



**Address by the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Dr. Fang Liu,
to the 11th ICAO Symposium and Exhibition
on Machine Readable Travel Documents**

(Montréal, 14 October 2015)

*Your Excellencies,
Distinguished ICAO Representatives,
Distinguished Delegates and Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. I am delighted to welcome you today at the opening of this important Symposium on the latest developments in Machine Readable Travel documents (MRTDs), border facilitation and identity management.
2. Although I could not be at ICAO this morning in person, I wish to set the stage for this important event.

3. MRTDs are a corner stone of ICAO's Traveller Identification Programme, or 'TRIP' strategy. Its objectives are to strengthen the interconnected State capacities relating to the establishment, protection and management of citizen identity, and secondly to determine secure systems of travel document production and border control facilitation which benefit from effectively-managed identity frameworks.

4. The TRIP strategy is designed to assist States in meeting international obligations with respect to a number of priorities, including the fight against terrorism, cross-border crime, and various threats to international civil aviation. It also specifically supports efforts relating to UN Security Council Resolution 2178 of September 2014.

5. With the global transition to machine readable passports now nearly complete, ICAO would like to remind its Member States that 24 November of this year is the deadline by which all non-machine readable passports should be removed from global circulation. States should encourage their citizens to renew any remaining non-machine-readable passports in their national systems before this deadline arrives in a few short weeks.

6. In the area of ePassport implementation, 120 of ICAO's 191 Member States now report that they are issuing ePassports – with nearly 500 million in circulation worldwide. Challenges persist in the ePassport domain, however, mainly as a number of these new travel documents are not fully compliant with ICAO specifications.

7. Another issue arising from ePassport implementation is that a significant number of States are still not using the ICAO Public Key Directory (PKD) to verify and authenticate their ePassports. I would like to stress that the PKD permits States to capitalize on the full security and facilitation benefits that ePassports are meant to deliver, and that intensified advocacy efforts are needed by all players to underscore that the PKD is an essential element of effective border integrity.
8. ICAO, for its part, has determined a new operating contract for the PKD, effective 1 January 2016. Under this new agreement, registration fees for new PKD participants will decrease substantially, and similarly the annual fee for existing participants will be reduced.

9. We are also working with great determination in ICAO today to establish a more systematic basis by which we can assist States in the implementation of ICAO's Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), including those relating to Doc 9303 and other policies supporting the ICAO TRIP. These efforts are consistent with ICAO's ongoing "No Country Left Behind" campaign, and a number of recent activities have directly supported these goals.

10. For instance, in line with numerous activities aimed at enhancing local and regional aviation security and facilitation, assistance to States under the ICAO TRIP Strategy has recently commenced in Africa's Sahel Region, with the direct support of the Government of Canada. The Sahel project activities include workshops, specialized training and technical assessment missions to address capacity gaps.

11. This project is being implemented in partnership with the United Nations' Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and in collaboration with other international organizations. I am very pleased to be able to highlight it to you, mainly as it represents an impressive example of joint efforts linking State needs, ICAO expertise, and financial support coordinated with the donor community.

12. In the same spirit, ICAO is also continuing to foster improved TRIP Strategy awareness worldwide, with the next Regional Seminar taking place just one month from now in Nairobi, Kenya, from 10–12 November.

13. Ladies and gentlemen, there is significant work ahead for States and ICAO in the implementation of coordinated activities aimed at rectifying aviation security and facilitation deficiencies in a sustainable manner. But if we continue to agree on common goals, and pursue them together through ICAO, I am confident we will build on the impressive record of progress in strengthening the global travel document system, and thereby enhance the security and facilitation of international civil aviation.

14. I should also make you aware that ICAO will be hosting a landmark event here at our headquarters at the end of next month, our first-ever ICAO World Aviation Forum, scheduled for 23–25 November.

15. This event will bring together States Ministers responsible for Transport and Infrastructure, Finance, Tourism and Economy; Directors General of Civil Aviation, and many other senior officials from governments, global and regional development banks, and even companies like Google which are increasingly looking for new ways to give back to the world and drive positive change.

16. Importantly, the World Aviation Forum will provide ICAO with an invaluable opportunity to highlight to these key decision makers the fundamental role of air transport in driving greater socio-economic prosperity wherever aircraft fly.

17. Please consider joining us for this very important event if you have any interest in fostering collaborative and effective aviation development in your State or region.

18. I wish you all a very informative and productive 2015 MRTD Symposium.
