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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 2.9: G8 Project on the Use of ePassports in Border Processing

G8 PROJECT ON THE USE OF EPASSPORTS IN BORDER PROCESSING

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

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this Working Paper is to inform the TAG about the results of the G8 project on the Use of ePassports in Border Processing.

1.2 At TAG-MRTD/18 held in Montréal from 5 to 7 May 2008, the project was presented to the TAG in WP/5. The TAG recognized the national and international security enhancements brought by reading ePassports at the border and encouraged the participation of NTWG member states in the G8 Lyon/Roma-led project.

1.3 With the goal of preventing the fraudulent use of passports, States began issuing ICAO compliant ePassports in 2005. There are now in excess of 65 countries issuing ePassports. To achieve the full security and facilitation benefits of ePassports, the information on the chip must be read and its integrity validated at the border. The goal of the G8 project was to establish the extent to which states read or were planning to read and validate ePassports at border control points and to determine whether there were any lessons learned to be shared.

1.4 This paper presents only highlights from the report. The final report has been previously provided to the Chair of the TAG and its members. Additionally, the October 2009 issue of the *Keesing Journal of Documents and Identity* contains an article on the project.

2. METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

2.1 In July 2008, a survey which included questions distinguishing between reading ePassport chips and validating the integrity of the information on the chip was distributed to G8 member states and NTWG participating states. A total of fourteen responses were received: all G8 member states as well as Australia, Latvia, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland.

2.2 Eleven of the fourteen respondents reported reading ePassport chips at the border. Two others planned to begin doing so within 2 years. The degree to which chip reading functionally was implemented ranged from a trial phase affecting only certain types of passports or limited ports of entry to full implementation. While a few respondent states plan only to read the ePassport at entry points the majority will do so at both entry and exit controls.

2.3 To limit the overall processing times some states have implemented strategies i.e. random or risk based, to select ePassport to be read. States that have implemented automated border control systems read 100% of the passports of travellers who are eligible to use the system.

2.4 With respect to verifying the integrity of the data on the chip, meaning using public key infrastructure certificates to determine whether the passport has been issued by a genuine issuing authority and whether the information on the chip is unaltered, only six states reported doing this check. In spite of this, verification of digital signatures was identified as the most useful security feature of the ePassport.

3. LESSONS LEARNED

3.1 Respondents emphasized that to ensure global chip reading capability ePassports must meet ICAO standards and ePassport readers must be designed to read documents that meet the same standard.

3.2 Additional recommendations related to implementing a border system to read ePassports include ensuring readers are able to process data in an acceptable time frame; ensuring that border systems are flexible enough to accommodate upgrades in both reader and document technologies; providing comprehensive training, including regular evaluation, for border control staff; maintaining effective communication with border control staff; and establishing close communications between travel document issuing agencies and border control authorities.

4. REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

4.1 The final project report was presented to and approved by G8 Roma/Lyon Heads of Delegations in April 2009. It included the following recommendations:

a) Communicate results to ICAO.

As per the recommendation, project results have been presented to both the New Technologies Working Group and the Implementation and Capacity Building Working Group. The paper has also been submitted to the Chief, Aviation Security and Facilitation Policy for distribution to the TAG.

b) Encourage ICAO to broaden and update research.

ICAO is encouraged to review on a regular basis the state of implementation of ePassport reading programs to determine where support for such programs may be required.

c) Encourage countries to integrate the reading and validation of ePassports into their border processes, and

d) To recognize the ICAO PKD as the mechanism of choice to do this, subject to national legislation if required.

4.2 The G8 recognized the importance of the last two recommendations by including relevant text in the Final Declaration of the G8 Justice and Home Affairs ministerial meeting held in Rome on the 29th and 30th of May 2009. The Final Declaration states that "As ePassports add new security capabilities, interoperability will be crucial. We request all States to verify the authenticity of the information in ePassport chips and to use the International Civil Aviation Organization Public Key Directory to do so when their national legislation permits. The G8 fully support the ICAO recommended practice that Contracting States issuing or intending to issue ePassport and/or implementing at border controls automated checks on ePassport should participate in the ICAO PKD".

5. ACTION BY THE TAG/MRTD

5.1 The NTWG invites the TAG/MRTD:

a) to recognize the efforts of the G8 Roma/Lyon Group in promoting the security enhancements brought by verifying ePassports at border control and by recognizing the ICAO/PKD; and

b) to support future research in this area to evaluate progress, to assess requirements for new technologies, and to determine where support may be needed.

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