

# ICAO Facilitation Global Forum

21 to 23 October 2024  
Bogotá, Colombia



Hosted by:



---

## Simone Schwartz Delgado

Assistant Representative (Protection)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, (UNHCR)

Bogota, Colombia

22 October 2024

# States that are party to the 1951 and 1954 Conventions

Usually, States issue passports to their citizens, allowing them to travel abroad and return.

Refugees often do not have a valid national passport or cannot use it, as it may put them at risk.

Stateless people, lacking nationality, cannot get a national passport.

In such cases, **travel documents** are provided as an alternative.

The **goal** is for individuals in need of international protection to have access to a travel document with **sufficient safeguards**, that **meets international standards** and **facilitates inclusion** in regional and global spaces.

This includes facilitating family reunification of refugees, access to complementary pathways, supporting labour mobility, educational opportunities in third countries etc. with the possibility of returning to the country of asylum.



Many refugees and stateless persons **do not have access to or cannot safely use** a national passport, and instead rely on travel documents for refugees and stateless persons.



## D. Travel documents

3.11 All passports issued by Contracting States shall be machine readable in accordance with the specifications of Doc 9303, Part 4.

*Note.— This provision does not intend to preclude the issuance of non-machine readable passports or temporary travel documents of limited validity in cases of emergency.*

3.11.1 For passports issued after 24 November 2005 and which are not machine readable, Contracting States shall ensure the expiration date falls before 24 November 2015.

3.12 Contracting States shall ensure that travel documents for refugees and stateless persons (“Convention Travel Documents”) are machine readable, in accordance with the specifications of Doc 9303.

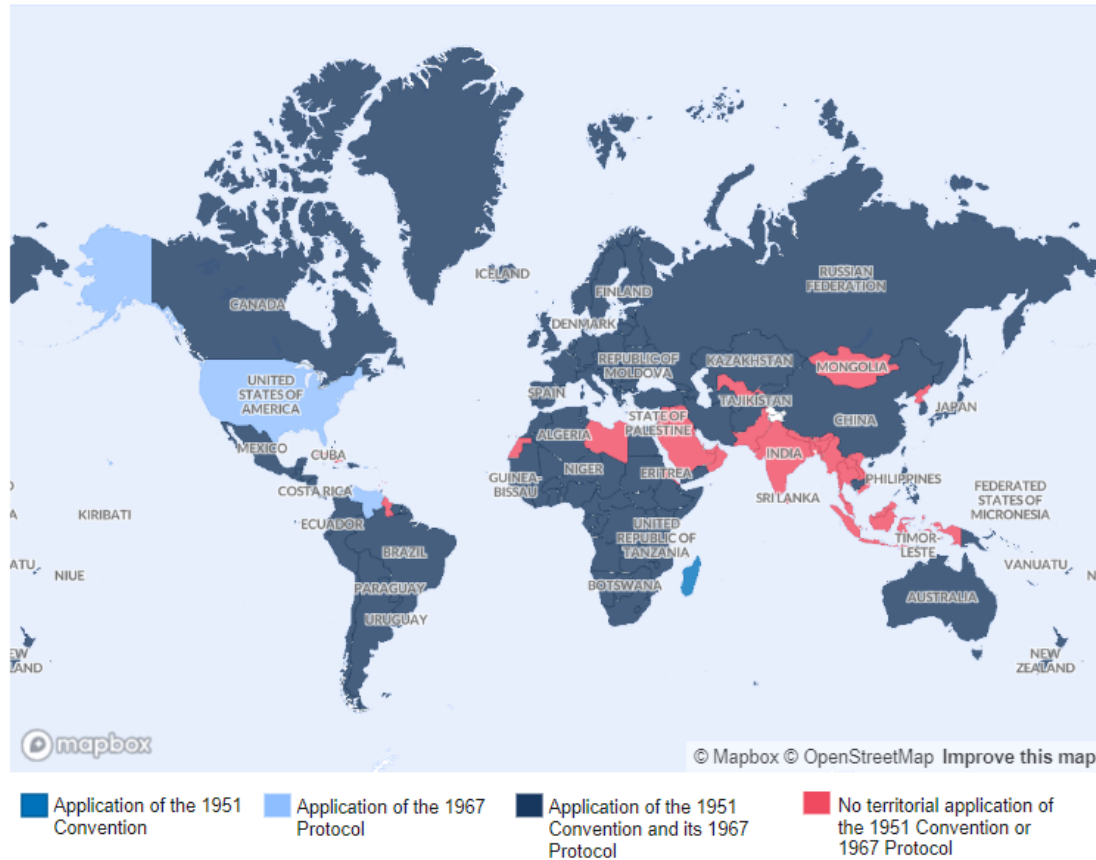
*Note.— “Convention Travel Documents” are provided for in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (cf. respective Article 28 of both Conventions).*

