



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

## **Regional Workshop on Travel Documents**

**9-11 October 2003**

**Bishkek**

### **FINAL REPORT**

November 2003

*The OSCE wishes to thank the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany for the generous contribution to this project. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the official views of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.*

## **Executive Summary**

The OSCE Centre in Bishkek, the Ministry of Interior of Kyrgyzstan and the Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) of the OSCE Secretariat conducted a three-day regional co-operation workshop on travel documents security from 9 to 11 October. It gathered 16 senior governmental experts from four OSCE participating States in Central Asia and Afghanistan, an OSCE partner for co-operation, as well as five international experts from the United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Russia and the United States. The workshop was successful in its broad and active participation, and for its positive findings. Governmental experts presented in-country evaluations of their own priority issues related to travel documents security and emphasized the need for increased cross-border co-operation at the regional level in areas such as information and intelligence sharing. Finally, the participants expressed their willingness to explore developing more bilateral and/or multilateral co-operation related to travel documents.

## **Background**

Central Asia's outward frontiers meet Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, the Russian Federation and Iran. Internally, the region hosts a number of issues that impact border management and demand attention. These include difficulties in the process of post-independence state-building, lingering border disputes, and the custodianship of nuclear and biological arms materials remaining at former Soviet testing sites.

Taken together, illicit cross-border activities can contribute to conditions conducive to terrorist activities. And the usual instrument for illicit border activity is the travel document. Counterfeiting of travel documents can allow terrorists and other criminals virtually free passage from country to country. In almost every criminal area, false travel documents are a principal means for criminals to ply their trade in areas such as terrorism, drugs, trafficking in human beings, and money laundering.

A key factor in addressing these conditions is the capacity of law enforcement officials in the following areas: border security and controls; the technical expertise of border police; border police deployment; the interdiction of counterfeit travel documents and passports; information storage and sharing on border traffic; and information gathering, analysis, storage, and retrieval related to convicted or suspected criminals.

The international community is in the process of intensifying technical assistance to improve border management to Central Asian countries. It is axiomatic that improving border management necessitates co-operation across those borders. Nonetheless, regional cross-border co-operation on border management has been very limited. Regional co-operation in general remains a priority. Countries in the region have acknowledged regional interdependency and are willing to pursue co-operation on a more technical and bilateral basis. However, multilateral co-operation thus far has followed a "variable geometry" of countries, depending on the issue.<sup>1</sup>

The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, in particular the Ministry of Interior (Mol), requested assistance from the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) to address the imperative need for cross-border and regional co-operation under the rubric of anti-terrorism and border security. The Mol, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, and the ATU organized a regional workshop in Bishkek on travel documents and other related issues of particular regional concern from 9 to 11 October 2003. The workshop gathered as participants relevant governmental officials specializing in travel document control from countries of the region. The goal of the workshop was to begin establishing a basis for regional co-operation specifically on travel documents, if not border management-related issues more generally.

This workshop intended to be relevant and timely. In response to the terrorist acts of 11 September 2001 and within the platform for co-operative security, the OSCE adopted two far-reaching documents

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<sup>1</sup> *EC Strategy Paper 2002-2006 and Indicative Programme 2002-2004 for Central Asia* (30 October 2002).

to prevent and combat terrorism: the Bishkek Programme of Action and the Bucharest Plan of Action. The workshop was designed in line with the following provisions of the Bishkek Programme of Action:

- To foster regional and international co-operation between anti-terrorist agencies and agencies fighting crime, including the trafficking of arms and illicit drugs, e.g. in the form of the establishment of channels of communication between relevant agencies (II;3);
- To strengthen the capacities of Central Asian states to control their borders and to prevent border crossing by terrorist and organized crime groups (III:1);
- To undertake joint training and operational activities in various areas, including training of specialists and considering the provision of appropriate equipment and technologies (III:3); and
- To strengthen the capacity of governmental institutions to combat terrorism, organized crime and illicit drugs (III:4).

The Bucharest Plan of Action has since formed the basis for all OSCE activities to prevent and combat terrorism, and its implementation remains a top priority for the Organization. The workshop aims to meet the following prominent provisions of the Bucharest Plan of Action:

- The respective UN conventions and UNSCRs constitute the global legal framework for the fight against terrorism (II.4);
- that there exists a close connection between terrorism and transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking in drugs, arms and human beings (III.19);
- OSCE participating States will consider how the OSCE may draw upon best practices and lessons learned to enhance border controls including visa and document security (II.7);
- OSCE participating States will prevent the movement of terrorist individuals or groups through effective border controls and controls on issuance of identity papers and travel documents and preventing their counterfeiting, forgery and fraudulent use (III.26);
- OSCE participating States and the Secretariat will strengthen co-operation, information exchange and promote dialogue within the OSCE area (IV.28).

