Honourable Minister of State, Director of Integration and Complementarity of CEN-SAD representing the Secretary General, distinguished representatives of the diplomatic community, participants from the CEN-SAD membership, delegates from the African regional bodies, colleagues from International Organizations, ladies and gentlemen. It is a pleasure to be with you here in Niamey and please allow me to add my voice to those who have recognized and thanked the Government of Niger for agreeing to host this workshop. Allow me to also acknowledge and specially thank the International Civil Aviation Organization, ICAO, for their assistance in providing many of the expert presenters to this meeting, through their Education and Promotion Working Group.

I had the pleasure of participating in the 6th CEN-SAD Meeting of the Ministers of Interior and Security in Cotonou this past September. I learned a great deal from the comments and presentations of the delegates over the course of that meeting. There was strong agreement that movements through the CEN-SAD region are becoming more complex and in some ways more problematical. A diverse and growing group of extra-regional migrants is being seen in some areas, and the challenges for interior and border personnel are increasing. At the same time there was widespread recognition of the difficulties in balancing better migration management with the ambitions, in some parts of this region, for increased economic integration. There were many technical and policy challenges that needed to be met and limited resources to apply to the solutions.

One of the direct outcomes of the Cotonou meeting was the agreement that a technical cooperation and capacity building programme in migration management for the region would be useful, and IOM offered to promote and, to the extent possible, initiate that
programme with CEN-SAD and its Members – most of which are also IOM Member and Observer States.

This workshop on travel documents and issuance systems is the first in what IOM envisions will be a series of structured and inter-related activities that will form a substantive programme for migration management capacity building in this region. In what I hope will be a helpful start to this workshop and the overall programme, I would like to touch briefly upon the following points:

1. An overview of some of the features of migration through the CEN-SAD region;
2. Initiatives by some of the concerned countries to better manage transit migration;
3. The rationale for improved travel documents within the CEN-SAD context;
4. IOM’s role in technical cooperation in this area of migration management; and,
5. The next steps toward a framework of technical cooperation in migration management in the CEN-SAD region.

1. Overview of some features of migration in and through the CEN-SAD area

The movements within and through the CEN-SAD membership region, and adjacent regions and countries, are of course of much concern to Europe as one of the main final destination points, and to North America as an onward destination for some of the migrants. But I suggest we begin our workshop with a broader perspective. The issue of managing the migration through this region, both the regular and the irregular migration, is of direct concern to the countries in the region, as well as to countries farther a field. By all accounts, most of the migrants in this region remain in this region, and it is probably safe to say that the governments of this region are even more stressed by the costs and efforts of management than are the destination countries off of the Continent. As such, the solutions or measures to resolve the problematic features of this movement, and to maximize the positive features of this movement, should be framed, as much as possible, within this region.

What is the nature of the movement through this region? Without trying to be comprehensive, let me note a few the common routes for land movement, which I believe are well known to all interested parties.

From the southern points, there is a route for land movements from Lagos and Benin City, moving up through Kano and Sekoto in northern Nigeria, and crossing the border into
Maradi and Zinder here in Niger, moving out through Arlit in Northern Niger, and into the Tamanrasset area of southern Algeria. From there, there is dispersion of the travellers northward.

From neighbouring Mali the route is similar: from Bamako in the south up through Mopti and Tessalit, and into Algeria at Bordj-Moktar, and onward to central points of Tamanrasset and Ghardaia in central Algeria. An additional and similar route appears to originate in Cotonou and move up through Benin to Niamey and from here to Gao in Mali and on to In Salah in Algeria.

Looking at the situation farther to the east, movements toward Egypt and Libya can be easily discerned, with various routes through Chad, Niger and Sudan. Routes out of Libya toward Italy are generally well known, and much covered in the press recently.

Generally all of these journeys require a great deal of patience on the part of the migrant. This suggests one common characteristic of much of the movement: that it is significant but it is not a hurried journey in many cases. Migrants stop along the way to try to find work, to refresh themselves, and to gather energy, resources and contacts for the balance of their travels.

An alternate to this generally northward route within the region is the westward approach. In these cases the migrants, instead of going north out of Nigeria or Benin or Mali, choose instead to move westwards into Mauritania and, from Nouakchott or other areas along that coast, may continue on land up to various points in Morocco seeking the usual and varied crossings into Spain. Alternately, the movement goes through the area of the Canary Islands.

In addition to the land routes across the middle of the Continent, there are of course normal air routes for those who have the means. For example, travellers out of parts of East Africa and the horn of Africa, can link in various ways with Libya and Egypt.

