International Civil Aviation Organization

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ICAO NEWS RELEASE

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MACHINE READABLE PASSPORTS
TO BE ISSUED WORLDWIDE BY 2010

Montreal, 11 July 2005 – Effective today, the machine readable passport (MRP) in the format specified by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is the worldwide standard.

The Organization's 188 Contracting States have agreed that all must begin issuing ICAO-standard MRPs no later than 1 April 2010. Some 110 States currently do so.

For States not yet issuing MRPs because of a lack of technical know-how or financial resources, ICAO has devised a plan of action called the *Universal Implementation of Machine Readable Travel Documents*. Support in meeting the new standard includes technical assistance in applying ICAO specifications and organizing issuance systems, identification of resources from donor States and international financial institutions, project management through ICAO's Technical Co-operation Bureau, and quality control.

"Cooperation among all ICAO Contracting States in the implementation of this new standard is essential for meeting our global objectives, to minimize delays in border-crossing formalities and to safeguard international civil aviation operation against acts of unlawful interference", noted Dr. Assad Kotaite, President of the Council of ICAO.

ICAO-standard MRPs are readily recognized by officials at security, immigration and customs check points and by embassies and consulates worldwide, and thus make it easier for a person to obtain visas for travel and to be cleared at airports.

Of the States already issuing ICAO-standard MRPs, more than forty plan to upgrade to the biometrically-enabled version, or e-passport, by the end of 2006. The current ICAO-standard technical specifications for e-passports can be downloaded from the ICAO website for Machine Readable Travel Documents (MRTDs) (www.icao.int/mrtd).

Known as the ICAO Blueprint for the harmonized, worldwide integration of biometric identification in machine readable travel documents, the specifications include:

- the face as the primary, mandatory biometric; iris or fingerprint as secondary and optional
- the contactless integrated circuit chip as the storage medium
- a logical data structure for programming the chip
- a modified public key infrastructure (PKI) scheme to secure the data against unauthorized alteration

The specifications will also be part of the sixth edition of Document 9303, Part 1 – Machine Readable Passports to be published later this year.

On 28 and 29 September 2005, at its Headquarters in Montreal, ICAO will hold an international *Symposium on ICAO-standard MRTDs – and biometric enhancement* to support the full implementation of MRPs around the world.

Editors: For more information on the ICAO MRTD programme, please consult our site at www.icao.int/mrtd.

A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created in 1944 to promote the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation throughout the world. It sets standards and regulations necessary for aviation safety, security, efficiency and regularity, as well as for aviation environmental protection. The Organization serves as the forum for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation among its 188 Contracting States.

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