3.13 **Recommended Practice.**— *When issuing identity documents or visas accepted for travel purposes, Contracting States should issue these in machine readable form, as specified in Doc 9303.*

3.14 **Recommended Practice.**— *Contracting States should establish publicly accessible facilities for the receipt of travel document applications and/or for the issuance of travel documents.*

# Global situation on documentation

States party to and territories to which the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol extends



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Working Paper to FAL panel (FALP/13-WP/12):

- As of 30 January 2024, there were 147 States party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol, and 98 parties to the 1954 Statelessness Convention.
- According to the “2019 Compliance Report” (UNHCR), only 78 countries are issuing “*machine-readable travel documents*” (MRCTDs) for refugees and 32 countries for stateless persons. Moreover, only 41% of refugees around the world have access to a Travel Document.
- Colombia is a State party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and to the 1954 Statelessness Convention, and provides Colombian Travel Documents to recognized refugees and stateless persons.

## Recommendations based on UNHCR-ICAO collaboration, reflected in **FALP/13-WP/12**

To explore **amending the relevant provisions** of Annex 9 (ref. 3.12) and the relevant sections in Doc 9303 (ref. 4.2.2.2), along with the joint 2017 UNHCR-ICAO Guide for Issuing Machine Readable Convention Travel Documents for Refugees and Stateless Persons, as necessary **to clarify scope and address coverage gaps** in providing a travel document for refugees and stateless persons (see tentative proposal to Appendix A below) which at present only make reference to Convention travel documents;

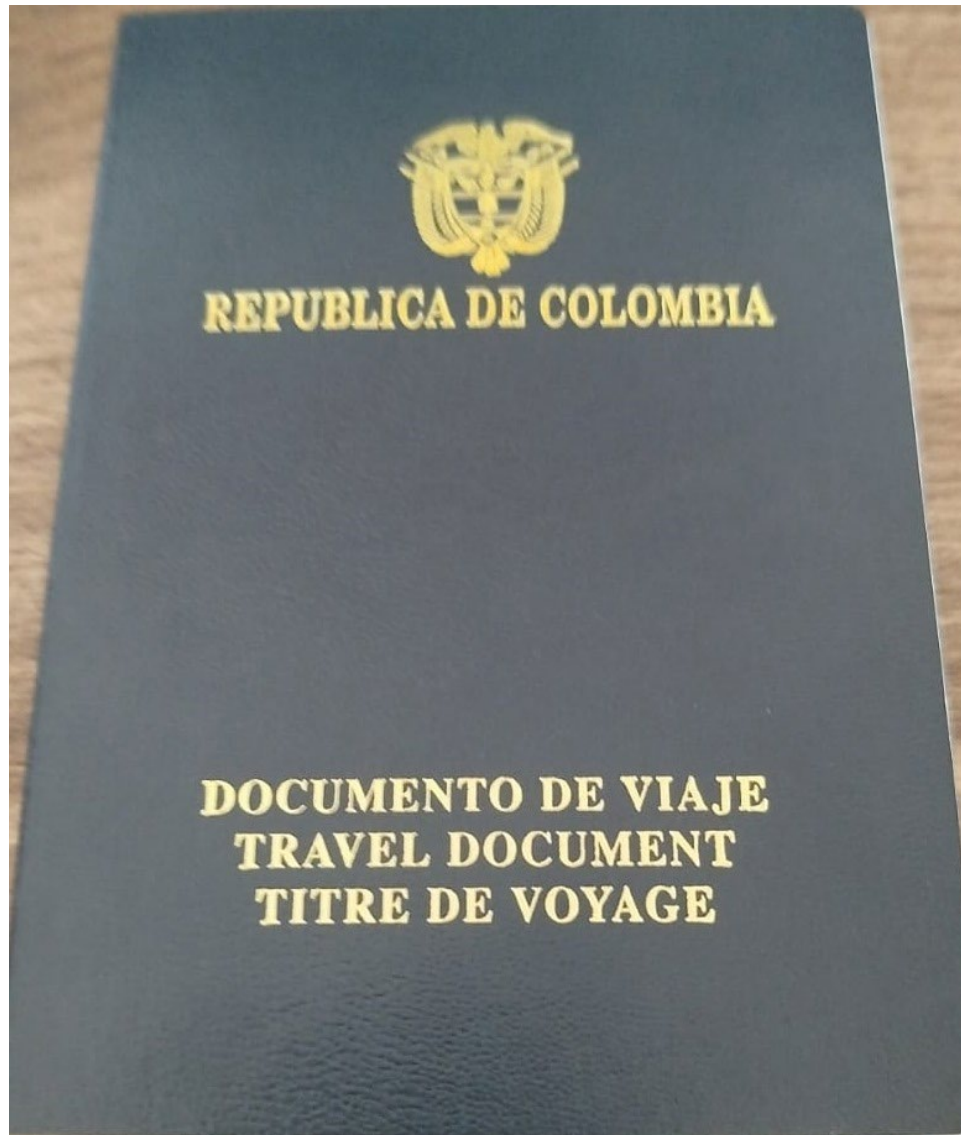
To work jointly with UNHCR to **track compliance data** (e.g., support efforts for UNHCR to provide an updated compliance report and to conduct a joint UNHCR-ICAO survey to Contracting States), to **address obstacles** preventing or delaying compliance, and to ensure the ongoing **development of compliance tools** include analysis of travel documents for refugees and stateless persons;

