**OPENING ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO),
DR. TAÏEB CHÉRIF,
TO THE
THIRD SYMPOSIUM AND EXHIBITION ON ICAO MRTDS,
BIOMETRICS AND SECURITY STANDARDS**

(Montreal, Canada 1-3 October 2007)

Good morning. I would like to extend to you a warm welcome to Montreal.

ICAO is proud to host the *Third Symposium and Exhibition on ICAO MRTDs, Biometrics and Security Standards*. The objective of this year's event is to bring ourselves up to date on progress made by ICAO, international organizations and industry partners in the area of travel document issuance and inspection applications. The focus of presentations will therefore be on the integrity and the secure issuance of documents, particularly in relation to border control processes. As always, the Symposium is also an opportunity for exchanging views and experiences on issues related to your respective MRTD or electronic MRTD development and implementation projects.

As we know, the ICAO MRTD Programme supports one of the ICAO Strategic Objectives: To enhance the security of global civil aviation. It does so primarily with the application of facilitation principles to expedite the flow of passengers in a secure and speedy fashion. The Programme, however, has an impact that goes beyond aviation security. It improves the overall national security of States in the fight against terrorism and criminal mobility. Later today you will hear our keynote speaker, Mr. Hassan Baage, Senior Legal Officer of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee, discuss the contribution of the MRTD Programme to limit terrorist mobility and effectively implement border controls measures.

As the United Nations agency mandated to develop standards and specifications for MRTD and eMRTDs, and to assist States in their implementation, ICAO is proud of the role its has played in responding to the request of States to also strengthen the security and integrity of ePassports.

Last March, for example, I presided over the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the ICAO Public Key Directory (PKD) Operation Office, which is a component of the public key infrastructure scheme specified by ICAO. This concept is essential to protect the signed data in electronic passports from counterfeiting or unauthorized alteration. Without the PKI, the trustworthiness of data in a chip, and hence the global interoperability of the e-passport, cannot be assured.

With the introduction of this infrastructure, we are witnessing the beginning of a new era in travel document verification and authentication. Having been entrusted by States with this highly critical responsibility represents a significant milestone for ICAO. We encourage every Contracting State to become part of the ICAO PKD. You will hear more about this issue from the Chairman of the PKD Board, Mr. Ross Greenwood.

Of course, our work doesn't stop with standards and guidance for the issuance and updating of standards for MRTDs. At every level of the Organization, we are also committed to supporting their promotion and implementation in a globally harmonized manner.

Last week, the 36th Session of the ICAO Assembly representing 190 Member States, renewed a Resolution on passport security and urged continuation of this essential work as a matter of high priority. We all recognize that in today's world, having an MRTD issued according to ICAO standards and specification does not suffice. States must also commit to establishing and maintaining confidence in their MRTDs by implementing and updating security features and best practices on the secure issuance and identity management processes and systems as established in Annex 9. You will hear a key presentation on this important issue by Mr. Barry Kefauver tomorrow.

ICAO is also committed to assist States comply with the requirement to issue machine readable passports only by 1 April 2010. To do so, it has established the Universal Implementation of Machine Readable Travel Documents Project which provides direct assistance to States. This involves coordination among ICAO, donor States, international organizations and other United Nations offices for support in this field and with overall security programmes.

ICAO is central to this global effort because of its role as the UN agency for establishing and updating standards and specifications on MRTDs. As such, ICAO is best suited to identify the pertinent expertise and technology required, and can support all development and implementation projects through its well established Technical Cooperation Bureau.

I encourage those States that require assistance with their machine readable travel documents or electronic machine readable travel documents to contact the ICAO Technical Cooperation Bureau and see how they can benefit from its proven track record.

Who wins when implementing ICAO MRTD standards and specifications?

The obvious answer is States. You will benefit from having better systems for securing borders against illegal migration, transborder crime, terrorism and fraud. Travelers and industry are also winners due to the increased confidence in authentic identity documents, protection against identity theft; and more efficient border control procedures.

Ladies and gentlemen, the next few days will provide much insight into knowledge and tools to upgrade your countries' international travel documents and border controls systems, and thus help move this global project forward. The high-level sharing of information includes an

exhibition and the presence of representatives from the industry, who are eager to apprise you of state-of-the-art products and services that are the "nuts and bolts" of MRTDs and inspection systems. I encourage you to take full advantage of their presence here with us and explore ways and means of making your MRTD programmes a success.

I commend your participation in this most important endeavour and wish you a very productive Symposium and workshop.

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