



TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP ON MACHINE READABLE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS (TAG-MRTD)

SEVENTEENTH MEETING

Montréal, 20 to 22 March 2007

Agenda item 2: Implementation of ePassports

Agenda item 2.2: Report of the New Technologies Working Group (NTWG)

NTWG COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Presented by the New Technologies Working Group (NTWG)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A working Paper circulated to NTWG members just prior to the Group's September 2006 meeting in Kingston, Canada, set out a number of communication issues that needed to be addressed. At the meeting itself, it was agreed that a small 'communications' group would be established to deal with these issues. A subsequent paper put forth a number of areas that should be covered. Both papers considered the need for a coherent and consistent communications strategy for NTWG, including an agreed role for NTWG to support ICAO, particularly in terms of expert advice and outreach activities.

1.2 In response to the second paper, a large number of NTWG members offered to be involved in this work.

1.3 This paper seeks to set out the areas where communication can be improved, the relationship between NTWG and ICAO with respect to the level/type of support required and how this might be achieved. It also seeks to place this work on a formal footing within the context of the future strategies of NTWG, ICAO and the TAG. The paper was written against the background of the demise of the EPWG and expected demise of DCFWG; it should be read in conjunction with Working Paper 2 – Review of the NTWG Terms of Reference.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The paper discussed at the NTWG Kingston meeting contained the following conclusions:

- a) Communication (external) was carried out by both NTWG and EPWG, as well as through the ICAO MRTD website and ICAO SGM. However, the effort was irregular and not particularly well coordinated. The recent publication of the ICAO

MRTD Report and the MRTD Symposia are welcome steps to improving the situation.

- b) EPWG, naturally seen as having a prime communications role, had limited resources and focused more on getting less developed states to adopt MRTDs and improve their passport application and issuance procedures, and less on new developments. In addition, EPWG has been moribund since TAG 16, despite having appointed a joint US/ICAO chair. It has now been disbanded.
- c) Although information on NTWGs activities and other useful information is available on the ISO website, access is password protected, inhibiting effective communications.
- d) Internal communications between groups is fairly limited.
- e) The work of the EPWG and DCFWG was not exclusively focused on the need to support NTWG

2.2 The Kingston paper put forward a number of suggestions on ways to correct the situation:

- a) ICAO SGM and NTWG should agree on the communications priorities. Consideration should also be given to an ICAO media relations strategy on ePassports.
- b) NTWG should establish a small communications team to identify and communicate more effectively key messages about the work of the NTWG. This would include information about the role of NTWG and its work plan, minutes of each NTWG meeting, and details of upcoming meetings including agenda. There should also be clear information about the status of Document 9303, for everyone to understand what is happening, not exclusively those with access to the ISO site. Contact names and e-mails should be provided for those on the NTWG communications team.
- c) An NTWG web page should be created within main ICAO pages, with appropriate links, within the web site. This would provide open access to information currently available only through the ISO site. For this communications channel to be effective, ICAO must commit to posting data in a timely fashion.
- d) ICAO SGM should send a letter to all participating member states informing them of the web page and how it can be accessed. Consideration should be given to include the e-mail addresses of members of the communications team.
- e) Consideration should again be given to publishing an English version of the most recent edition of Document 9303 on the ICAO website. Whilst this raises issues over loss of revenue to ICAO, there may be greater general benefit to doing so – for example, by ensuring that states always have access to the most recent version.

2.3 In the intervening period between the meetings in Kingston and Portugal, a number of NTWG members provided their views on what is required. Additionally, although EPWG has been disbanded, TF3 remains in operation and wishes to continue its support through working with the NTWG communications sub group. The Chair of DCFWG has further suggested that although this working

group is also to be disbanded, the pool of expertise within the group would contribute to the work of the communications group.

2.4 It is also important to recognise that from ICAO's standpoint, any messages delivered externally must be consistent with ICAO's own public information strategy and policy. ICAO emphasizes that positioning must remain within the control of the Secretariat.

2.5 It is possible to identify a number of emerging communications issues where NTWG/ICAO action is required. These are:

- a) Media stories – adverse stories on cloning, eavesdropping, skimming etc where there is a need to provide statements that could be issued by ICAO. Whilst it is accepted that each media story may be slightly different, there has up to now been a fairly consistent attack on the ability to 'crack' chip encryption and to 'clone' the chip data. However, most stories ignore the fact that ePassports are secured by features other than the chip. Preparation of generic statements that cover areas such as these is necessary. There are already a number of statements in circulation issued by governments and industry regarding the security of ePassports but few from ICAO. Use of generic statements would also allow ICAO to respond very quickly to such stories. Speed is also an important aspect to Governments who need to respond very quickly to such stories (usually within 24 hours) – being able to refer to an ICAO statement would be very helpful.
- b) Outreach activities are also extremely important for a number of reasons. EPWG no longer exists so the only outreach activity at present is that carried out by ICAO. There are a number of international organisations that have an interest in supporting ICAO's aims. Such organisations have proven in the past to be very useful partners and ICAO must build on those to obtain maximum leverage for their own aims whilst at the same time providing input to the aims of the organisations. Whilst it is clear that the Secretariat wishes to retain full control of the relationship between external organisations with which outreach activities may be organised, the communications group needs to be involved at a very early stage of each initiative to ensure that the appropriate level of support and expertise will be available. There are a host of issues around this subject that will need to be discussed with ICAO. The very successful symposiums that ICAO has run over the past two years require much support from TAG and requests for this might best be channelled through the communications group. Additionally, articles for the MRTD Report are needed and there needs to be a pool of contributors that the communications group should identify.
- c) Provision of FAQ's for the MRTD website and considering ways in which the website could be utilised more to support the outreach objective. Such areas as providing minutes from NTWG meetings on the website appear to be fairly straightforward. Some concern has been expressed about including dates for upcoming NTWG meetings as it could encourage more requests to attend. However that may be a larger issue that needs to be addressed.
- d) Providing responses to detailed technical questions will require a pool of expertise in the various areas of MRTDs

3. ACTION BY THE TAG/MRTD

3.1 A coherent and effective communications strategy involving both NTWG and the ICAO Secretariat must be based on a mutually-agreed to remit for the work. Given the evolution of this proposal over the past year, the NTWG invites TAG/MRTD to:

- a) note the formal creation of a sub group within the NTWG to take forward communications issues in partnership with the ICAO Secretariat, in line with the new Terms of Reference for NTWG proposed by Working Paper 2.
- b) endorse the following programme of work for the sub group:
 - develop appropriate media statements in relation to ePassports and obtain ICAO endorsement of same, for use by Governments;
 - support the ICAO Secretariat's plans for outreach activities by developing a structured and timely programme involving key international partners where appropriate;
 - provide knowledge and expertise to capacity building initiatives; support the concept of a mentoring role;
 - in partnership with the ICAO Secretariat, develop the MRTD website further to enhance the ability for ICAO to meet the needs of Contracting States and industry;
 - support the RFI process through publicising this event widely to both government and non-government; and
 - develop a structure for responding effectively to technical questions.

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