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FACILITATION (FAL) DIVISION — TWELFTH SESSION

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Agenda Item 2: Facilitation and security of travel documents and border control formalities
2.4: Advance passenger information (API)

ADVANCE PASSENGER INFORMATION (API) – A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

(Presented by the International Air Transport Association (IATA))

SUMMARY

In the last two years, the number of States developing plans to implement API programs has increased significantly. That number is expected to expand even further before 2006. While there is some commonality between existing and planned programs, in many cases the differences in national approaches to which data are to be provided and the methods for data exchange will prevent API system interoperability. This paper is intended to draw attention to the development of an overarching "API Statement of Principles", and to the imperative that States seeking to implement national API regimes comply with existing international standards.

Action by the Division is in paragraph 4.1.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In 1990, the United States became the first State to implement a scheme designed to enhance passenger facilitation by using electronically transmitted details concerning passengers en route to its territory. This program was developed well in advance of any efforts to establish international standards, and by necessity evolved along unilateral lines. Then, in 1995, Australia became the second State to adopt the concept of enhancing facilitation through information exchange when it implemented its Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) program. While the systems operate along wholly different lines, the ultimate goal is the same – the authorities obtain necessary information concerning inbound passengers ahead of arrival so that much of the vetting process can be completed in advance.

1.2 In response to growing concerns that API systems might be developed without the aid of internationally agreed standards, the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) joined in an effort to develop and agree a set of best practice guidelines that could assist States seeking to implement their own national API programs. A broad agreement was reached, and the WCO/IATA Guidelines on Advance Passenger Information ("The Guidelines") were released in

1993. These guidelines called upon States to limit data requirements to the minimum required to conduct pre-arrival checks, and in any event, to those data elements found in the machine readable zone of travel documents. The guidelines also established the use of UN/EDIFACT as the agreed method of data transmission, and laid out messaging formats.

1.3 In the aftermath of 9/11, it quickly became apparent that many States with or considering API programs as extensions of their overall border security and control strategies found the existing Guidelines to be in need of revision. Accordingly, the WCO, joined by IATA, ICAO and a number of interested States agreed to review and, where warranted, revise the guidelines. In seeking to identify what changes might be required, all existing and proposed national legislation and associated data element requirements in effect in 2002 were reviewed and incorporated into a new API Passenger Manifest message format.

1.4 That process was completed in March 2003, and the revised guidelines adopted by the WCO Council in June 2003. ICAO, seeing the value of the document and recognizing the need to establish globally acceptable standards for API programs, agreed to add its name to the revised Guidelines document.

1.5 To ensure the Guidelines continue to hold their relevance in a constantly changing environment, the WCO has created an "API Management Committee", comprised of WCO, IATA and ICAO as well as representatives of other interested bodies. The Committee is tasked with the ongoing review of the Guidelines document itself, consideration of proposed changes to its text and an effort to promote the Guidelines' global adoption.

2. DEVELOPMENTS IN OTHER FORA

2.1 Recognizing a common interest in further developing information exchange as a tool to enhance border controls, the Four Countries Conference (Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States) established a working group to review existing API programs and national legislation and to identify methods by which the value of API programs could be increased and systems more fully harmonized to ensure interoperability. That initial work was then reported to the IATA/Control Authorities Working Group (IATA/CAWG).

2.2 IATA/CAWG, after review and discussion of the work completed by the Four Countries Conference working group, agreed that additional research and development was required and therefore established a working party to develop a position paper on standardization of API programs. Meeting over the course of more than one year, the working party developed a broad "API Statement of Principles" which it felt addressed the most pressing elements of API systems that must be considered when States were debating the value of establishing their own national systems.

2.3 IATA/CAWG, in plenary discussion during its most recent meeting held in November, agreed final text changes and formally adopted the revised "API Statement of Principles" as an official IATA/CAWG document. A text version of that document is appended to this paper.

3. PARAPHRASED ELEMENTS FROM THE IATA/CAWG STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

3.1 API systems must be user friendly, seamless, and where appropriate, facilitate the travel of passengers.

3.2 Required API data should be limited to the data contained in the machine-readable zone of travel documents or obtainable from existing government databases, such as those containing visa issuance information.

3.3 API systems should be designed in such manner to ensure that required data elements originate from one representative of the requesting government.

3.4 Governments should work together to respect the data requirements of different countries' border agencies and should, to the extent possible, minimise the impact upon carriers of providing different data to different countries on individual flights.

3.5 Countries seeking to implement API schemes should utilise the WCO/IATA/ICAO agreed UN/EDIFACT messaging standard to ensure that interoperability is achieved.

3.6 Standardized API systems should result in a measurable improvement in passenger processing time, enhanced security and improved border control capabilities, optimized data accuracy and minimized costs.

