



FACILITATION PANEL (FALP)

FOURTEENTH MEETING

Montréal, 20 to 24 April 2026

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

CREW IDENTIFICATION AND FACILITATION

(Presented by Canada, United Kingdom, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the Global Express Association (GEA), and the International Air Cargo Association (TIACA))

SUMMARY

Crew Member Certificates (CMCs) were first established in 1949 and were intended to facilitate the movement of crew across international borders. However, the number of countries that issue CMCs is a fraction of all Contracting States. In parallel, operational practice has since evolved, with greater reliance placed on passports in conjunction with airline-issued crew identification documents to facilitate crew mobility. This approach has proven to be equally effective, more widely accepted, less administratively burdensome but with equal levels of security assurance suggesting that Annex 9 — *Facilitation* Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) should be amended to reflect current practices.

Action by the FAL Panel:

The Facilitation Panel (FALP) is invited to:

- a) agree to the proposed amendments to Annex 9 SARPs as found in Appendix A of this working paper.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In the Annex 9 SARPs, holders of CMCs are conferred certain advantages over other means of crew identification (see Annex 9, Chapter 3 section M 3.71, 3.71.2). While in practice the majority of ICAO Member States treat the combination of a passport and other crew identification documents on an equal footing to CMCs for the purpose of border entry and/or exit requirements. As such, the SARPs as currently written for entry-visa considerations, may inadvertently have become a barrier to the seamless and efficient movement of on-duty crew. At the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly, WP/285 - *Crew*

Identification and the Framework Provided by Annex 9 and WP/323 - Crew Identification and Facilitation were presented to promote a harmonized, performance-based global approach to crew identity and facilitation, which received broad support from Member States.

1.2 Annex 9 and ICAO Doc 9303, *Machine Readable Travel Documents* establish the legal, technical and operational basis for the global acceptance of passports as the primary and most secure identity document thereby minimizing the intended historical role of CMCs as an identity document for crew. While Annex 17 – *Aviation Security* contains security provisions related to crew identity verification, including access control, and validation of identity for access to security-restricted areas, it does not reference CMCs.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 There is an inconsistency between facilitation objectives and the prescriptive requirements in Annex 9, Chapter 3, Section M- *Identification and entry of crew and other aircraft operators personnel*. Standard 3.71 requires States to offer visa-free entrance to crew holding CMCs. However, only 16 Member States and one Special Administrative Region (SAR)¹ currently issue CMCs. States that do not issue CMCs have reported financial costs, operational complexities and administrative burdens as barriers for implementation. Consequently, the majority of crew who do not hold CMCs, fall under the Recommended Practice (RP) 3.71.1 which merely encourages States to waive the visa requirement. However, most countries currently do not impose visas on most crew and accept a **passport accompanied by a crew identity card**. In this context, even if they are issued by a national authority, CMCs do not seem to provide additional identification benefits over what most States currently accept for crew visa-free entrance.

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, *Machine Readable Travel Documents Part 5: Specifications for TDI Size Machine Readable Official Travel Documents (MROTDs)*. 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 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 CMC has, in practice, been overtaken by the superior security features and broad international acceptance of the passport and ePassport.

2.4 In contrast with CMCs, crew identity cards are issued by aircraft operators, with crew 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).

¹ Czechia, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, China (Hong Kong SAR only), China, Panama, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam. This list may not be exhaustive.

² As per International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) data, more than 160 Member States issue ePassports.

2.5 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.

2.6 In line with the ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) Guide on Evidence of Identity, the application of a comprehensive, risk-based and layered approach to identity establishment and verification could also be applied to aviation crew, including the use of alternative forms of crew identification that provide an equivalent level of assurance such as those found in Annex 17 Chapter 4 Standards 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 and associated security measures.

2.7 The amendments proposed in Appendix A below are not intended to disadvantage States that currently issue and rely on CMCs, which continue to play a role within certain national facilitation frameworks. Nor is it intended to establish a hierarchy among forms of crew identification. Rather, the objective is to modernize these Annex 9 SARPs by moving away from the CMC as the pre-eminent form of crew identification towards an approach in which a combination of a passport for entry-exit and identification purpose used in conjunction with occupational identity cards are recognized as equivalent.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The FALP is invited to:

- a) agree to the proposed amendments to Annex 9 SARPs as found in Appendix A of this working paper.

