International Civil Aviation Organization

WORKING PAPER

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

NINETEENTH MEETING

Montréal, 7 to 9 December 2009

Agenda Item 2: **Activities of the NTWG**
Agenda Item 2.7: **The Case for Electronic Immigration Clearances for Travel, Entry and/or Stay**

THE CASE FOR ELECTRONIC IMMIGRATION CLEARANCES FOR TRAVEL, ENTRY AND/OR STAY

(Presented by the New Technologies Working Group (NTWG))

1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   The use of and potential for electronic visas ("e-visas") have been under consideration by ICAO NTWG for some time.

1.2   The possible development of specifications for e-visas was discussed at an NTWG meeting in Manchester in November 1999. Further investigation work took place and a paper titled "Development of Specifications for Electronic Visas" was presented and discussed initially at the NTWG meeting in Haarlem in July-August 2000. Developments were reported to TAG-MRTD/13 in February 2002 and a first Draft Technical Report was produced by Australia in December 2002.

1.3   The development of ICAO specifications for biometrics deployment in machine readable travel documents (MRTDs), most notably the decision of TAG-MRTD/14 in May 2003 to endorse the use of high capacity contactless IC media as the storage medium for use with MRTDs in the deployment of biometrics, led to further consideration of this method of data storage in relation to visas.

1.4   As work has continued on e-visas, it has become clear that electronic records for the purposes of immigration are not limited to traditional visa processing, as such, new terminology is desirable. The NTWG proposes to continue the work on e-visas by developing a Technical Report on *Electronic Immigration Clearances for Travel, Entry and/or Stay* (EICTES).

2.   **BACKGROUND**

2.1   There is considerable potential for applications of e-visas/clearances in a wider context in the ICAO community of states, particularly with the other NTWG initiatives for biometrics deployment in MRTDs. These applications may be for the benefit of all States particularly in respect of verification of identity and eligibility of persons travelling. Immigration clearances are primarily issued for the use of the host state or group of states and the exact nature of the applications of EICTES and benefits must be considered in this context.

2.2   The NTWG meeting in The Hague in February 2004 agreed that development of the existing excellent work that had taken place resulting in the draft Technical Report should be continued and built on by a sub-committee of the NTWG. The aim being to incorporate into a Technical Report electronic storage of data on immigration clearances using contactless IC media.

2.3   It was agreed at TAG-MRTD/16 that the NTWG should continue its work on e-visas. At the NTWG meeting in Brussels in March 2009, the NTWG decided to focus its efforts on e-visas based on a database model as outlined in the previous drafts of the Technical Report referenced above rather than using contactless IC media.

2.4   At the NTWG meeting in Sydney in October 2009, it was agreed that to have the Technical Report apply more broadly to types of immigration clearances, that term "e-visas" should be replaced by *Electronic Immigration Clearances for Travel, Entry and/or Stay*.

2.5   In developing its work on EICTES, the NTWG will undertake the following:

   a) Suggest possible areas for ICAO informative guidance on the development of
       EICTES; and

   b) Examine potential areas where standardization may be desirable.

2.6   The continuing work as described above will result in the NTWG focusing its efforts on developing standards and guidelines for EICTES system that would be developed on the foundation of electronic records hosted in databases.

3.   **ACTION BY THE TAG/MRTD**

3.1   The TAG/MRTD is invited to approve continuation of the on-going research and development work being carried out by the NTWG for EICTES and their potential applications to the ICAO community and the development of a full Technical Report on these matters for subsequent consideration and adoption by the TAG/MRTD.

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