



## FACILITATION (FAL) DIVISION — TWELFTH SESSION

Cairo, Egypt, 22 March to 2 April 2004

- Agenda Item 2: Facilitation and security of travel documents and border control formalities**  
**2.4: Advance passenger information (API)**

### **PASSENGER MANIFEST VS ADVANCE PASSENGER INFORMATION (API)**

**(Presented by India)**

#### **SUMMARY**

This paper outlines the developments regarding evolution of the concept of Advance Passenger Information (API) since the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Facilitation Division (which has finally been incorporated in Annex 9 as paragraph 3.34) and attempts to explore the possibility of treating it as replacement for the Passenger Manifest provided for in paragraph 2.12 of Annex 9 (Eleventh Edition).

Action by the Division as in paragraph 3.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The concept of advance passenger information (API) was first mentioned by some delegates at the 10<sup>th</sup> session of the Facilitation Division held in 1988. However, it was at the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Division held in 1995 that it was given a serious thought when it was recognized that with the advancements made in the field of electronic data transmission, API could serve as a useful tool for certain national administrations in their risk management to tackle the menace of drug trafficking as well as threat to their national security. At the same time, introduction of API would result in cutting down the processing time by immigration and customs authorities at the destination airport. It was, however, felt that API could prove to be anti-facilitative unless uniform standards were followed with respect to the information to be included in the API message and the technical specifications thereof. Finally, the Division agreed to include a new Recommended Practice in Annex 9 as set out in paragraph 3.34.

1.2 For a couple of years thereafter, API generated a lot of interest and debate. It was perceived as a cumbersome process which would require considerable investment on the part of participating Governments and airlines in terms of developing new technology for the purpose. It was also initially visualized that API would involve more of a direct transmission of information from control authorities of a departing airport to their counterparts in the destination airport and might not involve

participation of airlines. Overall, there was an impression that this concept was suited to meet the needs of certain specific countries rather than being a general requirement. Consequently, API was simply included as a special measure in Chapter 3 of Annex 9 and the fact that it had a fundamental similarity with the already existing document called Passenger Manifest did not strike anyone. The things have rested at that and there has been no attempt so far to link and correlate API with Passenger Manifest.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUE

2.1 There was a growing demand in the seventies and eighties from the protagonists of facilitation that the requirements to submit documents for clearance of aircraft should be reduced. As a part of this campaign, it was one of the major recommendations of the Facilitation Division in the late seventies that the contracting States should eliminate the requirement of submission of Passenger Manifest by airlines as it was considered as a superfluous document. This decision is reflected even today in the first part of paragraph 2.12 of Annex 9.

2.2 However, due to the change in the global security scenario, particularly after the 9/11 incidents, there has been a big change in the attitude towards API and it is now finding more and more acceptance by the control authorities of States as well as the airlines. A number of countries have already implemented it and many more have the desire to do so as soon as possible. In fact, IATA has indicated its willingness to accept API and has been actively collaborating with WCO and ICAO for development of the message specifications. It is also observed now that API involves the submission of passenger data by airlines to the control authorities, as distinct from one authority to the other, and is thus serving the same purpose as the Passenger Manifest. Obviously, there is no need for both – the Passenger Manifest and the Advance Passenger Information – to exist together, given that the underlying principle of API as well as the Passenger Manifest is the same, i.e. submission of passenger data by airlines to the control authorities. In view of this, not only is the recommendation regarding elimination of the Passenger Manifest not valid any more, but there is a need to strengthen the concept of advance passenger information by merging the Passenger Manifest with API.

2.3 It may be pertinent to mention here that in accordance with paragraph 2.12 of Annex 9, the Passenger Manifest is not required to be submitted in advance, but many countries have been demanding its advance submission (as much before the landing of the flight as possible) and the airlines have been doing so wherever possible. In other words, the Passenger Manifest in actual practice has been operating like API, although it is not so refined as the present version of API. Since submission of advance passenger information by airlines to the authorities is no more an objectionable practice, it would be in the fitness of things to revise paragraph 2.12 of Annex 9 suitably. It would also be quite appropriate to move paragraph 3.34 (pertaining to API) – or its amended version – from Chapter 3 to Chapter 2, either in place of paragraph 2.12 (pertaining to Passenger Manifest) right away or just next to it so that API is clearly identified as the next generation of the Passenger Manifest.

2.4 It may also be justified now to upgrade the provision regarding API from a Recommended Practice to a Standard, having regard to the fact that it has been accepted by both the control authorities and the airlines as a great facilitation measure. However, the words “where appropriate” appearing in the beginning of paragraph 3.34 may continue in order to retain optional nature of the provision for some time till the allied procedural requirements, such as details of the API message and technical specifications, are standardized.

2.5 This analysis would remain incomplete unless Appendix 2 is also brought into its fold. Appendix 2 of Annex 9 prescribes the elements of passenger data which should be included in the Passenger Manifest. Incorporation in Annex 9 of a similar requirement in respect of API appears to be inevitable in order to make the concept complete and workable. It is believed that sufficient work has already been done by WCO/IATA/ICAO in this regard and it should not be difficult for this Division to finalize an appendix setting out the data elements and the message specifications for API. As discussed

in paragraph 2.3 above, this appendix may also be put just after Appendix 2 (relating to Passenger Manifest) and numbered as Appendix 2A with the intention of replacing Appendix 2 in future when API is universally implemented and Passenger Manifest is cancelled.

2.6 Lastly, it may be worthwhile suggesting a possible date for elimination of the requirement for submission of the Passenger Manifest and its complete substitution by API. The effective date could perhaps be the same as for issuance of the Machine Readable Passports, i.e. 1 April, 2006.

### 3. ACTION BY THE DIVISION

3.1 The Division is invited to recommend:

- a) adoption of the draft texts of revised paragraphs 2.12 and 3.34 (as in the attachment);
- b) upgradating of the Recommended Practice 3.34 to a Standard and shifting it to Chapter 2 as paragraph 2.13; and
- c) introduction of a new Appendix 2A in Annex 9 laying down the message contents and technical specifications of API to be developed by the Secretariat in consultation with WCO/IATA.

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## APPENDIX

### **Proposed revised text of paragraph 2.12**

*Contracting States requiring the presentation of a Passenger Manifest shall take steps to replace it by Advance Passenger Information in accordance with paragraph 2.13 latest by 1 April, 2006. Till the time presentation of a Passenger Manifest is required, the information to be supplied therein shall be limited to the elements indicated in Appendix 2. The submission will be accepted in either electronic or paper form.*

### **Proposed revised text of paragraph 3.34 (to be renumbered as 2.13)**

*Where appropriate, Contracting States should introduce a system of advance passenger information which involves the capture of certain passport and/or visa details prior to departure, the transmission of the details by electronic means to their public authorities, and the analysis of such data for risk management purposes prior to arrival in order to expedite clearance. This may be done in collaboration with the public authorities of other States or with the airlines. To minimize handling time during check-in, document reading devices should be used to capture the information in machine readable travel documents. When specifying the information to be transmitted to their public authorities, contracting States shall limit their requirements to the elements indicated in Appendix 2A and the message shall be transmitted as per the specifications contained in that Appendix.*

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