4. ACTION BY THE DIVISION

4.1 Recognizing that unconstrained development of non-standardized API systems will result in unnecessary impact on passenger processing and unreasonably increased costs due to reduced system interoperability, the Division is invited to note the information contained in this paper and the appended IATA/CAWG API Statement of Principles, and to adopt the following Recommendation:

Recommendation B/ xxx

It is recommended that ICAO, in cooperation with other interested parties and recognizing the work already achieved to formulate internationally agreed formats, develop API program standards and recommended practices necessary to ensure global interoperability.

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APPENDIX

IATA/CAWG STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES FOR ADVANCE PASSENGER INFORMATION SYSTEMS

This Statement of Principles for Advance Passenger Information (API) is not to be confused with initiatives on Advance Passenger Processing (APP). Definitions of API and APP are provided in Annex A to this document. It is proposed that a separate Information Paper on APP be developed at a later date.

Guidelines on Advance Passenger Information (API) were originally produced in October 1999. The aim of those Guidelines was to establish a framework under which a standardized API system could be developed.

The first principle of this system was to provide a clear and measurable facilitation benefit to the travelling public and to border security. Events since the publication of the 1999 Guidelines have sharpened the focus of individual states and their border agencies on border integrity. As we are all aware, in some instances, acts of terrorism have forced states to quickly introduce API systems not completely in accord with the original Guidelines. As a consequence of the above, there has now been a proliferation of API type systems, which have been developed in the absence of agreed standards.

Conscious of the fact that the original API Guidelines need to evolve as the threat to border security increases, whilst simultaneously facilitating the flow of passengers through airports with minimum disruption to airlines and maximum benefit to passengers, IATA/CAWG proposed in 2002 that their API/PNR Working Group should develop a Statement of Principles for API systems. This paper seeks to deliver that objective.

Consideration should be given by governments to the issue of non-discriminatory treatment of airlines and the aviation industry, in relation to other transport industries.

A standardized API system should include the following Key Elements:

a) an API system should be user-friendly, seamless and where appropriate facilitate the travel of passengers as a result of API data analysis being made available at the primary inspection line;

b) required API data should be limited to the data contained in the machine readable zone of travel documents (see ICAO Doc 9303, Part 1) or obtainable from existing government databases, such as a visa database;

c) an API system should take into account the interests of key stakeholders;

d) all relevant data requirements of the requesting government agencies must be taken into account. The data requirements should originate from one representative of the requesting government;

e) governments should work together to respect the data requirements of different countries' border agencies and to the extent possible, should minimise the impact upon carriers of providing different data to different countries on individual flights;

f) management of contractors/costs in a collective way to ensure unilateral systems are capable of operating in bilateral and multilateral environments, taking account of domestic and international legislative provisions;

g) with respect to the message format for transmission of API, systems should be developed to use the UN/EDIFACT messaging standard to ensure that interoperability is achieved. However, this should not be seen as constraining the ability to adopt other internationally agreed standards in the longer term;

h) API systems should seek to minimise the impact on existing carrier system and technical infrastructure;

i) an API system should be capable of round-the-clock operation, with contingency procedures in place to minimise disruption to airline operations in the event of system failure; and

j) governments choosing to introduce API systems should adopt the principles contained in this document. However, nothing in this document is to be construed as to contradict national legislation, regulations or court decisions.

Benefits that should arise from a standardized API system

- A measurable improvement in passenger processing time on arrival
- Opportunity to minimise costs through cooperation
- Opportunity to optimise data accuracy
- Enhanced security and improved border control capabilities

Other issues

There may be other issues involved, while not exhaustive the following identifies some of them:

- Feasibility of implementing standardised API to sea carriers and in countries with land borders
- API system may be less than 100% accessible in all locations

ANNEX A – DEFINITIONS

Advance passenger information system (API)

A unilateral system whereby required data elements are collected and transmitted to border control agencies prior to flight arrival, and made available on the primary line at the port of entry.

Interactive API

This type of API system - also known as Advance Passenger Processing, Board/No Board and Red Light/Green Light System - is a system whereby required data elements are collected and transmitted to border control agencies prior to flight departure. A directive (for each passenger) is transmitted back to the airline either permitting or denying boarding. This type of system will be covered more comprehensively in a forthcoming strategy paper.

Location of data elements

Departure Control System (DCS)
Passenger Name Record (PNR)
Machine Readable Zone (MRZ)
Government Database such as Visa

Machine Readable API Data Elements (as per ICAO Doc 9303)

Document Type
Document Number

Nationality

Country of Issuance
Date of Document Expiration
Family Name
Given Name
Gender
Date of Birth

Common API data header information

IATA arrival port code
IATA departure port code
Flight Identification (IATA Airline code and flight number)
Scheduled Date of departure (Based on local time - YYMMDD)
Scheduled Time of departure (Based on local time - HHMM)
Scheduled Date of arrival (Based on local time - YYMMDD)
Scheduled Time of arrival (Based on local time - HHMM)

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