While the routes just described are all on the Continent, it is particularly important to examine how these continental routes interact with and are used by migrants coming from outside Africa, and who use Africa, particularly the area of the CEN-SAD Member States and their neighbours, for transit to points in Europe and onward destinations. One of the common routes appears to use Amman, Jordan, as a transit point for air passengers from China, India and Pakistan, among other countries, to Morocco where some of these migrants then pick up on the usual land and sea routes. Another air route is from Pakistan...
to Bamako, again linking with the land routes already described. These routes are well-known and of course there are others, and, given that many of the passengers may be travelling on legitimate tickets and personal documentation through to their arrival on the Continent, the movement can not, in that sense, be seen as irregular. However, once these visitors overstay visas or begin to move further clandestinely, the movement does become irregular and worrisome, both for the countries of this region and for Europe and other more-distant destinations.

It is not just the routes but also the motivations and the means of the travellers that should be of interest to those seeking to better understand this movement and to, in some fashion, better manage it. Whether regular or irregular, most of the movement appears to be economically motivated; largely, these are people looking for work. This suggests that the solutions or countering actions should include, in some way, economic features that make the movement less compelling, and I note that IOM is engaged in many local economic development initiatives around the world for just this reason.

But the fact that the movement is largely economic does not necessarily make it acceptable or without negative consequences. Whether merited or not, the impression that many people are entering or working in a country without permission can set the stage for general anti-immigrant sentiments and can undercut confidence in governments. Also, the means and mechanisms that are used to enable this irregular movement are important in themselves. Because many of the migrants use facilitators, and let me use the term smuggler here although it may not always apply technically, there is a real danger of the development or expansion of large-scale powerful transnational criminal networks. These networks are themselves a problem, as they can undercut normal governance in a number of ways, and can extend their reach into quite destructive areas of activity beyond the smuggling of economic migrants.

In that regard I note the report by Italy’s secret service in 20041 that linked terrorist groups with the migrant smuggling trade. In fact, there have been other similar reports. Migrant smuggling is a billion-dollar business and it uses many tools and mechanisms that would be of interest to the terrorist networks. While we should be cautious about linking irregular migration too closely with terrorism – a categorical causal or direct link is certainly not merited – neither should we ignore the possible overlaps in the mechanisms.

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In sum, there is a mixed flow of persons moving through the region, some from the Continent and some not, some who have privileged status for border-crossing based on bilateral or regional agreements and others who have no such status, some being facilitated by criminal networks, and probably a few quite malicious characters in this broad milieu. At the same time, government resources to invest in improved migration management, whether these are investments in staff training, in better border management systems, in policy and legal reviews, or in improved documentation of their nationals, are quite minimal. Additionally, opportunities for the governments of the region to meet and plan on a technical level are relatively few.

2. Initiatives within the region

There are, however, useful initiatives in the region, both national initiatives and initiatives framed as cooperative actions with other countries. Allow me to cite just a few examples.

In June 2003, Morocco adopted a set of laws regulating the rights and conditions of admission and residence of foreigners. Morocco has also undertaken to set up two new institutions, attached to the Ministry of the Interior, responsible for reducing irregular migration. The first of these, the Migration and Border Control Directorate, will, inter alia, implement the national strategy to combat human traffic networks and improve border controls. It will be run by a national research and investigation brigade responsible for combating illegal migration and dealing with all cases of human trafficking. The second body, the Moroccan Migration Observatory, will undertake research, gather information on migration, maintain a database of national statistics and submit proposals, including a national migration strategy, to the government for concrete measures to manage migration. These are positive steps that will benefit the region.

Tunisia has also made significant efforts to reduce the growing number of irregular migrants on its territory by imposing stricter conditions of admission and expanding its border patrols. Algeria is also taking a number of steps to better manage transit migration.

Libya as well has strengthened its institutional capacity to deal with irregular migration and human trafficking. For example, in June 2004 the General Committee of the People for Security, with IOM, organized courses at the Police Academy in Tripoli to provide training for 100 senior officials and officers of the Libyan police force. During the courses, participants studied issues such as border control, document fraud and assisted voluntary
return of irregular migrants transiting Libya en route to southern Europe. A programme for further expanding Libya’s capacities has been presented by IOM to the European Commission for consideration.

The Pan-Sahel initiative of the United States with several countries in the region focuses on building capacities to increase security in the migration sector, with a strong focus on building capacity for inspection of materials crossing borders, and general border improvement in some areas.

