



WORKING PAPER

ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12: Facilitation Programmes

CREW IDENTIFICATION AND FACILITATION

(Presented by Canada, co-sponsored by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA))

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currently, only a limited number of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Member States issue Crew Member Certificates (CMCs). CMCs are intended to facilitate the cross-border movement of aviation crew members performing their operational duties. However, in practice, requiring a CMC as the only form of identification creates challenges for crews from States that do not issue this document. This disrupts airline schedules, complicates transit procedures and increases operational costs. This working paper proposes strengthening collaboration and communication between the ICAO Aviation Security, Cybersecurity and Facilitation panels by aligning work, processes, standards and operational context across the aviation system. A more integrated approach would enable aviation security measures and best practices to effectively mitigate border security risks while ensuring the safe and efficient passage of genuine crew members.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) recall the role facilitation plays to enhance and balance the need for efficiency in international air travel with that of global aviation and border security, as well as the Doha Declaration on Facilitation of International Air Transport endorsed at the ICAO Facilitation Conference (FALC 2025) that affirms the critical importance of facilitation in ensuring the efficient and seamless movement of passengers, cargo, and aircraft *and crew* across international borders;
- b) encourage Member States to explore and support a harmonized performance-based global approach that recognizes all available valid and secure primary and secondary documents and/or procedures that establish and validate crew identity, including digitalized documents and similar initiatives to enhance the entry process for crew members so that they may experience a seamless and efficient movement across international borders; and
- c) consider requesting the Council to task the Aviation Security Panel, Cybersecurity Panel and the Facilitation Panel to establish a Task Force made up of Annex 17 — *Aviation Security*, Annex 9 — *Facilitation* and cybersecurity panel members to collaborate in developing tangible methods that recognize and integrate existing Annex 17 Standards pertaining to crew identity with Annex 9 Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), as per Appendix A to this paper, and cybersecurity best practices.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goal <i>Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible and Reliable Mobility for All</i> .
<i>Financial implications:</i>	No financial implications anticipated.
<i>References:</i>	Annex 17 – <i>Aviation Security</i> Annex 9 – <i>Facilitation</i> Muscat Declaration on Aviation Security and Aviation Cybersecurity ¹ Doha Declaration on Facilitation of International Air Transport ²

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Passports became the globally recognized standard for international identification around the 1920s, with full global standardization and universal recognition emerging over the course of the 20th century, particularly after World War II and with the rise of the International Civil Aviation Organization’s (ICAO) role in setting travel document standards.

1.2 Crew Member Certificates (CMCs) were originally developed as a card for use for identification purposes by crew members, at a time when passports had not yet become the primary global identification document, by mirroring seafarer identity documents in facilitating international movement.

1.3 ICAO designated 2024 as the “Year of Facilitation” to mark the 75th anniversary of Annex 9 – *Facilitation* and to highlight the important role facilitation plays to enhance and balance the need for efficiency in international air travel with that of global aviation and border security. In April 2025, the Doha Declaration on Facilitation of International Air Transport was endorsed at the Facilitation Conference in Doha, Qatar, which affirms, “... the critical role of air transport facilitation in ensuring the efficient and seamless movement of passengers, crew, cargo, and aircraft across borders”.

1.4 Annex 9 Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) 3.71, 3.71.1 and 3.71.2 urge States to waive visa requirements for crew members since crew members have already undergone security screening by the State overseeing the aircraft operator. However, the Standard mandates waiving visas *only* for crew members presenting CMC despite Standard 3.70 requiring States to conduct background checks and implement adequate controls when issuing both CMCs and crew identity cards. In essence, while the requirements for issuing CMCs and crew identity cards are the same, the waiving of visas is only granted to CMC holders.

1.5 Notwithstanding Annex 9 Standard 3.67 which states, “Contracting States shall facilitate and expedite the process under which aircraft operators based in their territories can apply for Crew Member Certificates (CMCs) for their crew members,” only a minority of States issue CMCs. In practice, many ICAO Member States identify arriving crew by presenting the General Declaration (GenDec in ICAO Annex 9, Appendix 1), crew Advance Passenger Information (API), passports, airline-issued crew member identification cards and their uniforms.

¹ [International community adopts landmark declaration on aviation security and cybersecurity](#)

² [Doha Declaration on Facilitation of International Air Transport](#)

1.6 Annex 17 — *Aviation Security* outlines requirements for crew member identification to enhance aviation security and prevent unlawful interference. Annex 17 SARPs 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 mandate that crew members possess proper, verifiable identification and that States implement measures to control access to restricted airport areas and aircraft. While Annex 17 emphasizes secure identification processes, it does not specifically require CMCs, leaving specific documentation requirements to national authorities. Additionally, Annex 17 calls for verification procedures to authenticate crew identities before granting access to secure zones or allowing flight operations. Further, States' Competent Authorities responsible for aviation security conduct risk assessments to identify individuals, including crew, who may pose a threat to transportation security. These Competent Authorities not only conduct significant vetting but also integrate their own background checks with airline or airport-issued identification card processes. This system not only reduces the aviation security threat but may also mitigate immigration risks associated with crew members.

