

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP ON MACHINE READABLE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Fifteenth Meeting

(Montreal, 17 to 21 May 2004)

Agenda Item 4: Education and Promotion of MRTDs

Agenda Item 4.3: A report on the ICAO-OSCE International Forum on MRTDs

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Presented by the Chairperson of
the Education and Promotion Working Group (EPWG))

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Education and Promotion Working Group (EPWG) of the TAG/MRTD develops means of presenting information to governments that are not currently issuing Machine Readable Travel Documents (MRTDs) or are issuing passports that are not compliant with ICAO Doc 9303. It acts as the central point for identifying problems that prevent adoption of Doc 9303 by governments, proposes solutions to the TAG/MRTD and develops documentation and other orientation material to distribute to governments and to the public.

1.2 With the recent acceleration in the pace of change surrounding travel documents, biometrics, PKI, etc., the number of requests for assistance from States, the vendor community, other groups and individuals, both formal and informal, has increased dramatically. The volume of such requests has reached the point where it is increasingly difficult for the Facilitation Section to respond in timely fashion. Members of the New Technology Working Group (NTWG) have also faced similar demands for assistance.

2. EXPERT WORKSHOPS

2.1 The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), with extra-budgetary support from the Government of the United States, hosted the international expert workshop on travel document security on 1 and 2 March 2004 in Vienna. One hundred and forty-five experts from the OSCE participating States and ICAO attended the workshop, including travel document issuing and immigration authorities from 47 OSCE capitals, four of the OSCE partner for co-operation States, six partner organizations (EU, IOM, UNODC, Interpol, OECD and UNHCR), and representatives from four OSCE field operations.

2.2 The event, organized by the OSCE Secretariat's Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) in collaboration with ICAO EPWG, addressed a broad range of topics relating to travel document security. Day one focused on MRTDs; issuance standards, the history of ICAO Doc 9303, photo digitization, printing techniques and security features. There was also a presentation on the USA Enhanced Border Security Act

and the US Visit Program. Day two included presentations on biometrics, the application of biometrics in relation to travel documents and securing the biometric (PKI). The day concluded with a discussion on national strategy together with very useful presentations from Bulgaria reflecting on their experience in introducing an MRTD and Macedonia and about their future plans for the introduction of an MRTD.

2.3 Invited presenters included experts participating in ICAO Working Groups (WG) on travel document issues, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the European Commission (EC), as well as national experts from Bulgaria, France, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the United States.

2.4 Overall, participants agreed that the workshop was very useful and informative, inspiring new initiatives and encouraging states' efforts to comply with international standards. The workshop was rated either good or excellent by over 80 per cent of those who completed the workshop evaluation. The workshop served as an excellent forum for national travel document officials, the OSCE, the ICAO and other international organizations to exchange information and experience as well as initiate future cooperation. A full report of the event (including full evaluation) is available on the OSCE website at:

www.osce.org/documents/sg/2004/03/2434_en.pdf

2.5 It is the opinion of the EPWG that several factors contributed to the success of the event, including:

- a) a very capable host organization, namely OSCE, which provided logistics support (e.g. invitations, administration, etc.), and a well-equipped conference facility;
- b) a convenient location accessible by the target audience;
- c) a funding source for travel costs of countries requiring financial assistance to participate, in this case provided by the United States;
- d) simultaneous interpretation services, which may or may not be required depending on where the conference is held; and
- e) the recent Maastricht Ministerial Decision served as a key driver encouraging the participation of OSCE member states. Similar drivers may exist in other parts of the world or among other political or economic groups of countries.

3. ACTION BY THE TAG/MRTD

3.1 The EPWG invites the TAG/MRTD to:

- a) acknowledge the success of the OSCE/ICAO Workshop on Travel Document Security held in Vienna in early March 2004;
- b) recommend to ICAO members that seminars such as this are an effective vehicle for promoting the adoption of MRTDs, photo-digitized passports and for promoting an understanding of biometrics;
- c) encourage ICAO member states with the capability to provide funding and logistics assistance for future similar events; and

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- d) support future requests to hold similar events.

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