Several countries in the region have taken, or are planning to take, steps to improve citizen registration and documentation, particularly in the case of national identification cards. Some are planning new passports, and we look forward to their advice on lessons learned in that process as this workshop progresses.

Additionally, there are several cooperation processes or initiatives underway that, in some fashion, touch upon migration issues and that provide, or plan to provide, some support to efforts of some of the countries in the CEN-SAD region to address the migration challenges they are facing. Here we can mention the Western Mediterranean Forum of the Ministers of Home Affairs, which includes counter-trafficking and irregular migration on its agenda, as well as anti-terrorism matters. Also of note is the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group, which provides confidence building measures to the region and which is preparing a strategy on smuggling and counter-trafficking in the region. Also important is the Western Mediterranean Dialogue on Migration, also called the 5+5, which includes the five Maghrebian countries alongside France, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain in a continuing cooperation on migration in the Western Mediterranean, and in which IOM plays a central support role. While all of these, and there are others, have their role, they do not as yet substantively include many of the countries south of the Maghreb and they generally tend to focus more on dialogue than on direct technical support.

Initiatives from the European Commission that provide support for technical cooperation and capacity building programmes in this region are important and growing. Here we see the initial steps taken through the programme for Cooperation with Third Countries in the area of Migration (B7-667) and now, replacing it, the AENEAS programme. The AENEAS initiative is particularly encouraging in that, reportedly, it does intend to focus more attention in the near future on the countries south of Maghreb.
Many more initiatives by the CEN-SAD Members and some neighbouring States are well-worth mentioning, and we will refresh our understanding of those initiatives throughout the course of this workshop.

Generally, this region is beginning to move into the spotlight on migration issues and there are hopeful signs that additional technical support will be forthcoming to the concerned countries. There is good reason to focus some of that support on the improvement of travel documents and the issuance systems.

3. The rationale for improved travel documents within the CEN-SAD context

I would suggest that three converging and mutually supportive reasons underlie the rationale for improving travel documents within the CEN-SAD context.

First, there is the need to facilitate regional integration in some areas, and to support and encourage bilateral initiatives aimed at closer economic cooperation. These common economic and trade areas are often linked with agreements for the easier movement of the participating countries’ nationals across the common borders, as well as certain rights of establishment. Rather than the dissolution of borders and of travel documents, this calls for the establishment of very well articulated borders and very secure traveler documentation. This is necessary if the nationals with special rights are to be quickly and accurately identified among the mixed flow of travelers moving through the region. So, the first reason for improved travel documents and issuance systems is to facilitate and support areas of economic and social integration.

Second, there is the need for enhanced security in the migration sector. As touched upon earlier, there are several kinds of security threats. One is at the individual level of the exceptional migrant who is a known threat and for whom easily-altered travel documents may be an important tool to facilitate their cross-border movement. Perhaps more common, though, is the broad threat of the influence of trans-national organized criminal groups that earn large sums of money by facilitating the irregular movement of persons across borders, and by exploiting some of these migrants. The ability of these networks to obtain genuine passports through illegitimate means, or to alter passports that have relatively weak security features, would be undercut by much-improved travel documents and issuance systems.
The third rationale for improving travel documents and issuance systems is the increasing need for cooperation among the concerned countries in the area of migration management. This cooperation can take many forms including the establishment of bilateral labour migration agreements, and agreements to cooperate on the return of migrants who have originated from, or transited the territory of, the cooperating countries. In both cases, having a secure means of identifying the migrants is crucial.

For labour migration programmes, an origin country that can provide definitive documents for their labour émigrés, backed up by citizen registries and passport registries of high integrity, may have an advantage in marketing its export labour to destination countries. In the general area of return, improved travel document application systems can provide a relatively easy and trustworthy means of definitely identifying one’s own citizens, based on inquiries from other countries. As such, improved travel documents and registration systems provide an important tool to support expanded cooperation among states in migration management.

In sum, the goals of increased regional integration, increased security and increased cooperation with other countries in the area of migration management are all served through the improvement of travel documents and issuance systems.

4. The role of IOM in travel document improvement and related technical assistance

Most of the States represented here today know IOM well; most are among our 109 Member and 24 Observer States. Of the twenty-one CEN-SAD States, fifteen are IOM Members and one is an Observer. One of IOM’s core responsibilities is that of assisting our Members and Observers, and at times other States, in developing their capacity to manage migration. IOM provides direct technical assistance for capacity building through programmes and projects throughout the world, and through the provision of opportunities for inter-governmental dialogue and assistance between and among interested States.

