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Amended immigration regulations to boost tourism

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The Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom welcomed the Economic Stimulus and Recovery Plan as announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa, which includes immigration reforms as approved by Cabinet. This followed a joint presentation from the Ministers of Home Affairs and Tourism to Cabinet on 19 September 2018, on a number of visa-related reforms which will make it easier for tourists, business people and academia to come to South Africa.

“It was agreed by Cabinet that visa requirements should be simplified for China and India. On 1 October 2018, South Africa will therefore implement an agreement on simplification of visa requirements with China in order to attract larger numbers of tourists, business people and family members from this country.”

“South Africa will also finalise an agreement on similar simplifications of visa requirements with India on 28 September 2018 in order to ease the movement of tourists and business people to South Africa,” stated Minister Hanekom.

The Minister of Home Affairs also announced that negotiations for Visa Waiver Agreements are being finalised with a number of countries. These are mainly in Africa and the Middle East and include Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, **São Tomé and Príncipe**, Tunisia, Saharawi-Arab Democratic Republic, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, State of Palestine, Iran, Lebanon, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Belarus, Georgia, and Cuba.

The move towards an e-visa system is at an advanced stage and it will be piloted in New Zealand by April 2019. This will significantly enhance efficiency in the issuing of visas to tourists and business people visiting South Africa. The New Zealand pilot will enable government to improve on any challenges so that it can be rolled out to other countries.

For travelling foreign minors, amendments to the current regulations have been agreed by Cabinet in line with the recommendations of the Inter-Ministerial Committee. From the end of October 2018, South Africa will issue a Travel Advisory for minors not travelling with both parents. The amendment to the Regulations will be gazetted by the Minister of Home Affairs for information in October 2018.

“From the end of October 2018, when both parents travel with a minor, no additional documentation will be required. In the case where only one parent or a legal guardian, or another adult travels with a child, he/she may be required by an immigration officer to establish the adult’s relationship with the child. In this event, documentation, including a letter of consent will be requested, however, the consent letter will no longer need to be in the form of an affidavit. In cases where the documentation is requested, the adult travelling with the minor will be given an opportunity to produce the documents after arrival,” said Minister Hanekom.

Training of Immigration Officers will take place before and after the implementation date of the revised Regulations.

“I am certain these amendments to the Immigration Regulations will boost tourism to put us in line to reach our targets of increasing the direct contribution of tourism to the GDP from R118 billion in 2015 to R302 billion in 2026, while increasing direct jobs supported by the sector from 703 000 to 1 million,” concluded Minister Hanekom.

The amended Immigration Regulations will be gazetted in October 2018.

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