



Breakthrough with the electronic Apostille Pilot Program (e-APP):

*State of Kansas first jurisdiction to issue electronic Apostilles under the e-APP –
Colombia first jurisdiction to accept e-Apostilles under the e-APP – State of Rhode
Island first jurisdiction to go online with the Program’s electronic Register of Apostilles*

15 February 2007 — The legalisation (authentication) of public documents has entered a new era: the state of Kansas has issued the first electronic Apostille (e-Apostille) in accordance with the model suggested under the electronic Apostille Pilot Program (e-APP), thus becoming the first jurisdiction in the world to send a paperless Apostille Certificate – an official document authenticating the origin of a public document – to another State. The receiving State was Colombia, which in turn officially indicated its acceptance of the e-Apostille. As a result, the two jurisdictions are now ready to complete such authentications entirely electronically.

Furthermore, Rhode Island joined the e-APP by adopting and implementing the Program’s free, open-source electronic Register software. Any interested person can now conduct a secure, online search for an Apostille issued by Rhode Island officials (currently in paper form, soon also in electronic form) by entering its number and date and the register will show automatically if a matching entry can be found, thus allowing receiving parties to verify the origin of the Apostille much more quickly and efficiently than can be accomplished currently.

The e-APP is an innovative program launched in April 2006 to support the development of secure, cost-effective models for the issuance of e-Apostilles and the electronic registration of Apostilles. The Program is designed to strengthen the important benefits of the Hague Apostille Convention in the cross-border use of public documents; in particular, the e-APP allows for dramatic cost savings and leads to a level of security which by far exceeds current standards in the paper-only environment. The e-APP is also an effective tool to combat fraud in the context of the ever increasing cross-border use of public documents.

The Program thus translates the current paper-based Apostille system into a more efficient and secure government service for consumers and businesses that rely on important public documents (such as birth certificates, notarial acts, notarial authentications of signatures, adoption papers, public school diplomas, etc.). Currently, there are over 90 Contracting States to the Apostille Convention, and the e-APP is open to participation by all of them. More information about the Apostille Convention and the

e-APP can be found on the “Apostille Section” of the Hague Conference’s website (<http://www.hcch.net>).

With three participating jurisdictions, the e-APP already has met its goal for the first year. It is hoped that the example set by Kansas, Colombia and Rhode Island will soon be followed by other Contracting States. The e-APP provides software models that take advantage of entirely paperless processes to legalise a document with secure technology that will help deter fraud, reduce costs and increase the speed of critical transactions in international commerce. The e-APP thus promises parties who rely on this important Hague Convention a future of greatly streamlined and much more secure procedures, as compared to the relatively lengthy process of transacting such documents in paper, which is also more prone to fraud.

The Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference thanks the National Notary Association of the USA for the excellent cooperation under the e-APP; the Permanent Bureau is particularly grateful to the NNA for developing and providing the free, open-source software as defined in the e-APP and for serving as a partner in the effort to promote this initiative around the world. For more information on the NNA, go to <http://www.nationalnotary.org>.

For more details about the e-APP, contact First Secretary Christophe Bernasconi (cb@hcch.nl) at the Permanent Bureau.

About the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH)

With over 60 Member States representing all continents, the Hague Conference on Private International Law is a global inter-governmental organisation. A melting pot of different legal traditions, it develops and services multilateral legal instruments, which respond to global needs. An increasing number of non-Member States are also becoming parties to the Hague Conventions. As a result, the work of the Conference encompasses more than 120 countries around the world. The *Hague Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents* (Hague Apostille Convention) facilitates the circulation of public documents executed in one State party to the Convention and to be produced in another State party to the Convention. It does so by replacing the cumbersome and often costly formalities of a full legalisation process with the mere issuance of an Apostille (also called Apostille Certificate or Certificate).