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الهيئة العامة للطيران المدني
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Machine Readable Convention Travel Documents: A Humanitarian Challenge in the Field of MRTDs

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1. What are Convention Travel Documents (CTDs)?

- Travel documents/passports for Refugees and Stateless persons,
- Based on two conventions, i.e. international treaties: 1951
Refugee Convention, 1954 Statelessness Convention.

2. Who should/may issue CTDs?

- States parties to the 1951 and 1954 Conventions.

3. What about non States parties?

- State practice: aliens / foreigner passports.

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4. Do CTDs need to be machine readable?

- Yes, ICAO has confirmed that they are travel documents in the sense of Annex 9 and Document 9303 and therefore need to comply with the respective standards, including machine readability and respect the 2010 and 2015 deadlines.
- Foreigner passports also need to be machine readable.

5. Can States use the same technology for CTDs and passports?

- Most States produce machine readable passports and other travel documents. For many reasons, including cost efficiency, States can and should therefore use the same technology for CTDs.

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6. What are the similarities between passports and CTDs?

- The booklet should have the same quality and format in order to use the same print technology,
- Validity of a CTD can be the same as recommended for passports, i.e. 5 to 10 years, it should at least be valid for 1 or 2 years,
- One passport/CTD for one person, including children,
- The fees for a CTD should not exceed the fees for passports,
- Visa policies and requirements - similar to other aliens,
- Fees for exit, entry or transit visas should not exceed those for visas on foreign passports.

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7. What are the main differences between a passport and a CTD?

- CTDs have a specific title and refer to the 1951 or 1954 Convention,
- CTDs shall be in at least two languages, one of which English or French and include specific explanatory text as mentioned in the Schedule to the 1951 and 1954 Conventions,
- CTDs are usually not valid for the country of origin of a refugee,
- The booklets should be blue, the refugee CTD with two diagonal stripes (top left),
- Depending on national laws and regulations, CTDs may be issued by a different authority than the passport authority,
- The issue of a CTD does not entitle the holder to the protection of diplomatic or consular authorities of the issuing country.

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8. Why are CTDs a humanitarian challenge?

- Refugees and stateless persons cannot obtain national passports,
- They have legitimate needs and interests for travelling: family visits, education, training and work opportunities, etc.
- Low implementation rate:
 - 32 out of 148 States parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention issue machine readable CTDs (MRCTDs),
 - 13 out of 65 States parties to the 1954 Statelessness Convention issue MRCTDs.
- Limited state interest and weak lobby,
- Compared with passports, small production numbers of CTDs, hence higher production costs per booklet and limited financial interest among vendors.

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9. What are the overall interests in issuing MRCTDs?

- Treat refugees and stateless persons with respect and dignity,
- Avoid illegality and prevent document fraud,
- Increase legal travel, border control mechanisms and security,
- Close the gap: refugees and stateless persons risk to remain behind in the general development of MRTDs.

10. What are UNHCR and ICAO doing?

- Close cooperation,
- Technical advice and guidance (mainly through ICBWG),
- Joint monitoring and advocacy.

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Conclusion and action points:

- ▶ States parties to the 1951 and 1954 Conventions should issue CTDs to refugees and stateless persons legally staying on their territory. Non States parties may issue foreigner passports.
- ▶ CTDs need to be machine readable like national passports and other travel documents.
- ▶ States should use the same technology for passports and CTDs.
- ▶ Vendor companies should include CTDs systematically into their programme.
- ▶ UNHCR and ICAO develop technical guidance for States and vendors who should also actively seek advice from UNHCR and ICAO in order to increase implementation.