



## 14<sup>th</sup> International Forum on the electronic Apostille Programme (e-APP)

### Conclusions & Recommendations (C&R)

- 1 On 12 and 13 May, the 14<sup>th</sup> International Forum on the electronic Apostille Programme (e-APP) took place in Marrakech, Morocco. The Forum was held in Africa for the first time and was organised by the HCCH's Regional Office for Africa, with the support of the Ministry of Justice of Morocco.
- 2 The Forum was conducted in a hybrid format and attended by over 320 participants, representing 55 Contracting Parties and two non-Contracting Parties to the *Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents* (Apostille Convention). The Forum was also attended by members of the public, private companies, and organisations directly and indirectly connected to the Apostille Convention and the e-APP. The 14<sup>th</sup> International Forum also marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the e-APP.
- 3 Thirteen Contracting Parties,<sup>1</sup> at various stages of the e-APP implementation process, delivered presentations on the status of the e-APP in their respective States and participated in panel and roundtable discussions. The Permanent Bureau also provided a preliminary summary of the responses to the 2026 e-APP questionnaire and invited Contracting Parties that have not yet responded to the questionnaire to do so.
- 4 The 14<sup>th</sup> International Forum on the e-APP adopted the following C&R:
  1. **Global outlook and the importance of the e-APP to the business climate**
- 5 Participants noted the growing global uptake of both the Apostille Convention and the e-APP. At the time of the Forum, the Apostille Convention had 129 Contracting Parties. Sixty-one Contracting Parties had implemented the e-Register component of the e-APP, 44 of which had also implemented the e-Apostille component. States were encouraged to consider implementing both components of the e-APP.
- 6 The discussions underscored that the increasing implementation of the e-APP reflects a clear global trend towards greater reliance on digital solutions, including for the authentication of public documents. This development contributes to a more predictable, efficient, and secure and reliable environment for cross-border transactions, which is particularly relevant to international trade, investment, and mobility.
- 7 Representatives of the World Bank further highlighted that digital solutions such as the e-APP are increasingly recognised as an important factor in attracting foreign direct investment, by reducing

<sup>1</sup> Belgium, China (Mainland) and Hong Kong SAR, Dominican Republic, France, Indonesia, Israel, Mongolia, Morocco, Philippines, Rwanda, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States of America.

procedural uncertainty and administrative burdens, thus improving the business environment for private sector development. It was also noted that implementing the e-APP contributed to increasing transparency and accountability as well as reducing costs in the context of providing public services.

## **2. Implementation of the e-APP**

8 It was noted that Contracting Parties have used different technologies in implementing the e-APP, often as part of broader e-government initiatives. Representatives of Competent Authorities exchanged information on their respective approaches to the technologies used, including in terms of the security measures adopted.

9 For both components of the e-APP, it was emphasised that security remains a key consideration when requesting, issuing, recording, transmitting and verifying Apostilles. Participants stressed the need for continuing assessment of security standards and the importance of adjusting the implementation of the e-APP to technological developments. They further noted that maintaining robust and up-to-date security standards is essential to strengthening trust in the effective and reliable circulation of e-Apostilles.

### **a. e-Apostille**

10 The presentations highlighted the significant contribution of the e-Apostille component to enhancing the secure and efficient operation of the Apostille Convention. As Contracting Parties increasingly issue public documents in electronic form, e-Apostilles are the only means to preserve the advantages associated with such public documents, offering key advantages in security and ease of transmission.

11 Participants noted that e-Apostilles support the integration of digital solutions into public service delivery through the use of governmental platforms and electronic infrastructure. They enhance the accessibility of Apostille services for users by enabling online requests, thereby reducing, and in some cases eliminating, the need for individuals to travel to competent authorities in order to obtain an Apostille. e-Apostilles further help deter fraud and reduce the risk of tampering with documents, while also shortening processing times and lowering the costs associated with the issuance of paper Apostilles by Competent Authorities.

### **b. e-Register**

12 The discussions reflected that the e-Register component significantly enhances accessibility, transparency, and trust under the Apostille Convention. e-Registers enable the verification of Apostilles, regardless of their format, at any time and from any location, without the need to contact the issuing Competent Authority. It was highlighted that this improved accessibility benefits users, Competent Authorities, and recipients alike by enabling more efficient record-keeping and verification.

13 By allowing prompt verification of Apostilles and, where applicable, access to information relating to the underlying public document, the e-Register assists recipients in confirming the authenticity of Apostilles with greater confidence. The discussions highlighted that this strengthens the reliability and acceptance of Apostilles globally.

14 Contracting Parties were encouraged to operate e-Registers that provide, at least, a basic description and / or image of the Apostille and of the underlying public document, subject to applicable laws and regulations, including on privacy and data protection.

### 3. Acceptance of e-Apostilles

- 15 Participants recalled the fundamental principle according to which validly issued Apostilles must be recognised in all other Contracting Parties and that this principle equally applies to e-Apostilles. It was emphasised that failure to accept e-Apostilles constitutes a violation of the Apostille Convention, irrespective of whether the State of destination has implemented the e-Apostille component. The law of the State of destination, however, governs the admissibility and probative value of the underlying public document.
- 16 Participants emphasised that, irrespective of their current level of digital integration, Contracting Parties should ensure the establishment of appropriate domestic legal and technical frameworks to enable the effective processing and recognition of incoming e-Apostilles and electronic public documents.
- 17 Where a recipient refuses to accept an e-Apostille, participants encouraged the holder of the e-Apostille to inform the issuing Competent Authority, which in turn is encouraged to seek a formal written explanation from the recipient for the reasons preventing acceptance. Such communication is seen as an important means to overcome any challenges in relation to the acceptance of e-Apostilles.
- 18 Participants stressed that inquiring in advance whether an e-Apostille will be accepted in the State of destination is not considered good practice.
- 19 In case of systemic issues with the acceptance of e-Apostilles by a Contracting Party, issuing Competent Authorities are encouraged to contact the Permanent Bureau.

### 4. Continued promotion and education

- 20 Participants shared their experiences in ensuring the continuous training of officials within Competent Authorities, as well as their efforts to promote the e-APP and its operation, including among recipients. The importance of sustained awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives was emphasised in this regard.
- 21 The discussions further highlighted the need for Contracting Parties to employ a range of tools and methods for education and outreach, including workshops, frequently asked questions (FAQs), practical guidance materials, and internal instructions. Participants recalled the valuable guidance contained in the document entitled "[The e-APP: Key Principles and Good Practices](#)" and encouraged Contracting Parties to disseminate this document domestically to relevant authorities and users of the e-APP, in order to support education and training efforts.
- 22 The discussions further underscored the value of strengthened cooperation among Contracting Parties and Competent Authorities, including through the sharing of information, experiences, and technical expertise.
- 23 It was also suggested that the HCCH assess the possibility of developing additional documentation, in consultation with experts and Contracting Parties, designed further to support the acceptance of e-Apostilles and to be submitted to the Council of General Affairs and Policy for approval in 2028.

### 5. Next Forum

- 24 Participants considered that the e-APP Forum offered a valuable opportunity for officials to connect and share experiences on the e-APP, and welcomed the suggestion of convening a further Forum at an appropriate time.