APPENDIX A

Proposal for amendments to Annex 9 — *Facilitation*

**CHAPTER 3: ENTRY AND DEPARTURE OF PERSONS AND
THEIR BAGGAGE**

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M. Identification and entry of crew and other aircraft operators' personnel

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3.71 Contracting States shall accept CMCs, issued according to the requirements of Standard 3.68, for visa-free entrance of crew members when arriving in a duty status on an international flight and seeking temporary entry for the period allowed by the receiving State.

3.xx Contracting States accepting CMCs for visa-free entrance shall equally accept a passport issued according to the requirements of Doc 9303 Part 4 accompanied by crew identity cards for visa-free entrance of crew members.

3.71.1 Recommended Practice.— *Contracting States should waive the visa requirement for crew members when arriving in a duty status on an international flight and seeking temporary entry for the period allowed by the receiving State.*

3.71.2 Recommended Practice.— *Contracting States should waive the visa requirement for arriving crew members presenting CMCs or a passport accompanied by crew identity cards, when arriving on another aircraft operator or another mode of transport and seeking temporary entry for the period allowed by the receiving State in order to join their assigned flight in a duty status.*

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APPENDIX B
NEW or REVISED SARP PROPOSAL: AMENDMENT, ANNEX 9, CHAPTER 3,
[STANDARD/RECOMMENDED PRACTICE]

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. What is the problem that this proposal is designed to address?

<i>Please include specific details</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modernize SARPs to align with current operational practice and risk-based identity management - Reduce administrative burden without diminishing security - leveraging the passport/ePassport as the primary MRTD and airline crew IDs as occupational credentials.

2. What alternatives to SARPs were considered to solve the problem?

None	Circular	Manual	Policy	<i>Other (please explain)</i>
	X	X	X	Establishing a new working group or task force dedicated to reviewing current SARPs and policies to develop a strategy/policy or best approach forward, in addition to amending the current Annex 9) or tasking the FALP WGA9 to consider all the above.

3a. What is the impact of this proposal on a State?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Implementing this proposal will enhance civil aviation safety	X				

Rationale:
 Implementing this proposal would enhance civil aviation safety by reducing operational delays and administrative burdens associated with crew documentation requirements. In particular, it would alleviate organizational and scheduling challenges for airlines registered in States that do not currently issue Crew Member Certificates (CMCs), while also addressing delays that may arise at airports where crew recognition is limited to those holding a CMC.

By facilitating the recognition of alternative but equivalent crew identification documentation, the proposal would support more predictable and efficient crew processing. This, in turn, helps ensure that qualified crew members are able to perform their operational duties without unnecessary delays or last-minute substitutions, thereby supporting the safe and orderly conduct of flight operations.

Implementing this proposal will increase air navigation capacity and improve efficiency	X				
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Rationale:
 Implementing this proposal would improve air navigation capacity and operational efficiency by reducing administrative barriers associated with the recognition of flight crew documentation. By allowing States to recognize crew members using a valid passport in combination with a crew identity card, alongside those holding a Crew Member Certificate (CMC), the proposal would help streamline crew processing at border control points and airports.

Reducing delays linked to documentation recognition would improve the predictability of crew movements and airline scheduling. This would help minimize disruptions such as delayed crew clearance, last-minute crew substitutions, or repositioning of alternate crew, all of which can affect flight departures and the efficient use of airport and airspace capacity.

By facilitating more reliable crew deployment and smoother operational planning, the proposal would contribute to more efficient flight operations and better utilization of available air navigation and airport capacity, thereby supporting the overall efficiency of the global air transport system.

