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AIRCOP

PRESS RELEASE

First Meeting of the West Africa Regional Informal Working Group (IWG) on Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR)

Freetown 11 May 2022 – Freetown hosts a two-day meeting of the West Africa Regional Informal Working Group (IWG) on Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR). Organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and hosted by the Government of Sierra Leone, the first in-person meeting of the West Africa IWG on API and PNR will provide a forum for border law enforcement, security, and civil aviation agencies from 17 countries in the region to discuss implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions [2178](#) (2014), [2396](#) (2017), and [2482](#) (2019), which mandates all United Nations Member States to collect, use, and share passenger data to prevent and counter the travel of terrorists and other serious criminals while ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights and data privacy. Addressing the opening of the event with the distinguished presence of Mr. Jacob Jusu Saffa, Chief Minister of Sierra Leone, said: *“I urge representatives of member states present here to ensure that the work of the West African Informal Working Group on API and PNR complements existing regional counter terrorism initiatives and builds upon efforts of member states, as part of an overall strategy towards a sustained fight against terrorism across the globe”*, and Mr. Abdulai Caulker, National Security Coordinator of Sierra Leone, noted: *“By effectively utilizing the API and PNR system through the collection and analysis of passenger data, Sierra Leone would have the singular opportunity to build its capacity in countering terrorism and organized crime, especially those targeting airports and airlines”*.

The meeting brought together 86 participants and experts from governments within the region as well as experts from the United Nations. Dr. Amado Philip de Andrés, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Director for West and Central Africa stated *“Terrorist organizations and criminal groups seek by all means and stratagems to evade border controls and thwart the vigilance of law enforcement agencies.”* The UNODC Airport Communications Programme (AIRCOP) serves as the Secretariat for the IWG.

Over the next two days, delegates from the region will have the opportunity to discuss legal, operational, transport industry engagement, and technical aspects of API and PNR in focused breakout sessions aimed at supporting the development of a framework for the annual work plan of the IWG. *“The main benefits of this forum are the sharing of lessons learned, good practices, and networking, while we are facing common challenges, and using this Informal Working Group meeting to work together to overcome them. Networking is absolutely vital, and this face-to-face meeting will allow us to build trust that will facilitate information sharing”*, noted by Ms. Christine Bradley, UNOCT Chief of Countering Terrorist Travel Section.

The regional IWG for West Africa was launched in a virtual event on 14 December 2021, with the support of the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel (CT Travel) Programme, as a vehicle to foster the sharing of best practices, lessons learned and enable the widest possible cooperation and exchange of information between Passenger Information Units (PIU).

The CT Travel Programme, UNOCT's flagship global initiative which assists beneficiary Member States in enhancing their national capabilities to detect and intercept terrorists and serious criminals by using API and PNR data, is currently supporting 51 beneficiary Member States across the globe. The Programme also promotes regional cooperation through enhanced information exchange and sharing of lessons learned and good practices.

The CT Travel Programme follows an "All-of-UN" approach to provide comprehensive, yet tailored assistance to beneficiary Member States, with the support of five implementing partners, including the [United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate \(CTED\)](#), the [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\)](#), the [United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology \(OICT\)](#), the [International Civil Aviation Organization \(ICAO\)](#), and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and in close cooperation with the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#).

The UNODC Airport Communication Programme (AIRCOP) is implemented by UNODC in partnership with INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO). It aims at strengthening the capacities of international airports to target and intercept high-risk passengers, cargo and mail, as a contribution to the fight against illicit drugs and other illicit commodities (such as wildlife products or falsified medical products), terrorism-related threats (such as arms or potential foreign terrorist fighters), trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. Moreover, it aims at facilitating communication and coordination between origin, transit and destination countries to disrupt cross-border illicit flows and criminal networks. AIRCOP is active in more than 40 countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, South-Eastern Europe and South-East Asia. In the framework of the CT Travel programme, AIRCOP oversees pillar 2 on the operationalization of the PIUs.



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