International Civil Aviation Organization

**WORKING PAPER**

A37-WP/286
EC/21
23/09/10
**(Information paper)**
**English only**

ASSEMBLY — 37TH SESSION

ECONOMIC COMMISSION

**Agenda Item 52: Facilitation**

PASSENGER DATA HARMONIZATION

(Presented by the International Air Transport Association)

| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY |
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| This Information Paper outlines the approach that has been adopted by the International Air Transport Association's Passenger Facilitation Working Group (IATA PFWG) to harmonize passenger data through the adoption of a common, or universal, passenger data set. The ultimate goal of this effort is to develop and adopt Best Practices, Standards, and Recommended Practices, in cooperation with other interested stakeholders, that will ensure consistency of process, enhance security and reduce unnecessary operational impacts across the entire range of nationally-imposed passenger data exchange requirements. The standardisation of data collection and transmission would improve the quality of data that governments receive. A Universal List would allow governments the flexibility to select and utilise the data as they deem fit. This approach would enable governments to uphold national security, adapt to changes at their own speed without being predictable, and maintain border integrity as required by national legislation and/or regulations that have been adopted. |

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| *Strategic Objectives:* | This working paper relates to Strategic Objective B – *Security*, enhance global civil aviation security |
| *Financial implications:* | No financial implications |
| *References:* | No references |

1.      **INTRODUCTION**

1.1         Member States have long recognised that passenger data supplied by airline operators is a critical element of the State's border control and risk management processes. However, as various data exchange requirements, imposed at the national level by various States, have been introduced, the absence of common objectives and clear agreement on process among Member States has resulted in the proliferation of sometimes-conflicting national requirements. These programmes, whether labelled as API, APP, AQQ, iAPI, CAPPS, ETA, ESTA, PNRGOV, PNR (Push or Pull), or Secure Flight, obligate airline operators to collect and transmit information about their customers and crew, often in different message formats and at various times, to the relevant government bodies. Each of the various messages and message formats that result contain a variety of data elements – a significant proportion of which are common across all of the message types.

1.2         Standards, Recommended Practices and guidance materials, as agreed by ICAO and the World Customs Organization (WCO), already exist for the collection and transmission of passenger data. Many governments already comply with internationally agreed best practices, with other States beginning efforts to harmonize their requirements along these same lines.For example, airline operators can transmit a "single" UN/EDIFACT passenger manifest (or PAXLST) message to meet the requirements of AQQ, ESTA, and Secure Flight, all programmes implemented by the United States. This same message format is used to satisfy requirements for advance passenger data submission in a host of other States at the other end of a common journey.

1.3         However, the lack of full harmonization means that too often, there are requests for data elements are not incorporated into existing international standards (i.e. WCO/IATA/ICAO guidelines on API and the UN/EDIFACT Paxlst message format). In other instances, Member States have required submission of approved data sets in a structure or format other than that which is specified by both ICAO and WCO.

1.4         Airline operators incur programming and implementation costs when preparing to comply with data exchange programmes that are fully consistent with existing standards. These costs increase exponentially and the ability for airline operators to comply is significantly impacted when the programme being implemented is not consistent with international norms.

2.      **APPROACH**

2.1         The IATA Passenger Facilitation Working Group (PFWG), which is comprised of industry, government, airport and solution provider representatives, believes that at least 90 per cent of the data elements transmitted by carriers to governments in response to the increasingly wide range of specific national programme requirements are common among the various currently existing data message formats.

2.2         Working on this assumption, the PFWG is developing a matrix of all known data requirements to identify and catalogue both common and irregular elements that the various States require to support passenger and airline reservation system data provision mandates. Utilizing this matrix, the group intends to demonstrate that the various data messages used today do, in fact, require many of the same elements multiple times, within a given and relatively short-term timeframe, to cover a single flight operation.

2.3        Making use of the mutually agreed universal list of common data elements described in paragraph 2.2, and taking into consideration all known national programme requirements, the PFWG would then seek to build consensus leading to adoption of a new globally adoptable standard relating to a common, or universal, data exchange message structure.

2.4        Once such a standard has been adopted, the interested stakeholders, including governments, representatives from the air transport industry, airports and solution providers would then need to determine the most effective format to support that data's transmission between airline operators and States, between various States or between one State's individual agencies.

2.5        Internationally agreed standards and best practices would then need to be adopted to ensure global acceptance and implementation of this approach that is designed to enhance border and aviation security, reduce costs and impact on airport operations, and improve States' abilities to risk assess passenger movements in a timely manner.

3.        **NEXT STEPS**

3.1        A dedicated subgroup is currently working on the development of a data matrix to demonstrate common data elements required to support various national passenger data programmes already in place. Additionally, the study will seek to identify the timelines for data submission under each of the individual programme requirements, the goal of which is also to highlight commonalities in approach across the broader range of existing programmes.

3.2        From this effort, we anticipate adoption of a single globally-agreed list of common data elements necessary to support all existing national data exchange requirements, and those which may be developed and implemented in the future.

3.3        The initial efforts will then be followed by development and ultimate adoption of a standardized message format (such as UN/EDIFACT or XML) acceptable to and meeting the needs of both States and airline operators.

4.        **ACTIONS**

4.1        The Assembly is asked to note the concepts discussed within this Information Paper and, where appropriate, support and actively encourage all Member States to adopt and implement policies and best practices described in existing Annex 9 Standards and Recommended Practices, which are intended to promote the alignment and harmonization of passenger data exchange on a truly global basis.

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