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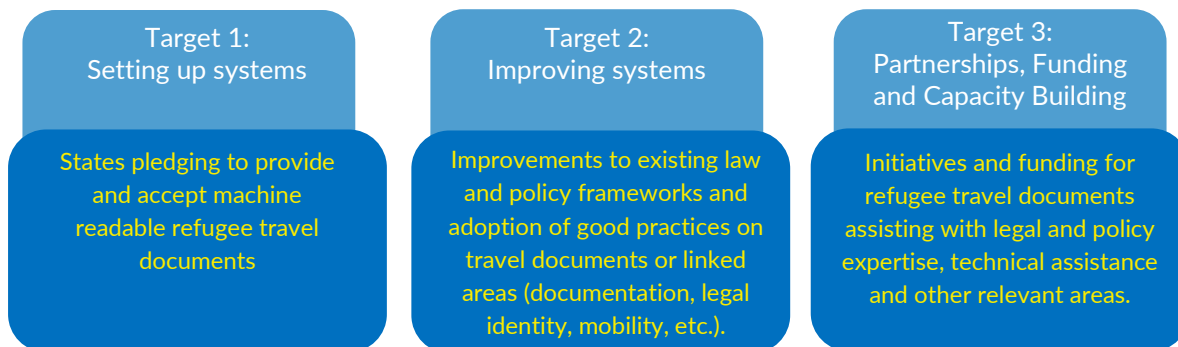
Like anyone, refugees and stateless persons need to be able to travel in their regions and beyond. Labour mobility, education pathways and family reunification offer them the prospect to secure their own future in safety. To take up such opportunities, refugees often need ready access to renewable travel documents.

At the Global Refugee Forum in 2023, the [Multi-stakeholder Pledge on Refugee Travel Documents](#) was launched and is now supported by the Working Group on Travel Documents for Persons in Need of International Protection and Stateless Persons.

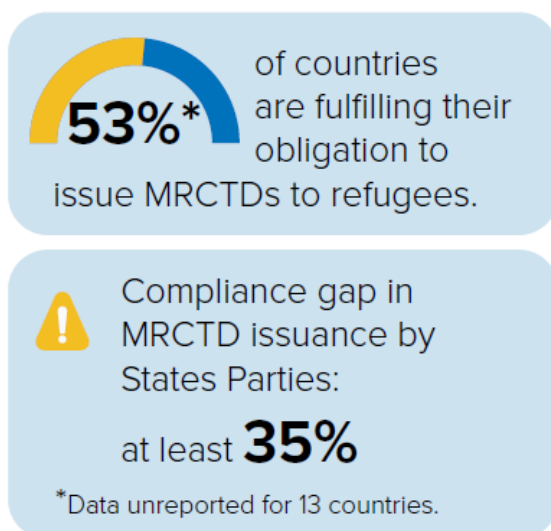
Aligned with the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees and the [Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030](#), the pledge prioritizes the promotion and adoption of machine readable travel documents (MRTDs) for refugees and stateless persons as a key enabler of mobility, protection, and access to opportunities. Through strengthened legal and policy frameworks and the provision of technical expertise and resources, the pledge also supports broader efforts to enhance inclusion, by facilitating family reunification, complementary pathways, economic participation, livelihoods, and access to higher education.

2023 Global Refugee Forum: Multi-stakeholder Pledge on Refugee Travel Documents

The Multi-stakeholder Pledge brings together 24 pledging entities, including States (representing 67 per cent), civil society organizations, and private sector partners, united in their commitment to improving refugee travel documents (see Annex 1 for a full list of pledging entities). Two years after the Global Refugee Forum in 2023, this report reviews the progress made in implementing the multi-stakeholder pledge. The report presents progress achieved by diverse actors under the three global multi-stakeholder pledge targets.



Status quo and remaining gaps in issuance of travel documents



The data presented in the graphics highlights both progress and remaining gaps in the issuance of machine readable Convention travel documents (MRCTDs) for refugees. While 53 per cent of States Parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention are fulfilling their obligation to issue MRCTDs, at least 35 per cent of countries still face a compliance gap. This includes States issuing other types of MRTDs, those continuing to rely on manual non-ICAO-compliant CTDs, and countries that do not issue refugee travel documents at all.

Updated information on countries issuing travel documents is available through UNHCR's [Travel Documents Dashboard](#), and the [2025 Stocktaking Report: Machine Readable Travel Documents for Refugees and Stateless Persons](#) summarizes current State practices. Together, these findings underscore that, despite progress, significant efforts are still required to expand access to secure and standardized travel documents.

EUROPE

2020: Azerbaijan started issuing eMRCTDs valid for up to 5 years.
| **2024:** Serbia* started issuing MRCTDs valid for up to 5 years for refugees and for up to 1 year for subsidiary protection holders.

