

**TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP ON
MACHINE READABLE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS**

Fifteenth Meeting

(Montreal, 17 to 21 May 2004)

Agenda Item 2: Report of the Document Content and Format Working Group (DCFWDG)
Agenda Item 2.1: Progress in updating Doc 9303 and proposed amendments

**"e-Passport" INDICATOR –
VERSION NUMBER & NEW CHECK CHARACTER SCHEME IN
MACHINE READABLE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS**

(Presented by the Document Content and Format Working Group (DCFWDG))

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This working paper is provided as a supplement to WP/17 in case there is not a consensus reached to adopt the "Version Number & New Check Character Scheme in MRTDs" set forth in that paper.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The primary objective is to respond to the request of the NTWG to specify an e-Passport indicator in the MRZ.

2.2 This objective can be met in the "least invasive" manner by specifying the "Version Number" as a new field at the end of the existing "Name" field. This is the preferred DCFWDG solution in case the "New Check Character Scheme" is not acceptable.

**3. SUPPLEMENTARY PROPOSAL BY DCFWDG – VERSION
NUMBER SCHEME**

3.1 As an alternative to the new check character scheme described in WP/17, the DCFWDG is proposing mandatory adoption of a new MRZ version number that will:

- a) identify the MRP as an e-Passport; and
- b) open the way for future improvements of the MRZ by introducing a version identifier.

3.2 The objective of this alternative is to cause the least amount of disruption to existing machine readers and to keep a maximum measure of backward compatibility without abolishing the option for future improvements in accordance with the objectives of WP/17.

3.3 In the first instance, the space available for holder name information in the "Name" field of the passport MRZ will be shortened by two positions that will be used for version number information. Its content will consist of a separator (<) character followed by a number which, in the first version will be the number "1". The presence of this information in a Passport (upper MRL positions 43 and 44) will signify that the document is an e-Passport. It can easily be distinguished from holder name information by the fact that it is numeric.

3.4 In the standard, the version number field will be more generally defined as a group of characters at the end of the "Name" field starting with a separator (<) and a numeric character. The purpose of this definition is to allow for future variations of the information given in this part of the name field. For example, in version 2 it may contain 5 character positions, ie a separator (<) followed by the version number "2", followed by 3 alphanumeric check digits.

3.5 Thus the essential feature of this scheme of identifying the document as containing a contactless IC is that the former end of the "Name" field now is occupied by a numeric character, preceded at least by a separator (<). Technically, this additional information is part of the MRZ name field.

3.6 This scheme does have the weakness that, in the first instance, the indicator relies on just one extra character in the MRZ, the version number. Forgers are likely to tamper with this character in order to disguise the presence of the contactless IC. The DCFWG prefers the scheme as set-out in WP/17 as the combined version number and check character scheme is more difficult to alter. Moreover, for receiving countries prepared to read the contactless IC, the data so provided more than compensates for the shortened "Name" field of the MRZ.

4. ACTION BY THE TAG/MRTD

4.1 The DCFWG invites the TAG/MRTD to:

- a) note the alternative scheme proposed by the DCFWG for the identification of e-Passports using the MRZ; and
- b) recommend approval of the this approach and work to date by the DCFWG, and approve the development of more precise technical specifications for inclusion in Doc 9303.