HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON COVID-19

Montréal, 12 to 22 October 2021

DRAFT REPORT OF THE FACILITATION STREAM
ON AGENDA ITEM 8

The attached draft report on Agenda Item 8 is presented for approval by
the Facilitation Stream for submission to the Plenary.

Agenda Item 8: Enhancing digital data sharing to facilitate seamless and contactless processes during and beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic

1.1   The Conference considered WP/22 presented by the Secretariat that described the comprehensive set of tools within the ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) that support States in enhancing digital data sharing to facilitate seamless and contactless processes during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Health and identity data encoded in documents issued in one State and used for travel to other territories can be read and validated by all States using the same model. Data enrolled digitally can be shared across borders seamlessly by using an existing ICAO comprehensive set of tools. There was a wide support for WP/22. The Conference took note that global interoperability of vaccine certificates will be critical to aviation recovery and supported ICAO's development of digital and non-digital capabilities under the ICAO TRIP strategy, while also noting equitable access in the context of the *No Country Left Behind* (NCLB) initiative. The Conference noted the benefits of relying on existing infrastructure when issuing health certificates in VDS-NC format, but also recognized that alternate trust anchors in a State, such as health Public Key Infrastructure (*PKI)* can also be used. In addition flexibility in verification systems was desirable. The Conference highlighted the exact wording of CART Recommendation 17 and noted that the European Union Digital Covid Certificate (EU-DCC) is another example of an already deployed health credential. It was seen as critical to support interoperability among various health certificates and the ICAO VDS-NC specifications. Moreover, the use of Interactive Advance Passenger Information (iAPI) systems was considered, whereby clearance is confirmed by the State of Destination or Transit before departure keeping in mind that the best way for authorities to collect health information is through their own health portals, such as a digital Passenger Locator Form (PLF).

1.2   The Conference considered WP/105 by the United Arab Emirates that highlighted the potential benefits from innovation, creative solutions, flexibility, and rapid deployment of new technologies and solutions for COVID-19 mitigation measures in civil aviation with the aim to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 public health emergency. The Conference acknowledged the importance of innovative approaches to exchange passenger health-related documentation and facilitate contactless processing of passengers at various stages of their journey in line with ICAO Annex 9 – *Facilitation*. The Conference supported the working paper and noted that the development of technologies, the use of touchless equipment, biometric identification technologies, and the adoption of standardized procedures to facilitate and secure air transport are very important.

1.3   The Conference considered WP/131 by the Republic of Korea that highlighted the operating progress of biometrics using the palm vein authentication used by the Korea Airports Corporation in the Republic of Korea with other States and ICAO, and suggests that the palm vein authentication that offers benefits in terms of contact-free, privacy, accuracy, and reliability in the COVID-19 era be added as an optional method of biometric authentication in ICAO Doc 9303, *Machine Readable Documents*, Part 9. While new forms of biometric identification can be explored, the Conference noted that the introduction of palm vein authentication in Doc 9303 needed further evaluation and should be referred to Technical Advisory Group of TRIP (TAG/TRIP) for more evaluation.

1.4   The Conference considered WP/173 presented by Japan that highlighted the necessity to recognize the importance of promoting mutual recognition of various certificates concerning the health status of passengers, as well as promoting digitalization of both the issuance and acceptance of certificates and ensuring interoperability of widely-used standards related to digitalization, for a smooth resumption of cross-border travel by international aviation while taking countermeasures against COVID-19. The Conference supported the working paper by acknowledging the importance of a smooth resumption of cross-border travel through aviation supported by mutual

recognition of health certificates and the global interoperability of digital systems, for both issuance and acceptance of certificates.

1.5   The Conference considered WP/174 presented by Japan that highlighted that in the future, all procedures could be covered by facial recognition alone. Currently, Japan implemented a new boarding procedure, "Face Express" (One ID) system, at both Narita and Haneda International Airports in Japan in July 2021. When passengers at airports use the Face Express system, they can register their facial photo and pass through baggage check-in, security checkpoints, and boarding gates with a "face pass," without having to present their boarding pass or passport during airport procedures. This will make the conventional boarding process smoother in a contactless manner. The Conference supported widely the paper while emphasizing that collaboration amongst relevant international organizations, industry, and ICAO and working groups is essential. The Conference noted the benefits of contactless passenger processing while acknowledging that some States may have difficulties implementing these innovations due to legal data protection regulations.

1.6   The Conference considered WP/175 presented by Singapore, co-sponsored by Thailand, that highlighted how biometric technology can facilitate a more contactless journey for passengers by eliminating the need for repeated presentation of travel documents as passengers' journey through the airport. The Conference emphasized that collaboration amongst States, relevant international organizations, industry, and ICAO and working groups is essential. The Conference supported the paper and noted the important role that biometrics can play in facilitating contactless passenger flows, while acknowledging the associated human rights and data privacy concerns.

1.7   Information Papers provided by Brazil (WP/228), People's Republic of China (WPs 148 and 149), and the United States (WP/195) were noted.

1.8   As a result of the discussion, the Facilitation Stream agreed on the following recommendations:

> **Recommendation 8/1 –   Enhancing digital data sharing to facilitate seamless and contactless processes during and beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic**

That States should:

a) support digital issuance of health proofs in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations and these should be interoperable with the specifications in the ICAO Technical Report Visible Digital Seal for Non-Constrained Environments (VDS-NC);

b) integrate the verification of health proofs for border crossing into their inspection systems for the validation of the VDS-NC to the extent possible;

c) adopt an appropriate regulatory framework that considers all data protection and privacy requirements for use of health proofs for travel and incorporates appropriate safeguards;

d) adopt a policy of mutual recognition of health proofs to facilitate the opening of borders;

e) if issuing ePassports, consider to redeploy their existing eMRTD trust framework to secure the issuance of health proofs with the VDS-NC, while recognizing that the development of a PKI system by health authorities is also acceptable;

f)   if requesting health-related documentation, consider developing a health digital platform where passengers can apply for obtaining a notification of approval to travel by the States of destination and transit;

g)   consider digitization of passenger processing in line with ICAO Standards and international guidance, taking into account their own needs and circumstances;

h)   seek and promote global interoperability in all passenger processing efforts, whether involving manual or automated processes or some combination thereof;

i)   exploit the use of iAPI systems where feasible by providing a response message to aircraft operators with information related to public health requirements;

j)   share lessons learned and best practices under the auspice of ICAO for the benefit of civil aviation recovery and responses to future disruptions;

k)   consider making greater use of biometric technology for passenger processing as recommended in the Airport Module of the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce (CART) *Take-off Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis* document; and

l)   share experiences in implementing and using biometric passenger processing to facilitate wider adoption and safe travel as air travel recovers.

— END —