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

2024–2025: In Egypt, draft asylum legislation is under consideration by the government, which includes a provision (Article 12) for providing refugee travel documents.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Japan began issuing MRCTDs* and extended validity to up to 5 years under the amended immigration and refugee law. At the Global Refugee Forum, Kyrgyzstan pledged to begin issuing MRCTDs*, and Australia and New Zealand committed to support capacity building efforts to issue refugee travel documents.



AMERICAS

2023: Canada committed at the Global Refugee Forum to conduct research and share good practices.
| **2024 and 2025:** Mexico and Chile* began issuing eMRCTDs/MRCTDs.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

2019: Namibia* issued eMRCTDs. | **2020:** Kenya* launched MRCTDs. | **2021:** Sudan* began issuing MRCTDs (paused since 2023 due to conflict). Angola published Law No. 22/21 of October 18 enabling MRCTD issuance. | **2022–2025:** Senegal commenced work on implementation of the 2022 asylum law including an MRCTD provision. | **2023:** Angola* began issuing MRTDs. At the Global Refugee Forum, Botswana, Chad, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Ethiopia, South Sudan committed to issue MRCTDs. | **2024:** Burkina Faso* fulfilled their pledge by extending their MRCTD validity period from 1 year to 5 years. Malawi* and Zimbabwe* successfully transitioned to eMRCTDs. Taking steps towards issuance, South Sudan extended the validity period of MRCTDs to 5 years with the possibility to renew abroad. | **2025:** Mali issued a decree on providing MRCTDs.

* indicates countries that issue only CTDs for refugees and not stateless persons

Legal basis and protection safeguards of refugee and stateless persons travel documents

Article 28 of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its [1967 Protocol](#) as well as the [1954 Statelessness Convention](#) obligate States to provide travel documents to refugees and stateless persons lawfully staying in their territory. These documents are complemented by [ICAO's Chicago Convention](#) under Annex 9 and the [UNHCR Executive Committee No. 13, No.114](#), and the [UNHCR Expert Roundtable conclusions](#), forming the legal basis and recommendations on the defining characteristics of travel documents for refugees and stateless persons to provide protection and ensure functional use.

To summarize, the characteristics listed below define travel documents for refugees and stateless persons to ensure protection and functional usability:

- issued by the State where a refugee or stateless person is lawfully staying
- only compelling issues of national security or public order would prevent issuance
- priced the same or lower as national passports
- transparent application process for issuance, renewal or replacement
- fair, secure and efficient processing that considers protection needs
- can be renewed abroad from a consulate or embassy without needing to return to the issuing country
- affords the right to return to the issuing country while valid
- must be machine readable and meet ICAO standards
- provides protection against refoulement through omitting or noting the nationality field as refugee or stateless person
- unlimited use to facilitate multiple journeys with a minimum 5-year validity period
- allows travel to all States and territories
- recognized by other States and can be utilized for obtaining visas or accessing durable or progressive solutions

Refugee travel documents in action: Progress under the multi-stakeholder pledge

Target 1 – Setting up systems

Refugees often cannot safely obtain or use a national passport, as it may be inaccessible, lost, or tied to the country they fled. To live, travel, and access opportunities like others, they need an alternative travel document that reflects their protection status. The first target of the multi-stakeholder pledge unites states pledging to provide and accept such MRTDs for refugees.

Key progress

- In 2025, **Chile** began issuing MRCTDs to refugees in line with standards from the 2017 joint UNHCR-ICAO guide.
- **Mexico** is providing State-issued MRCTD to refugees since late 2024.¹
- **Ethiopia** introduced new identification documents, including an electronic machine readable convention travel document, Alien Passport and Emergency Travel Document, with expanded service centres improving nationwide access.
- In **Chad**, the rollout of biometric national ID cards is underway, with international donor support, establishing a foundation for future MRCTD issuance.
- **Kyrgyzstan** adopted amendments to the *Law on Refugees* in April 2023 introducing the concept of a refugee travel document, with implementation currently underway.
- **South Sudan** has taken necessary steps towards issuance of digital IDs and MRCTDs. The legal framework is in place including the (2024) Civil Registration and National Identification Regulations and a (November 2024) ministerial order No. 05/2024 extending the validity of CTDs to 5-years and enabling renewals abroad. Progress to the next steps depends on availability of funds.



Former Refugee Advisor Stella Nikuze holding the new specimen example of the Chilean MRCTD at the 2025 CRCP in Geneva

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¹ Mexico is not a formal pledging entity under the multi-stakeholder pledge on travel documents but submitted an aligned pledge that focuses on refugee inclusion by strengthening public policies to address refugees' identity-related needs.

Target 2 – Improving systems

Refugee and stateless person travel documents are often limited by short validity, lack of return rights, and renewal barriers abroad, reducing their usefulness. Their issuance is typically ad hoc, costly to maintain, and fall behind advances like electronic or digital passports. Refugees additionally face challenges with hard-to-access consular services and visas, sometimes forcing them to use national passports despite potential risks. Pledges under the second target, thus, focus on improving existing law and policy frameworks and adopting good practices on travel documents or linked areas.