<p>Implementing this proposal will enhance global civil aviation security and facilitation (taking into account impact on human rights, health and privacy, if any)</p>	<p>X</p>				
<p><i>Rationale:</i></p> <p>Implementing this proposal would enhance global civil aviation security and facilitation by clarifying the distinct purposes of travel and crew documentation. Historically, the CMC was meant to serve both as a travel document and as a means of identifying crew members. However, in practice, passports are now widely used to support entry and exit requirements, while crew identity cards serve to verify that an individual is a bona fide crew member. Clearly distinguishing these functions would reduce the risk of inconsistent implementation among States while harmonizing operational practice with the intent of Annex 9.</p> <p>Providing clearer guidance within ICAO provisions would help ensure that crew documentation is recognized and applied appropriately by frontline border and control authorities, thereby improving operational predictability and facilitating legitimate crew movements.</p> <p>The proposal does not introduce new personal data requirements and therefore does not create additional impacts on human rights, health, or privacy. Rather, it improves the clarity and consistent application of existing ICAO provisions, supporting secure, efficient, and predictable international aviation operations.</p>					
<p>Implementing this proposal will foster the development of a sound and economically-viable civil aviation system</p>	<p>X</p>				
<p><i>Rationale:</i></p> <p>Implementing this proposal would support the development of a sound and economically viable civil aviation system by promoting consistency and fairness in the facilitation of international flight crew movements. In particular, accepting the proposal would help ensure a level playing field among Member States with respect to the documentation issued to, and accepted for, flight crew.</p> <p>At present, some States issue Crew Member Certificates (CMCs), while the vast majority rely on alternative documentation such as passports in combination with crew identity cards. Where visa exemptions are granted specifically to crew holding a CMC, States that do not issue such certificates may be inadvertently placed at a disadvantage, despite their crew meeting identification and security requirements by way of a passport and other recognized documents.</p> <p>By allowing States the flexibility to recognize flight crew travelling with a valid passport and crew identity card, alongside those holding a CMC, the proposal would promote greater harmonization in facilitation practices and avoid unintended barriers to international operations. This approach supports operational efficiency for airlines, reduces administrative burdens, and ensures that crew members are treated equitably regardless of the documentation regime used by their State of registry.</p> <p>More broadly, the proposal reinforces ICAO’s objective of facilitating safe, secure, and efficient international air transport by enabling States to implement practical and interoperable documentation arrangements for flight crew.</p>					
<p>Implementing this proposal will minimize the adverse environmental effects of civil aviation activities</p>	<p>X</p>				
<p><i>Rationale:</i></p> <p>By facilitating the recognition of a passport and crew identification documents, the proposal would reduce administrative barriers that may lead to operational delays, crew repositioning flights, or inefficient crew deployment. Improving the</p>					

efficiency and predictability of international flight operations can help minimize unnecessary fuel burn and associated emissions, thereby contributing indirectly to reducing the environmental impact of civil aviation activities.

3b. Do the benefits of this proposal justify the cost of its implementation?

Yes	No	Not sure	Not applicable
			X

4a. What is the impact of this proposal on Industry?

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Implementing this proposal will enhance civil aviation safety	X				

Rationale:

It would alleviate organizational and scheduling challenges for airlines registered in States that do not currently issue Crew Member Certificates (CMCs), while also addressing delays that may arise at airports where crew recognition is limited to those holding a CMC.

By facilitating the recognition of alternative but equivalent crew identification documentation, the proposal would support more predictable and efficient crew processing. This, in turn, helps ensure that qualified crew members are able to perform their operational duties without unnecessary delays or last-minute substitutions, thereby supporting the safe and orderly conduct of flight operations.

Implementing this proposal will increase air navigation capacity and improve efficiency	X				
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Rationale:

Reducing delays linked to documentation recognition would improve the predictability of crew movements and airline scheduling. This would help minimize disruptions such as delayed crew clearance, last-minute crew substitutions, or repositioning of alternate crew, all of which can affect flight departures and the efficient use of airport and airspace capacity.

By facilitating more reliable crew deployment and smoother operational planning, the proposal would contribute to more efficient flight operations and better utilization of available air navigation and airport capacity, thereby supporting the overall efficiency of the global air transport system.

Implementing this proposal will enhance global civil aviation security and facilitation (taking into account impact on human rights, health and privacy, if any)	X				
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Rationale:

Annex 9 to be re-equilibrated to reflect the current crew facilitation practice of States and improve crew facilitation across borders. Clear recognition in Annex 9 that the combination of a passport and a crew identity card is equivalent to CMC, which is currently the practice of most States when it comes to visas on crew. With the vast majority of countries not issuing CMCs to their crew (only 17 States do issue CMC) and Annex 9 only mandating visa waiving for crew holding a CMC, Annex 9 has inadvertently become limiting in its facilitation provisions for crew. The proposal aims at correcting the situation to reflect current practice.