The OSCE was uniquely suited to partner with the MoI in carrying out this project. As all countries in the region are OSCE participating States, the OSCE was best placed to create a regional forum in which all states concerned may address evolving border-related issues. The OSCE not only enjoys strong relations with each country's delegation to the OSCE in Vienna, but it also maintains a field presence in each country. The OSCE Centre in Bishkek, established in 1998, focuses on regional issues and is active in supporting intensive dialogue at all levels of Kyrgyz state institutions and society.

As a focal point for co-ordination and liaison, the ATU facilitates OSCE action against terrorism carried out by OSCE bodies, institutions and field operations. The Unit responds to requests for assistance from OSCE participating States and delivers practical assistance and substantive guidance to field activities in co-ordination with OSCE bodies and institutions. The ATU has already facilitated the successful implementation of a Regional Co-operation Workshop on Travel Documents for South Eastern Europe, held in Ohrid in early April 2003.

## **Project Objectives**

The workshop in Bishkek aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. The current state of cross-border and regional co-operation on travel documents and related issues is defined and assessed by participants;
2. Priority technical issues related to travel document control that require regional co-operation are identified by participants;
3. Lessons learned and best-practice case studies in regional co-operation from outside the region are presented by international experts;
4. Participants work together in groups, concretely and constructively, identifying shared problems related to travel document control and technical areas propitious for bilateral and regional co-operation;
5. A final document on lessons learned and recommendations is produced by participants for continued bilateral and regional co-operation in the area of travel document control;
6. A Technical Working Group is formed by participants to continue after the project as an informal network for information sharing;
7. Participants' understanding of travel document-related issues in other countries of the region is improved.
8. Participants' willingness to share information and co-operate on issues related to travel documents is improved.

## General Assessment

(1) Each participating state shared their priorities related to the problems of travel documents security. Participants identified key areas in which they would benefit from co-operation with their counterparts in the neighbouring and regional countries, particularly in information sharing.

(2) The priority technical themes for each participating country and their regional co-operation were presented by participating delegations in plenum. The in-country evaluation presentations shaped discussions in working groups and stimulated substantial informal exchange and networking within the workshop and at the margins.

(3) International experts gave presentations on lessons learned from outside the region, including technical recommendations.

(4) Participants held a working group session divided into two groups by theme, concretely and constructively, identifying shared problems related to travel document control and technical areas for regional co-operation. The working groups were perhaps the most successful element of the workshop. Discussion between delegations was candid and participants appreciated this informal, and infrequent, opportunity to network and share information.

(5) Participants did not produce a written document of lessons learned/recommendations, but opted to make presentations, which included lessons learned and recommendations, following working groups and country/expert presentations.

9. (6) Participants expressed the need for increased cross-border co-operation, e.g. information exchange, on travel document-related issues at the regional level, especially through organized

structure and contact points. The ATU will help initiate an informal network for information sharing by facilitating contacts among the participants.

(7) For most of the participants, this workshop served as the first forum for sharing and exchanging information and experience with their counterparts from regional countries. Through in-country evaluations and expert presentations, as well as question and answer sessions, participants had the opportunity to expand their knowledge and understanding about problems and priority issues relating to travel document security.

(8) Same as (6).

## **Implementation**

### Planning

The project was a partnership between the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Mol, the Kyrgyz delegation to the OSCE in Vienna and the OSCE ATU. Exploratory discussions were held among these four actors throughout the summer 2003. The ATU indicated potential funding for such a project and the Mol and CiB agreed on the appropriateness of such a workshop, with the Mol offering to host the workshop. It was agreed to begin advancing planning to hold the event in the autumn of 2003. The Federal Republic of Germany Mission to the OSCE indicated early interest in funding the project.

Proposal drafts proceeded to be elaborated between the CiB, the Mol and the ATU throughout the summer. During this period, it was envisaged that the ATU should introduce the project to OSCE participating State delegations in Vienna, and facilitate the nomination of participating governmental experts. Following these meetings, and based on the experience with planning the workshop in Ohrid, liaison with participating governments and securing nomination of participants were referred to the Mission level. The ATU would continue its role of liaison with the potential donor. It is also important to note that, during this planning process, at the initiative of the Secretary General, it was agreed that Afghanistan would be invited to send participants to the workshop. The ATU liaised with delegations in Vienna in order to secure their support for the Afghan participation.

