

**Regional Seminar on MRTDs, Biometrics and Identification
Management,
9-11 July 2013, Philipsburg, Sint Maarten, Dutch West Indies**

Wrap-up: Talking Points

Honorable Sarah Wescot-Williams, Prime Minister of Sint Maarten
Ms. Leona Romeo Marlin, Department Head, Civil Registry of Sint
Maarten

Invited Speakers
ICAO Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure for me to provide closing remarks on the completion of a very successful ICAO Regional Seminar on MRTDs and Biometrics for the Americas.

ICAO MRTD Regional Seminars - as this one in Sint Maarten - have two main purposes. First, they provide an opportunity to brief participants from Member States about current ICAO Standards, specifications, new developments and clarify any specific questions and finer technical points.

Second, they provide a forum for professional discussions about the current and emerging needs of States and other stakeholders. They present an opportunity to discuss practical ways how we could join our forces to strengthen traveller identification management and border control capacity, so that the States and their societies could benefit from enhanced security and facilitation that the MRTD programme offers.

We can say with confidence that the Regional Seminar in Sint Maarten addressed those needs very well. In particular, the numbers and diversity of the participants highlighted the importance that government agencies and private sector place on identification management, travel documents, border security and combating terrorism and trans-border crime.

I would like to highlight some important messages that emerged from our discussions at the Seminar:

- Compliance with ICAO MRTD standards and specifications is of key importance to maximising security and facilitation benefits for States and their citizens. In particular, compliance with ICAO Standards is a legal obligation of all Member States of ICAO.
- In our exchanges, compliance with Annex 9 emerged as an area of particular importance. Meeting the deadline of 24 November 2015 for the expiration of non-machine readable passports is a challenge to a number of States. We encourage States to maintain a dialogue with ICAO on this matter, send a reply to the Standard 3.10.1 Questionnaire and, if applicable, file a difference.
- It is important to mention that many governmental entities that have presence at international airports, they are not only implementing their responsibilities by a national mandate but also for a commitment of the State with the international community throughout the implementation of Annex 9 – Facilitation and other related from the Chicago Convention, therefore, it is important that all governmental entities of the States related with aviation should coordinate with the appropriate civil aviation authority within their States.
- Effective security and facilitation is not just about travel documents. MRTDs are important – but they are just part of the broader traveller identification management framework. A framework that integrates identification management, MRTDs, border controls and other elements in a comprehensive manner. This is the main direction of the new ICAO Traveller Identification Strategy that reconfirms and consolidates the relevance of identification management to the needs and expectations of our Member States.
- We have to admit that some States world-wide struggle with the implementation of Annex 9 standards and MRTD specifications. This calls for intensifying capacity building assistance efforts, intensifying technical dialogue with states in need, and mobilising assistance from the donor community.
- Our exchanges also proved to be particularly constructive in addressing the challenges of cross-border cooperation and data sharing. This is a vital area that requires further regional cooperation, confidence building measures, joint activities and information exchange in preventing identification fraud. Our round table discussions highlighted the special challenges that the Dutch, French and British overseas territories face in combating identification fraud and trans-border crime. They face the same

pressures as other States in the region – but are often excluded from some regional cooperation frameworks. A strong message emerging from this Seminar is – exploring new, more inclusive and more effective forms of regional cooperation and data sharing is an important priority.

- The security of passport issuance process and Evidence of Identification are areas that require particular attention. This is an area where identification fraud efforts have been shifting to globally, and can be exploited for terrorist and trans-border crime purposes. ICAO will continue with the ongoing work of codifying good practices in secure issuance and identification management for the benefit of all States.

Some capacity gaps have been identified during the frank and constructive discussions during the Seminar. The ICAO Secretariat and Technical Advisory Group on MRTD, and the Implementation and Capacity-Building Working Group will be following them up and exploring ways how to address them through practical capacity-building projects. I also encourage States to maintain dialogue with ICAO about their ongoing and newly-emerging MRTD and border challenges. The more we know what your needs are, the better placed ICAO will be to develop an effective technical assistance strategy. Please remain in touch with the MRTD Programme and the Implementation and Capacity Building Working Group about your needs and challenges. Also, make use of the ICAO Regional Offices in Mexico City and Lima to communicate your needs and challenges. Our close cooperation and ongoing technical dialogue are key to success.

The final main point I want to stress. ICAO does not work for itself. It works for its Member States. If you face challenges in implementing ICAO Standards or ensuring compliance with specifications – please let us know. Problem solving is always easier when we join forces and work towards a common goal.

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This successful Regional Seminar was the result of excellent cooperation between many parties. I should like to take this opportunity to thank our hosts, the Government of Sint Maarten – and especially the Cabinet of the Prime Minister and the Civil Registry of Sint Maarten – which provided enormous assistance and support in organizing this important event. Their hospitality was outstanding and gave us an opportunity to discover the beauty and charm of Sint Maarten and its people.

Special thanks are due to Ms. Leona Romeo Marlin, Head of Civil Registry, and Ms. Emilia Thomas, Policy Advisor at the Cabinet of the Prime Minister of Sint Maarten. They were our main focal points and partners in organising this Seminar. Their support, contribution and willingness to go an extra mile whenever needed were quite essential to making this event a success.

Thank you again and extend this appreciation to your wonderful and professional staff.

Special thanks are due to the ICAO Technical Advisory Group on MRTDs. Their members have graciously postponed their other duties to serve as speakers and moderators at the Seminar, thus ensuring its success.

The participants of the Seminar, diverse as they are, have one thing in common: they are very busy people. I thank you all for taking your valuable time to attend the Seminar, to contribute to its discussions and a constructive debate about traveller identification needs, current and future.

Thanks are due to the industry partners who made the Seminar possible through their contributions and briefed us about the technologies and products they offer.

Allow me also to congratulate the MRTD Programme and to thank my colleagues Mauricio, Erick, Garleen, and Nathalie, in Montreal, that made possible this event.

Last but not least, I should like to thank the team of interpreters.

Again, I sincerely thank you all for having taken the time to join us here, and look forward to seeing you at future ICAO MRTD events.

Those who depart, I wish you a good and safe journey back home, those who remain, please keep take a good care of this beautiful island, and for all of you, my best wishes of success in all your activities.

Thank you very much.

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