



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12: Facilitation Programmes

LEVERAGING THE ASSISTANCE FOR VARIOUS PASSENGER DATA EXCHANGE SYSTEMS

(Presented by the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) on behalf of
54 African States²)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Working Paper recognizes the critical role played by collecting, processing and disseminating passenger data as part of border security systems under the Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) regimes. States must leverage on the assistance from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) global partners and other agencies to establish API/PNR systems. ICAO should also establish a global assistance framework for passenger data systems which is underpinned by guidelines.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- encourage States to enhance participation in peer-to-peer exchanges and technical capacity-building activities;
- request ICAO to establish a Global Passenger Data Systems Assistance Framework, consolidating technical, operational, legal and financial support mechanisms;
- invite ICAO to regularly update information on available funding mechanisms and partnerships to support States' implementation efforts;
- urge ICAO to promote regional cooperation and public-private partnerships to accelerate progress and foster innovative, cost-effective solutions; and
- encourage States to enhance inter-agency cooperation at the national level to maximize the benefits of passenger data systems for aviation security and facilitation.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goal: Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible and Reliable Mobility for All
<i>Financial implications:</i>	<i>To be determined</i>
<i>References:</i>	United Nations Security Council Resolution 2396 (2017) Annex 9 — <i>Facilitation</i> Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) Annex 17 — <i>Aviation Security</i> SARPs

¹ English and French versions provided by AFCAC.

² Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe..

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Passenger data exchange systems have become a critical pillar of aviation security and facilitation efforts worldwide. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 9 — *Facilitation*, specifically Chapter 9, sets out the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) that require States to establish systems for the exchange of passenger information including Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) data. These systems must be underpinned by an appropriate legal and administrative framework, ensuring consistency with international obligations and respect for fundamental rights, including data protection and privacy.

1.2 The international community has reinforced these obligations through key instruments, notably the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2396 (2017), which requires States to collect, process and analyse PNR data to prevent the movement of terrorists. Similarly, UNSCR 2178 (2014) calls upon States to require airlines to provide API to national authorities to detect and prevent the travel of foreign terrorist fighters.

1.3 Despite the recognized importance of API and PNR systems, the process of developing and operationalizing these systems remains complex. It demands significant financial investment, sophisticated IT infrastructure, skilled human resources and the establishment of robust legal frameworks. Connectivity with airline communication networks, compliance with international data exchange standards and ongoing maintenance costs further add to the burden on States. As a result, many countries, particularly in developing regions such as Africa, continue to face substantial challenges in ensuring compliance by implementing effective passenger data exchange systems.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Passenger data exchange systems offer numerous advantages to States and the international aviation community at large. When properly implemented, these systems enhance border security, improve the efficiency of border crossing processes and contribute to the detection and prevention of the movement of known or suspected terrorists, criminals and other persons of interest. API and PNR data, when cross-referenced with national and international watchlists, provide timely intelligence that can significantly strengthen national security measures. Furthermore, these systems help streamline immigration processes, reduce passenger processing times and enable more effective allocation of limited border control resources.

2.2 However, the global rate of implementation of API and PNR systems remains low, as evidenced by the findings of the ICAO Universal Security Audit Programme – Continuous Monitoring Approach (USAP–CMA) Audits. Many States are still struggling with the various legal, technical, operational and financial challenges associated with these systems. Financial constraints are a major barrier, with the costs of system acquisition, integration with airline systems and ensuring international interoperability often being prohibitive.

2.3 Legal challenges are equally significant. Establishing frameworks that govern the collection, use retention and protection of passenger data is a delicate balancing act. States must ensure that their legislation complies not only with security imperatives but also with human rights obligations, particularly concerning privacy and data protection. Additionally, the need to modernize existing IT systems and ensure interoperability between legacy and new digital systems presents technical hurdles that many States find difficult to overcome.

2.4 Given these challenges, there is an urgent need for targeted and comprehensive capacity building initiatives. Assistance programs must be flexible and adapt to the different stages of implementation that States find themselves in. Technical assistance should include support for system design and integration, IT infrastructure development and guidance on compliance with ICAO SARPs and other relevant

international instruments. Building on existing tools such as the API-PNR Toolkit, practical, scenario-based workshops should be offered to enable States to gain hands-on experience in designing, implementing and managing these systems.

2.5 Peer-to-peer exchanges of best practices is another important component towards capacity building. States that have successfully implemented passenger data systems can share valuable insights, including lessons learned, model legal frameworks, technical specifications and examples of effective inter-agency cooperation. By learning from one another, States can avoid common pitfalls and adopt proven strategies suited to their particular national contexts.

2.6 Implementation challenges also have a strong financial dimension. Although assistance and funding mechanisms exist through ICAO partnerships with organizations such as the World Customs Organization, International Air Transport Association, World Bank and United Nations Counter-Terrorism programs, many States are either unaware of these opportunities or unsure how to access them. The lack of a centralized, coordinated assistance framework has the potential to create confusion and results in missed opportunities for support.

2.7 To address this, ICAO, in collaboration with its global partners, should develop a Global Passenger Data Systems Assistance Framework. This framework would consolidate technical, operational, legal and financial assistance streams into a coherent and accessible mechanism, guiding States through the steps needed to build and sustain their systems. It would also map available funding sources and provide States with clear guidance on application procedures for financial support, whether for system installation, connectivity fees, or maintenance costs.

2.8 In addition, fostering regional collaboration and public-private partnerships is essential. Regional initiatives can facilitate standardized approaches to ensure system development and operation, while partnerships with airlines, technology companies and financial institutions can drive innovation, reduce costs and create sustainable solutions. Such collaboration can ensure that passenger data systems are not only implemented but are also resilient, future-proof and scalable.

2.9 Inter-agency cooperation within States is equally important. Passenger data must be efficiently shared among immigration, customs, intelligence, and law enforcement agencies, enhancing coordination and ensuring that risks are identified and addressed in a timely manner. Successful API and PNR systems require integrated processes that eliminate duplication of effort, streamline operations and ensure that information is analysed and acted upon appropriately.

2.10 Ultimately, enhancing passenger data exchange systems strengthens both aviation security and facilitation, supporting broader objectives of safe, secure and efficient international air transport. The benefits of implementing API and PNR systems extend well beyond security, contributing to better management of migration flows, reducing travel delays and improving the overall passenger experience.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The immense contributions from ICAO global partners and other international agencies in promoting and supporting the implementation of API and PNR systems are acknowledged and appreciated. However, it is clear that a more unified, structured and strategic approach is required to close the implementation gaps that persist globally and regionally.

3.2 ICAO Member States are encouraged to actively support efforts to create a global framework for assistance, to participate in peer-to-peer exchanges and technical capacity-building programs and to work closely with donors and private sector partners to ensure that financial and technical barriers are effectively addressed.

3.3 Recognizing that passenger data exchange systems serve multiple purposes—enhancing security, facilitating travel, protecting human rights and improving passenger experiences—States must prioritize their development and ensure that they are sustainable, resilient and aligned with international standards.

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