The CiB and the Mol issued invitations to bilateral embassies in Bishkek to meet and discuss their potential participation in the workshop. The ATU subsequently met on 24 September 2003 with bilateral representatives from four countries of the region. Every country indicated overall support of the project and committed themselves to nominating governmental experts to participate.

The ATU, in co-ordination with relevant delegations of OSCE participating States in Vienna, identified and invited experts from the United Kingdom, the United States, Bulgaria and Russia to participate and to give expert presentations during the workshop.

Logistics and event planning were performed by the CiB and the ATU, in concert with the Mol. The event was held at the Hotel Pinara in Bishkek, where participants also stayed.

Most participating governmental experts and international experts arrived on 8 October, the evening prior to the start of the workshop.

## **Participation** (Please see Annex 2)

### Participants

A total of 19 governmental experts participated from the following countries:

- Kyrgyzstan (9)
- Kazakhstan (3)
- Tajikistan (2)
- Uzbekistan (3)
- Afghanistan (2)

#### International Experts

Five international experts, two from the United Kingdom, one from Bulgaria, one from Russia and one from the US Embassy in Moscow, took part. Each expert possessed specialisation in border control and travel documents.

#### International Community In-country

Officials from the UNDP, UNHCR and IOM based in Bishkek participated as observers.

#### **Workshop Programme** (Please see Annex 1)

##### Country Presentations

During the workshop each participating delegation made a presentation. The presentations touched on their various travel documents, the way those documents were issued and the safeguards mechanisms that were built in to prevent falsification.

All country presentations prompted questions from other delegations.

##### Plenum Discussions

Following expert and country presentations, discussion among participants was active. Some of the topics are highlighted here:

- various procedures for issuing travel documents;
- problems faced at border crossings;
- varying visa regimes among the participating countries;
- safety marks in travel documents ;
- ways of secure production, design and transportation of travel documents;
- display of photographs in travel documents;
- need for more advanced equipment at border crossings.

##### Working Groups

On the second day of the workshop, one working group session was held. The participants were divided into two working groups. Each group was given a different set of topics for discussion. The discussions were facilitated by the international experts.

The topics for the first working group were related to detection of travel document fraud. They were:

- Travel document security safeguard features and forgeries;
- Use of database and information exchange on lost and stolen documents;
- Need for training on identifying forged travel documents;
- Organisational structure for countering fraudulent documents;
- Equipment necessary for such a structure;
- Need for communications/exchange of information about the types of forgeries being encountered;
  - Security at border controls.

The recommendations coming out of the first working group were as follows:

Group one recommended focusing attention and efforts to training for front-line border officers to detect fraudulent travel documents. Basic training on existing safeguard features is necessary to upgrade the ability to detect forged travel documents. The group also expressed the need for a system for information exchange on new types of fraud and identity of users of fraudulent documents, which could be facilitated by a network of national points of contact.

In the second working group, participants were given the following topics relating to security and integrity of travel documents:

- Travel documents issuance procedures;
- Security during passports production;
- Minimum security standards for travel documents;
- Visa issuance procedures.

The recommendations of the second working group were as follows:

In Group two, there was an overall consensus about the need for more careful check of the necessary documentation during the application process for travel documents. Central production and distribution of travel documents was also recommended as a way to prevent corruption and theft that could possibly occur during transportation of these documents. Group two also recommended that in order to counter the resourcefulness of criminals and their constant attempt to exploit weaknesses in security features, there needs to be regular review of travel documents, as no documents are permanently secure.

## **Conclusion and Lessons Learned**

### Conclusion

The Bishkek workshop can be considered successful in its focused aim of beginning a process of constructive, technical dialogue toward more formalised regional co-operation in Central Asia. Governmental officials from countries in the region collaborated together to jointly identify areas for regional co-operation and called for more interaction on issues related to travel documents. Participants voiced clear support for this type of facilitated forum to establish contacts with counterparts and informally begin solving shared problems. The participants further expressed the value of the unique networking afforded by the forum and called for more events of this nature.