Presently IOM implements, with our government partners throughout the world, approximately 1000 active projects valued at over 800 million dollars, with about 80 million dollars of projects in what we term the Technical Cooperation Service — where our work on borders, travel documents, enhancing management and administrative structures, related policy and law, training system improvement and inter-governmental dialogue takes place.
Our work specifically in the area of travel documents is as follows. We assist countries in assessing their current documents and systems, in planning and specifications for new systems, in creation of tenders for such systems, and at times in the management of the subsequent programme to implement the upgrading of systems and documents. This is a complex area of technical cooperation and an area of increasing importance in managing security. We participate in ICAO meetings and support their work in the promotion of internationally-standard machine-readable travel documents, and we work with the private sector on solutions in this sector. Current projects in this sector are serving Bangladesh, Belize, Ecuador, Honduras and Kyrgyzstan.

Closely-related actions of IOM focus on establishing or strengthening border systems, including the data systems used at checkpoints and at central management sites, improving the business process of the border, and assisting countries in moving toward more integrated border management approaches. Numerous projects are on-going and more are in planning stages for Africa, Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

We assist countries in building administrative and management structures in the migration sector. The investigation of trans-national organised crime in the migration sector, particularly smuggling and trafficking, requires special skills and resources within the government at many levels. The arms of government dealing with migration management are an important part of the overall approach, and require well-developed capacities in this regard.

We work with governments to improve the policy and legal base for migration management. All of the operational work – border improvement, travel document improvement, and other areas – needs to be supported and guided by a clear policy base, and a clear legal and regulative framework. This is particularly the case if security is to be vigorously pursued without violating international norms and conventions dealing with privacy and human rights. We encourage States to pursue security without sacrificing the principles of freedom and justice. It can be done, if this perspective is taken from the start.

IOM assists governments in strengthening training and human resource development systems that support all features of migration management, including those most directly linked with migration and security. Here our work commonly takes the form of working with our partner countries to build up national training systems and institutions, and to develop the recurrent capacity for governments to design, deliver and upgrade their own
training systems. We have a major programme underway in this sector with the East African Community countries.

And finally, IOM works to expand inter-governmental technical cooperation and dialogue on migration management matters. This workshop with CEN-SAD is one example of our work in that area.

4. Toward a Framework for Technical Cooperation in Migration Management in the CEN-SAD Region

What might this suggest for technical cooperation in migration management in the CEN-SAD region? What might a framework of cooperation look like, and how might IOM contribute to it? Here are some initial thoughts for your consideration.

The region might benefit from a structured and long-term technical cooperation and capacity building programme that focuses on the areas of concern in this workshop, and related areas. The core elements of this programme might include the following, with CEN-SAD States participating as their priorities dictate.

A. Regional Technical Meetings

A series of meetings for the senior technical and managerial staff of the border service, the service responsible for passport issuance and management, the service responsible for investigation of trans-national organised crime, and related services from interested CEN-SAD member states, designed as workshop sessions with support from experts, to refresh skills and understandings, and to plan joint operations. Following this meeting on travel documents, other meetings could focus on:

1) Border data systems: Appropriate models for border data systems and border business processes, and examples of successful models across a range of costs;

2) Migration and Criminal Investigation Functions: How governments are strengthening the role of migration offices in combating trans-national organized crime, including smuggling and trafficking;
3) Migration and human rights: How to preserve and protect human rights while improving migration management functions; and,

4) Managing return migration: Elements of cooperation with other countries when resolving return issues, including migrant identification, bilateral return agreements and other features.

B. Technical Assessments

The technical cooperation programme could include the design and implementation of a series of on-site technical assessments in the above-mentioned areas, assisting countries in forming detailed plans for improvement and, where needed, in framing these plans as proposals for external assistance.

C. Implementation

Implementation of specific projects that follow from the noted assessments, including specific projects to improve travel documents and the underlying issuance and registration systems.

D. Expanded opportunities for study tours and secondments within and beyond the CEN-SAD region, focused on exposure to potentially useful systems and structures in other countries.

From IOM’s perspective, such a framework might have value in helping to move the agenda of this week’s meeting forward into further practical implementation.

Over these three days, we will have the benefit of several experts who will lead us through a comprehensive agenda covering travel document specifications, document issuance systems, biometric applications and, from the European Commission, technical and policy issues related to regional economic and free movement areas.

I hope that these comments provided some useful food for thought for our discussions over the next few days. I thank you for your kind attention, and look forward to further discussions, and to concrete joint follow-up activities to help carry this week’s agenda forward.
Keynote Address

IMPROVED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF OVERALL MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN THE CEN-SAD REGION