

- On behalf of the Secretary General of the OAS, Luis Almagro, I am grateful for the kind invitation extended by ICAO and for the opportunity to be here with all of you today.
- As you know, secure borders are essential for the free flow of trade, for the quick and safe passage of travelers, and for greater protection against crime, violence and illegal activities. International tourism arrivals to Latin America and the Caribbean almost tripled between 2000 and 2015 from 36.7million to 97.12 million. And according to the World Bank, between 2005 and 2014 imports to the region increased from 500 billion to over 1 trillion and exports largely followed the same curve. The United States and Canada are two of the region's top 5 import/export partners. So never before have secure and efficient border controls and protocols in the Americas been more important.
- The Americas as a region has a long history of cross-border migration and, in many instances, areas of weakness in border control and identity management. For the past decade, population mobility has become an issue of even greater concern for OAS Member States, due largely to the rise of irregular migration and trans-border crime. In addition, the linkages between national (and regional) security and border controls have prompted governments to take into account transnational organized crime and terrorism threats when strengthening their migration and identity management mechanisms. The need for enhanced comprehensive border and identity management capacity-building strategies has emerged as a priority for both individual governments and regional bodies.

- The international system has responded in a number of different ways. UN Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) requires “all UN Member States to prevent the movement of terrorists or terrorist groups through effective border controls and controls on the issuance of identity papers and travel documents, as well as through measures to prevent counterfeiting, forgery or the fraudulent use of identity papers and travel documents.” And more recently, UN Security Council Resolution 2309 (2016) calls on member states to work with ICAO to ensure that its international security standards are reviewed, adapted and implemented to effectively address this threat.
- For its part the OAS, through the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) has been helping its Member States strengthen national capacity in this field since 2006.
- Specifically, CICTE’s Document Security and Fraud Prevention Program aims to enhance security in the issuance and control of travel and identity documents by encouraging the development of integrated and secure national identity management systems, as well as more effective control over the use of these documents. The program aims to strengthen the national capacity of OAS Member States to comply with ICAO security standards (**Annex 9 and Document 9303**) concerning the emission and control of Machine Readable Travel Documents (MRTDs) and to detect fraudulent use of travel and identity documents. The program also focuses on increasing the capacity of migration, customs, and other personnel responsible for controlling the movement of people across national borders to detect fraudulent documents and prevent their counterfeiting, forgery or fraudulent use.

- With very generous support from the Governments of Canada and the United States, CICTE’s program has trained over 1600 officials from throughout in the region in 5 key “high-impact” areas:
  1. Providing technical expertise: by giving officials the skills they need to address operations-level border security problems (such as teaching an immigration official how to identify a counterfeit passport; instructing port officials how to implement a container control system; behavior analysis; interviewing techniques, etc.);
  2. Assessing vulnerabilities: by identifying weaknesses in existing capacities and systems;
  3. Managing crises: which helps better prepare stakeholders in dealing with crisis situations, primarily by hosting table-top crisis management exercises
  4. Building networks and improving communication: to promote the sharing of experiences and know-how and to establish lines of communication among key stakeholders within countries and across borders (such as through the establishment of National Points of Contacts for Major Events);
  5. Promoting sustainability: by helping Member States move towards institutionalizing all of these efforts through train-the-trainer programs.
  
- Three years ago, in 2013, we carried out capacity gap assessments in 8 countries throughout the Hemisphere (Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Paraguay, Peru and

Uruguay) on travel document security and identity management, which gave us greater insight into the challenges our Member States face regarding the security of issuance processes and control of travel documents.

- As a result future OAS/CICTE efforts will be geared towards strengthening Member States' abilities to secure the document issuance process and improve the verification of identity. As well as on greater capacity to detect fraudulent travel documents, and perhaps, more importantly, sharing information on travel document fraud.
- In conclusion, we know that without the sustained commitment of all actors at all levels to improve border security, our Hemisphere will be less secure for trade, investment and tourism. Threats are constantly evolving and becoming more complex. We need to be well prepared to address these threats in order to safeguard regional and international trade and economic interests, including important and growing commercial relationships.
- Of course none of this will be possible without continued cooperation and coordination. We all must work together with our strategic partners and take advantage of important events such as this, to raise awareness and create synergies so that as a region we work together to create strong and secure borders and ensure the efficient and safe movement of our citizens.