To determine what steps can be taken to **capacitate States** to include refugees and stateless persons in the national system for machine readable travel document and utilize the ICAO ICBWG to support in this endeavor including, when necessary, the use of letters to draw attention to issues of noncompliance.

# Standards & Recommended Practices

- UNHCR
  - Right to return
  - Acceptance of CTDs
  - Protection against refoulement (linked to nationality field)
  - CTDs renewable abroad
  - Price is same or lower than lowest priced national passport
- ICAO
  - Machine-readable
  - Nationality field not included or noted as refugee / stateless
  - Transparent application procedures for issuance, renewal, replacement
  - 5-year validity period (as a minimum) and unlimited journeys for passports

## Situation in Colombia



- States have an obligation to issue CTDs under Article 28 of the 1951 Refugee Convention: *“Contracting States shall issue to refugees staying lawfully in their territory travel documents for the purpose of travel outside their territory (...)”* There is a similar provision for stateless persons in Art. 28 of the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons.
- In Colombia, travel documents are issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to refugees, stateless persons, political asylees, and foreigners who are in Colombia and do not have Diplomatic or Consular Representation in the country.
- These Colombian travel documents are regulated as follows: *“Documento de viaje con zona de lectura mecánica”* (Resolution 6888 on Passports and Travel documents from 2021  
[https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/sites/default/files/Normograma/docs/resolucion\\_minrelaciones\\_6888\\_2021.htm](https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/sites/default/files/Normograma/docs/resolucion_minrelaciones_6888_2021.htm))
- The Colombian Travel document is intended to provide an international identification and travel document to the above-mentioned categories of persons.
- Recognized refugees receive a Colombian Travel Document in which the visa type “M for refugees” can be issued. With these documents refugees can request the issuance of a foreigners’ identity card, which is the document valid to identify themselves within the country.



# Situation in Colombia

## Some population data:

As of 30 June 2024, there were 1363 formally recognized refugees in the country.

In 2023, UNHCR provided support (in particular to facilitate their travel to Bogota to obtain CTDs) for 74 refugees (31 families), and for 68 refugees (25 families) so far in 2024.

Some 2 million Venezuelans out of the 2.8 million Venezuelans currently in Colombia, are under the protection of the Temporary Protection Permit (TPS). Nevertheless, TPS holders do not have access to a Colombian Travel Document.

## Challenges:

The Colombian Travel Document is free of charge for refugees and stateless persons, but it is only issued in Bogotá.

Colombian Travel Documents cannot be extended/renewed abroad (by Colombian consulates).

The validity of the refugee visa and the Colombian Travel Document is limited to 3 years (below the period of 5 years recommended by ICAO).

Some countries do not recognize the Colombian Travel Document – for example several European countries only admit 1951 Convention Travel Documents to allow refugees' entry into their territories.

There does not exist any publically available guide on how to obtain a travel document. Upon recognition of refugee status, the authorities provide orientation to the refugee, including information on how to apply for a travel document.



**“Travel documents are key to unlocking refugee potential. Without them, dreams of a better life are put on hold.”**

*Bahati, refugee student in Italy*

**“I imagine a future where refugees are not waiting for help; where they can use their travel document to work, travel, and live normal lives, just like anyone else.”**

*Prince, refugee working as IUNV at UNHCR*

---

# Thank You