Key progress

- **Burkina Faso** fulfilled their pledge by extending their MRCTD validity period from 1 year to 5 years.
- In 2023/2024, **Uganda** introduced an online platform for issuing Convention Travel Documents, improving efficiency and predictability and resulting in a notable increase in applications by 2025.
- **Côte d’Ivoire** has authorized the issuance of refugee travel documents at the same cost as for nationals.



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Nadjia Leila, a 19-year-old refugee from the Central African Republic with her Refugee Travel document issued by Burkina

Target 3 – Partnerships, funding and capacity building

Initiatives and funding for refugee travel documents that assist with legal and policy expertise, technical assistance, and other relevant areas.

Key progress

- In **Canada**, an ongoing analysis is assessing gaps in the use of refugee travel documents to inform engagement with international partners and other States.

- **New Zealand and Australia** delivered the first milestone of their joint pledge through a 2024 Refugee Travel Document workshop in Bangkok, with Australia funding officials' participation.
- **IOM** contributed to the 2024 Expert Roundtable on Travel Documents, helping develop recommendations on standardization and identity verification, and continued supporting related global initiatives on legal identity.
- **Secure Identity Alliance** participated in the UNHCR–University of Essex Expert Roundtable on Travel Documents in 2024, contributing to discussions on CTD standardization and joining the Working Group on Travel Documents

Challenges in implementing the multi-stakeholder pledge

Matching support on funding

Securing matching support for funding remains a key challenge to advancing the implementation of MRTDs. High costs for developing the infrastructure for secure and specialized printing and production along with the need for interoperability and upkeeping the system requires matching States setting up systems with donors. Additionally, aligning planning and contracts with printing companies further complicates coordinated implementation and financial support. To address these gaps, UNHCR encourages consideration of support from States, development partners, private sector actors, and funding organizations, as targeted contributions would be critical to ensuring timely and effective rollout of MRTDs.

Coordination and logistical obstacles

Several pledges to establish systems for issuing MRTDs for refugees and stateless persons face coordination and logistical challenges. Effective implementation requires a national legal framework, policies, administrative procedures, alongside interoperable identity management systems linked with national databases. Thus, progress takes time and requires State support. Some States are still focusing on foundational identity document systems, with existing pledges or discussions yet to be formally linked to refugee travel document initiatives.

Engaging with countries with lower MRTDs issuing rates

The August 2025 stocktaking report on global issuance of MRTD noted variations in issuing rates along regions. While Europe has the highest percentage of countries

issuing travel documents for refugees and stateless persons. The MRTD issuance rates are lower in the Asia and Pacific region and in the Middle East and Northern Africa region corresponding to the low number of States which are parties to both Conventions (1951 and 1954). This is particularly significant given that several countries in these regions host large refugee populations, underscoring the urgent need for them to accede to the Conventions and begin issuing MRTDs.

Looking forward

With an estimated 17 million refugees living in countries without access to MRTDs, the multi-stakeholder pledge on refugee travel documents aims to close this critical gap and thereby facilitate refugees' access to durable solutions.

Sharing progress and strengthening collaboration

The Global Refugee Forum Progress Review 2025 will provide an opportunity to review progress on MRTD pledges, draw lessons from implementation, and showcase best practices. Fostering collaboration needs structured exchange platforms, such as thematic discussions and technical webinars to connect governments and partners to share expertise and practical solutions. Linking countries that are beginning to establish MRTD systems with those further along in the process will support overcoming technical, and financial barriers in implementing their MRTD pledges.

Mobilizing support and funding

While several States have demonstrated strong political will and, in some cases, developed the necessary infrastructure, funding remains a major constraint to operationalizing or expanding MRTD issuance. Donor support and matching funding, including creative approaches for fundraising, are therefore essential to sustain implementation.

Updating guidance and strategic direction

The 2017 [Guide for Issuing Machine Readable Convention Travel Documents for Refugees and Stateless Persons by UNHCR and ICAO](#) will be updated and expanded to reflect new developments and include more practical information. Strengthening these commitments will help promote safer and more orderly mobility, reduce irregular movements, curb trafficking and exploitation, and reinforce border security while safeguarding international protection standards.

Annex 1

Government of Australia
Government of Botswana
Government of Burkina Faso
Government of Canada
Government of Chad
Government of Chile
Government of d'Ivoire
Government of Ethiopia
Government of Guinea
Government of Guinea-Bissau
Government of Kenya
Government of Kyrgyzstan

Government of New Zealand
Government of Sao Tome and Principe
Government of South Sudan
Government of Uganda
ID4Africa
International Organization for Migration
Secure Identity Alliance ASBL
Talent Beyond Boundaries
The OpenGeoCommunity, led by Japan Bid
committee, the UN Smart Maps Group of
UNCT Botswana
Wadani Relief Organization