



FACILITATION PANEL (FALP)

FOURTEENTH MEETING

Montréal, 20 to 24 April 2026

Agenda Item 3: Amendments to Annex 9 — *Facilitation*

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ICAO DIGITAL TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION (DTA) AND RELATED MEASURES

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

The implementation of the ICAO Digital Travel Authorization (DTA) would introduce harmonized 2D barcodes based on ICAO's trust framework for electronic Machine Readable Travel Documents (eMRTDs), with standardized data content and format. The proposed introduction of an Annex 9 Recommended Practice promoting the implementation of ICAO DTAs has been developed in collaboration with the IATA Control Authorities Working Group (CAWG). It would support global interoperability and go hand in hand with Annex 9 — *Facilitation* clarifications regarding pre-travel verification supported by interactive Advance Passenger Information (iAPI) systems.

Action by the FAL Panel:

Actions by the Panel are presented at paragraph 3, below.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ICAO Digital Travel Authorization (DTA) provides specifications for a non-physical travel authorization deploying a 2D barcode usable in either paper or digital format. It specifies a standardized data set, is designed for online application and issuance in digital format, with paper printing possible. The 2D barcode contains the actual data payload and contains a verifiable digital signature.

1.2 The Fifth Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group/Traveller Identification Programme (TAG/TRIP/5) endorsed that a proposal for an Annex 9 Recommended Practice promoting the implementation of ICAO DTAs should be submitted to FALP/14. Implementation of DTAs would support uptake of another critical tool to support border security and facilitation, as well as enable contactless processing. The introduction of a Recommended Practice supporting the implementation of the DTA would be ideally supported by definitions clarifying both the DTA and the concept of non-physical and physical authorizations to travel, in other words authorizations either not affixed or affixed to a passport.

1.3 Pre-travel verification of DTA and other non-physical travel authorizations can be supported by interactive Advance Passenger Information (iAPI) systems, in particular the processes outlined under Chapter 9, Section C., entitled Electronic Travel Systems (ETS). To clarify the support process that ETS can provide, this paper proposes slight amendments to the iAPI and ETS provisions, as well as the ETS definition.

1.4 Additionally, this paper submits a proposal to move provisions that reference visas and authorizations to travel from Section D., entitled Travel documents into Chapter 3, Section F. This is aligned with the ICAO TAG/TRIP Implementation and Capacity Building Working Group (ICBWG) proposal to modify the definition for *Travel document*, which would remove the reference to visas.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The DTA is designed to standardize the “eVisa,” Typically, States issuing eVisas require passengers to hold a printed or digital proof of issuance of their authorization on their mobile device. The display and data content of these proofs is not standardized, hampering the predictability that any verifier needs. Implementing standardized DTAs would pave the way for automating steps to verify the acceptance for travel through digital means. Importantly, the DTA is an ICAO Doc 9303 specification providing global interoperability to 2D barcodes and the related data content, format and verifiability, that promote contactless travel, based on the ICAO Datastructure for Barcode (IDB) specification. The DTA can be used at a Contracting States’ discretion to support either visa or travel authorization policy regimes. From a technical perspective, however, it is non-physical and not affixed to passports.

2.2 The amendments to existing Recommended Practices 9.16, 9.17 and 9.18 support the concept of pre-travel verification of authorizations to travel using iAPI systems. The modification to the definition of ETS strengthens the concept that ETS is a *process* and not an authorization or visa categorization.

2.3 Current Recommended Practice 3.16 combines references to primary travel documents and visas. Since the proposed amendment to the definition of *Travel documents* excludes visas, this paper proposes to narrow the focus of 3.16 to travel documents only and to introduce a new, but very similar Recommended Practice in Section F. encouraging the issuance of machine readable visas.

2.4 Current Recommended Practice 3.16.1 speaks to the issuance of visas that are not machine readable. This paper proposes to move this provision into Section F. as well, leaving the wording unchanged.

2.5 Finally, this working paper suggests to modify the title of Section F. to accommodate the concept of both visas and authorizations to travel.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Facilitation Panel is invited to:

- a) endorse the content of this working paper, especially the introduction of a new Recommended Practice supporting the implementation of standardized Digital Travel Authorizations (DTA), issued in accordance with the specifications contained in Doc 9303;

- b) endorse the new and amended definitions, as well as the amendments to the Recommended Practices for iAPI systems and ETS; and
- c) endorse the moving of provisions related to visas and authorizations to travel from Chapter 3, Section D. into Section F, as well as the related title change to Section F.

