKD participation is relevant for all States. Many issue the electronic and digital documents that can be authenticated using PKD data and can benefit by sharing the data that enhances trust through global verifiability. All will be processing these documents at their borders and can use PKD-based verification to improve security and facilitation. Those not yet participating in PKD are encouraged to consider joining <https://www.icao.int/icao-pkd/how-participate>, taking advantage of the convenience of the new PKD system and extended support offerings to onboard and use the system quickly and easily.

2.7 Existing PKD participants are encouraged to redouble their efforts to ensure full and complete use of the PKD by all relevant issuing and verifying authorities in their State or organization, working collaboratively at national or organizational level to take advantage of the new PKD system and support offerings as required.

3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Conference is invited to note the information contained in this Paper.

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