### Lessons Learned

- *The workshop provided a useful forum for collegial dialogue.* The workshop fostered candid and enthusiastic discussion among the participants. Many also indicated that this type of forum at the technical level was rare and therefore needed.
- *Willingness to intensify regional co-operation on travel documents at technical expert level was expressed.* All participants expressed willingness, and need for, technical co-operation at their level. However, they also pointed to the need for greater political will at higher levels.
- *Participants benefit most from practical case studies of other existing regional co-operation.* Participants appreciated examining cases of successful co-operation in other regions. Such an exercise facilitates participants' understanding of how regional co-operation works and application of the lessons learned to the situations in their own regions.
- *Efforts to provide basic technical training should be strengthened.* Successful training missions for front-line staff of participating states have already been carried out in the past by the United Kingdom under IOM sponsorship. While initially participants expressed need for additional equipment to carry out their duties more effectively, experts and participants agreed that the importance of equipment should not be overemphasised. Rather, strengthening efforts to provide basic training for front-line border officers to detect fraudulent travel documents could facilitate early detection of fraudulent documents. Full contact details for MICA were made available to participants for possible requests for training for participating States' front-line officers in the future.

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**Annex 1**  
**WORKSHOP ON "TRAVEL DOCUMENTS SECURITY"**

**AGENDA**

**ARRIVAL DAY**  
**Wednesday, 8 October 2003**

<b>Time</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>Location</b>
0900 – 2000	<i><b>Arrival of Participants In-processing and Registration</b></i>	Hotel Pinara
1530 – 1630	<i><b>Meeting of Speakers Technical co-ordination</b></i>	
1800	<i><b>Informal Dinner</b></i>	

**DAY 1**  
**Thursday, 9 October 2003**

<b>Time</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>Location</b>
0800	<i><b>Breakfast</b></i>	Restaurant
0900 – 0915	<i><b>Welcome and Introduction of International Experts</b></i>	Plenary
0915 – 0945	<i><b>Keynote Address</b></i>	Plenary
0945 – 1015	<i><b>Kyrgyzstan: Presentation</b> To be followed by Question and Answer Session</i>	Plenary
1015 – 1045	<i><b>Kazakhstan: Presentation</b> To be followed by Question and Answer Session</i>	Plenary
1045 – 1100	<i><b>Coffee Break</b></i>	
1100 – 1130	<i><b>Uzbekistan: Presentation</b> To be followed by Question and Answer Session</i>	Plenary
1130 – 1200	<i><b>Tajikistan: Presentation</b> To be followed by Question and Answer Session</i>	Plenary
1200 – 1400	<i><b>Lunch</b></i>	Restaurant
1400 – 1515	<i><b>Plenary Discussion</b></i>	Plenary
1515 - 1530	<i><b>Coffee Break</b></i>	
1530 - 1630	<i><b>International Expert Presentation</b> To be followed by Plenary Discussion and Question/Answer Session</i>	Plenary
1700 – 1800	<i><b>Reception</b></i>	
1800 – 2030	<i><b>Informal Dinner</b></i>	

**DAY 2**  
**Friday, 10 October 2003**

<b>Time</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>Location</b>
0800	<b>Breakfast</b>	Restaurant
0900 – 1000	<b>International Expert Presentation</b> <i>To be followed by Plenary Discussion/Question and Answer Session</i>	Plenary
1000 – 1015	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
1015 – 1315	<b>Working Groups</b> (to be organized by theme) <i>Goal: Areas for Co-operation/Intervention, Conclusion of Findings for Presentation.</i>	Divide into two locations
1315 – 1445	<b>Lunch</b>	Restaurant
1445 - 1515	<b>Afghanistan: Presentation</b> <i>To be followed by Question and Answer Session</i>	
1515 – 1615	<b>Presentation: Working Group 1</b> Speaker to be chosen by Group <i>To be followed by discussion</i>	Plenary
1615 – 1630	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
1630 – 1730	<b>Presentation: Working Group 2</b> Speaker to be chosen by Group <i>To be followed by discussion</i>	Plenary
1800 –2000	<b>Informal Dinner</b>	

**DAY 3**  
**Saturday, 11 October 2003**

<b>Time</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>Location</b>
0800	<b>Breakfast</b>	Restaurant
0900 – 1000	<b>International Expert Presentation/Introduction to Drafting Session</b>	Plenary
1015 – 1030	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
1030 – 1230	<b>Presentation of Recommendations for Continued Technical Co-operation and Assistance and Concluding Session</b>	Plenary
1230 – 1800	<b>Excursion including Lunch</b>	Ala Archa
1900	<b>Dinner</b>	Restaurant

**DAY 4**  
**Sunday, 12 October 2003**

***Departure for Airport and Outbound Flights***