APPENDIX

AMENDMENTS TO ANNEX 9

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS
AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

CHAPTER 1. DEFINITIONS AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A. Definitions

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Authorization to travel. Either a non-physical (not affixed to a passport) and/or a physical authorization (affixed to a passport) issued by the receiving State authorizing the traveller to travel.

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Digital Travel Authorization (DTA). Proof of issuance of an authorization to travel not affixed to a passport containing a digitally signed barcode using an ICAO Datastructure for Barcode (IDB), as specified in Doc 9303.

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Electronic Travel Systems (ETS). The ~~electronic~~automated process for the lodgement, acceptance and verification of a passenger's authorization to travel ~~not affixed to a passport to a State, in lieu of the standard counterfoil paper visa.~~

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CHAPTER 3: ENTRY AND DEPARTURE OF PERSONS AND
THEIR BAGGAGE

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D. Travel documents

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3.16 Recommended Practice.— *When issuing identity documents ~~or visas~~ accepted for travel purposes, Contracting States should issue these in machine readable form, as specified in Doc 9303.*

~~3.16.1 Recommended Practice.— When issuing visas that are not machine-readable, Contracting States should ensure that the personal and issuance data in such documents conform to the specifications for the visual zone of the machine-readable visa, as set forth in Doc 9303, Part 7.~~

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F. Entry/re-entry visas and authorizations to travel

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3.XX Recommended Practice.— When issuing visas accepted for travel purposes, Contracting States should issue these in machine-readable form, as specified in Doc 9303.

3.XX Recommended Practice.— When issuing visas that are not machine-readable, Contracting States should ensure that the personal and issuance data in such documents conform to the specifications for the visual zone of the machine-readable visa, as set forth in Doc 9303, Part 7.

3.XX Recommended Practice.— Contracting States issuing authorizations to travel not affixed to a passport and which cannot be verified through an interactive Advance Passenger Information (iAPI) system should issue such authorizations as Digital Travel Authorizations (DTA), in accordance with the specifications contained in Doc 9303.

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CHAPTER 9. PASSENGER DATA SYSTEMS

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B. Advance Passenger Information (API)

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9.16 Recommended Practice.— Contracting States implementing an iAPI system should:

- a) seek to minimize the impact on existing aircraft operator systems and technical infrastructure by consulting aircraft operators before development and implementation of an iAPI system;
~~and~~
- b) work together with aircraft operators to develop iAPI systems that integrate into the aircraft operator's departure control interfaces; and
- c) consider incorporating immigration and security-related vetting outcomes into the interactive response message provided to aircraft operators.

Note.— Immigration related response messages to aircraft operators could include verification of both non-physical authorizations to travel not affixed to a passport, as well as physical authorizations to travel affixed to a passport, through an iAPI system.

C. Electronic Travel Systems (ETS)

9.17 Recommended Practice.— *Contracting States ~~seeking to~~ establishing an Electronic Travel System (ETS) should ~~perform~~ integrate the pre-travel verification system ~~through~~ with an ~~iAPI~~ interactive ~~Advance Passenger Information~~ system.*

Note.— This will allow States to integrate with the airline departure control systems using data messaging standards in accordance with international guidelines in order to provide a real-time response to the airline to verify the ~~validity and~~ authenticity of a passenger's authorization during check-in.

9.18 Recommended Practice.— *Contracting States seeking to implement an ETS should:*

- a) *ensure a robust electronic lodgement platform where an online application for authority to travel can be made. A State should make clear that its platform is the preferred means for applying online in order to reduce the scope of unofficial third-party vendors that may charge an additional fee for the purpose of lodging an individual's application;*
- b) *include tools built into the application to assist individuals to avoid errors when completing the application form, including clear instructions as to the applicability of which nationalities require a ~~travel authorization not affixed to a passport~~ an ETS, and not allow application processing for non-eligible passengers (such as nationality and/or document type);*
- c) *institute automated and continuous vetting of relevant alert lists;*
- d) *provide ~~electronic notification~~ to the passenger ~~an electronic notification of~~ to replace paper ~~evidence of an individual's approval for travel;~~ and*
- e) *ensure that the information required from the passenger is easily understood in accordance with the national laws and regulations of that State.*

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