1.7 According to the ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) guidance document, *ICAO TRIP Guide on Evidence of Identity* States should apply an 'Evidence of Identity' (EOI) approach to designing robust and secure processes that consider the full range of data, documents and information available, covering both the foundational ('legal') and physical identity of the individual.

1.8 Technological advances have significantly improved aviation passenger and crew identification by enhancing security, streamlining processes and enabling seamless travel. Biometric identification, such as facial recognition and fingerprint scanning, has expedited verification at airports, while digital travel credentials and mobile-based IDs reduce reliance on physical documents. Automated crew identification programs and blockchain-based identity management enhance security and efficiency, while contactless solutions and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven risk profiling improve border security and immigration processes.

2. CURRENT USE IN RELATION TO RISK RELEVANCE

2.1 While some States require airline crew members to obtain visas to facilitate security and immigration checks, the criteria and processes for issuing these visas differ from one country to another. In certain cases, States will exempt crew members from visa requirements, but only if they present a valid CMC.

2.2 Although comprehensive global statistics on airline crew members who have illegally entered or overstayed in foreign countries are not readily available, visa overstays among crew members represent a small fraction of overall visa overstay cases.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Annex 9 and Doc 9303, *Machine Readable Travel Documents* created the legal, technical, and operational foundation for passports to be accepted globally as the primary travel document, while reducing the need for supplemental or alternative documents like CMCs for general border entry purposes. Continuing to recognize CMCs as a primary travel document is increasingly outdated in an era where passports are universally accepted as the global standard.

3.2 There is an inherent contradiction between the intent of facilitation and the prescriptive requirement for States to only recognize CMCs for identifying crew to enjoy seamless visa-exempt travel when seeking to enter/exit a state when on duty.

3.3 In line with the TRIP Guide on Evidence of Identity, a comprehensive risk-based approach to establishing and validating identity using available documents and information should be equally applied to verifying crew identity. Integrating Annex 17 crew identity requirements into the Annex 9 SARP 3.71 would allow a layered approach that includes alternative but equally robust forms of crew identification to the CMC, while ensuring seamless and secure global movement for crew members.

3.4 State policies for crew members should recognize the unique nature of aviation personnel, who frequently travel internationally for short stays. Their scheduled duties and employment status minimize immigration risks, while extensive security screening by the State of oversight of the aircraft operator further reduces the security concerns.

3.5 Overall, technological advancements have led to more secure, efficient and streamlined identity verification processes for both passengers and crew, aligning with global efforts to modernize aviation security and facilitation. However, while technology enhances security and efficiency, concerns over data privacy, cybersecurity and interoperability between systems remain significant.

APPENDIX

ANNEX A– COMPARISON OF ANNEX 9 AND ANNEX 17 SARPS ON CREW IDENTITY FOR
VISA-EXEMPT ENTRY

Annex 9- Chapter 3 Section M	Annex 17- Chapter 4
<p>3.68 If Contracting States issue Crew Member Certificates, then these shall be issued only in the form of machine readable cards in accordance with the specifications of Doc 9303, Part 5.</p>	<p>Standard 4.2.3 – Identification Systems for Access Control</p> <p>Each Contracting State shall ensure that identification systems are established and implemented in respect of persons and vehicles in order to prevent unauthorized access to airside areas and security restricted areas. Access shall be granted only to those with an operational need or other legitimate reason to be there. Identity and authorization shall be verified at designated checkpoints before access is allowed to airside areas and security restricted areas.</p>
<p>3.70 CMCs and crew identity cards shall be issued only after a background check has been carried out by or on behalf of the relevant public authority. In addition, adequate controls such as a certification of employment status of an applicant prior to issuance, controls on blank card stock, and accountability requirements for issuing personnel, shall be placed on the issuance of CMCs and crew identity cards.</p>	<p>Standard 4.2.4 – Access to Security Restricted Areas</p> <p>Each Contracting State shall ensure that the movement of persons and vehicles to and from the aircraft is supervised in security restricted areas in order to prevent unauthorized access to aircraft.</p>
<p>3.71 Contracting States shall accept CMCs, issued according to the requirements of Standard 3.62, 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.</p>	
<p>3.71.1 <i>Recommended Practice.</i> — 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.</p>	
<p>3.71.2 <i>Recommended Practice.</i> — Contracting States should waive the visa requirement for arriving crew members presenting CMCs, 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.</p>	