Implementing this proposal will foster the development of a sound and economically-viable civil aviation system	X				
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<i>Rationale:</i>					
Most States do not currently impose including visas on crew. With this re-equilibration of Annex 9 and broadening the recognition of documents held by crew, will help assisting a more economically viable civil aviation system by avoiding costs and burden such as: cost for obtaining the authorization to travel, delays upon crew arrival impacting crew resting times, administrative cost of managing crew authorizations to travel, limiting the destinations crew can operate to due to authorizations to travel requirement, etc.					
Implementing this proposal will minimize the adverse environmental effects of civil aviation activities			X		
<i>Rationale:</i>					

4b. Do the benefits of this proposal justify the cost of its implementation?

Yes	No	Not sure	Not applicable
X			

5. How long would it take for States and Industry to implement this proposal?

Already implemented	0-1 years	1-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years
X					
The proposed changes to the SARPs serve to clarify the legitimacy of already existing practices rather than affect change.					

6. Financial implications of the proposal

<p>The cost impact on States would include:</p> <p>There is no technical impact anticipated. That is specifications (MRZ formats, LDS, biometric encodings, security features, test regimes, are unchanged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re: Technical impact: There are no technical changes to Doc 9303 specifications required by the Annex 9 amendment itself. It is a facilitation policy change, not a document-format or data-structure change. - Re: Passports: Already governed by Doc 9303 Part 4; the proposed Annex 9 language makes clear that the passport is the MRTD element in the acceptance pathway. - Re: Crew Identity Cards: These are recognized as operational credentials. Their acceptance in combination with the passport is a policy decision under Annex 9, not a change to Doc 9303 technical specs. - Re: CMCs: CMCs will remain MRTDs per Doc 9303 (historically Part 5 TD1-format expectations). The Annex 9 amendment does not alter their technical requirements; it adds equivalency for another accepted pathway. <p>For those States that don't issue CMCs, there is no cost impact anticipated. For those States that only recognize CMC holders as crew, there may be an impact on their processes, to also allow crew that hold a passport and other crew identity cards.</p> <p>With operational communications, States, issuers, airlines, and border agencies will understand that the new Annex 9 equivalency does not trigger redesign of passports or CMCs, but may require changes to digital or electronic Travel Authorizations.</p> <p>The cost impact on the industry would include:</p>

The proposed changes to the SARPs serve to clarify the legitimacy of already existing practices rather than affect change.

IMPLEMENTATION TASK LIST AND OUTLINE OF GUIDANCE MATERIAL

1. IMPLEMENTATION TASK LIST

1.1 Essential steps to be followed by a State in order to implement proposed amendments¹

[SARP/TOPIC]

1.1.1 For States that already [implement the SARP or take action on the TOPIC], no action is necessary. For those that do not, the essential steps are the following:

a) . . .

Legislation, regulations, policies, procedures, training, implementation, modification, supervision, assessment, compliance, gap analysis, consideration,

[Example (for illustration only):

[Assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families

For States that have established legislation, regulations and/or policies in support of assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families, and that are aligned with Doc 9998 and Doc 9973, no action may be required. For those that do not, the essential steps are the following:

- a) identify established legislation, regulations and/or policies;
- b) gap analysis between established legislation, regulations, and/policies, and Doc 9998 and Doc 9973;
- c) decisions on whether to introduce new provision to align with ICAO guidance material;
- d) modification and/or development of provision;
- e) official adoptions of provisions;
- f) implementation of newly adopted provisions by applicable entities;
- g) modification of an oversight framework; and

¹ Amendment of a format or clarification nature are not allowed in this Appendix.

h) supervision by the State of provisions, as appropriate.]

2. STANDARDIZATION PROCESS

2.1 Effective date: [] [Month/Year]: to be completed by Secretariat

2.2 Applicability date: [] [Month/Year]: to be completed by Secretariat

3. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:

3.1 ICAO documentation:

Title	Type	Publication date
	Manual/Other Guidance Material/Web page	

3.2 External documentation:

Title	External Organization	Publication date

4. IMPLEMENTATION ASSISTANCE TASKS

Type	Global	Regional
[Seminar/Symposium/Workshop/etc.]		

**5. UNIVERSAL SECURITY AUDIT PROGRAMME (USAP)
OR UNIVERSAL SAFETY OVERSIGHT PROGRAMME
(USOAP)**

5.1 [No] [additional] protocol questions required under USAP [USOAP].