

**ICAO SEVENTH SYMPOSIUM AND EXHIBITION ON MRTDs,  
BIOMETRICS AND SECURITY STANDARDS**

(Montreal, 12 to 15 September 2011)

**Closing Remarks**

**Mrs. Folasade Odutola, Director, Air Transport Bureau, ICAO**

Distinguished Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and privilege to provide closing remarks on the completion of this very successful ICAO Symposium on MRTDs, Biometrics and Security Standards.

This ongoing global event has proved its relevance over the years. As we conclude the 7th Symposium, it is timely to reflect on the reasons why we inaugurated this annual gathering in the first place, and the extent to which it responds to evolving needs.

Generally, the ICAO MRTD Symposium has three main purposes.

First, it provides an opportunity to brief participants from ICAO Member States and industry about current MRTD specifications and new developments, and clarify the finer technical points.

Second, it provides a forum for discussion about the existing and emerging needs of States and other stakeholders. Quite simply, the Symposium is an exceptional opportunity to identify practical ways we can join forces to strengthen the MRTD regulatory framework, the implementation of MRTD programmes and the capacity to provide border security.

Lastly, this Symposium facilitates dialogue between governments and the industry. Government agencies from around the world are able to learn first-hand about the latest state-of-the-art technological developments and innovative solutions for enhancing document security.

I believe we can say with confidence that the 7<sup>th</sup> MRTD Symposium accomplished our objectives. In particular, the numbers and diversity of participants highlighted the importance that government agencies and the private sector place on travel documents, border security, and efforts to combat terrorism and transborder crime.

This 7th Symposium was also special in two respects.

The timing of the event, coinciding as it did with the tenth anniversary of 9/11, reminds us of the real threat posed by terrorism. Expert presentations on counterterrorism — including interventions from high-level policy officials — highlighted the fact that existing solutions have limitations. Clearly, we need to find a more comprehensive and innovative approach to deal with a longstanding problem. As part of this process, we should examine the role of travel documents and border security in the broader, comprehensive security framework.

I am pleased to note that these very issues have been raised by ICAO at an institutional level, and the Organization is assessing how to maximize the security and facilitation benefits of the MRTD Programme.

Another point I should like to stress is the value of the feedback from the MRTD strategy panel session. I have no doubt you will agree that this interesting and thought-provoking exchange was the highlight of the Symposium. Importantly, it generated a significant record of views that will be taken into account as ICAO develops a new MRTD Programme strategy.

ICAO listens to the voice of stakeholders, and is grateful indeed for your input and expertise. As we proceed to further refine and build the MRTD Programme over the coming months, we are confident we can count on your continued support.

Special thanks are due to the Technical Advisory Group on MRTDs, and its working groups on new technologies and implementation and capacity-building activities. Their members have graciously served as speakers and moderators at the Symposium, thus ensuring that our discussions benefited from their expertise. I must also cite the ICAO Technical Co-operation Bureau and the Board of the Public Key Directory for their outstanding cooperation, in particular for mobilizing experts for workshops on their subject areas.

Please join me in a round of applause to thank all of these experts for their efforts.

Diverse as they are, MRTD Symposium participants have one trait in common: they are very busy people. I thank you all for attending the Symposium and contributing to the constructive discussions. Thanks also to the many sponsors who made this event possible.

Last, but not the least, I should like to thank the team of interpreters who worked so hard in recent days to facilitate our communications. You did an admirable job despite our complex technical discussions.

Before closing, I should like to remind participants of two important forthcoming events. As many of you know, regional MRTD seminars will be held in Qatar and Singapore at the end of 2011. Details can be found at the ICAO MRTD website, however, should you have further questions do not hesitate to contact our staff.

Again, my sincere thanks to all participants and stakeholders for taking the time to join us here. I wish you all a safe journey home.

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