



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Private Bag X424, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa. Tel. (+27 12) 444 6780, Fax (+27 12) 444 7027
Private Bag X9154, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa. Tel. (+27 21) 469 5800, Fax: (+27 21) 465 3216

**Joint media statement on the meeting between the Minister of Home Affairs, Malusi Gigaba
and the Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom**

31 July 2014

The Minister of Home Affairs, Minister Malusi Gigaba and the Minister of Tourism, Minister Derek Hanekom met on Wednesday, 30 July 2014 in Cape Town to discuss the impact on the tourism sector of the new Immigration Regulations which came into effect on 26 May 2014.

Key issues raised include:

- Transit visas;
- The regulation relating to the presentation of unabridged birth certificates upon entering or departing South Africa; and
- The requirement for foreign nationals to apply for visas 'in person'.

Ministers Gigaba and Hanekom reiterated their **common understanding** that:

- Enhanced security and the facilitation of tourism development are not mutually exclusive and should be managed in a way consistent with our national interest;
- The effective management of migration; the security as well as the sovereignty of South Africa reinforces growth in the tourism sector;
- The Immigration Regulations were a crucial part of continued efforts to strengthen South Africa's immigration regime;
- Tourism makes a significant contribution to job creation and economic growth, and that the tourism experience encompasses the full customer journey which starts with visa application and documentation requirements; and
- The new Immigration Regulations could have unintended consequences as well as practical implementation difficulties which should be mitigated and managed in a reasonable and constructive manner.

In respect of **transit visas**, the Ministers agreed that the introduction of the capacity to collect biometrics at ports of entry or within a transit facility at such ports of entry would obviate the need for such visas. The Ministers were confident that the phasing in of biometric data collection capacity at ports of entry could lead to the phasing out of transit visas.

In respect of **'in person' visa applications**, the Ministers noted the capacity constraints in countries that cover large geographic areas as well as in countries without a South African Mission or Consulate. The Ministers agreed on the need to intervene speedily to mitigate unintended consequences. Towards expediting interventions that could improve the state of readiness, the Department of Home Affairs has already engaged Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) Global with a view to increasing its footprint as and when required to do so. To this end, the Department of Tourism will provide relevant information to assist the Department of Home Affairs in making an

informed determination pertaining to countries where the need exists for an increase in the visa processing and biometric data capturing footprint.

In respect of *'unabridged birth certificates'*, the Ministers reiterated their commitment to the prevention and combating of trafficking in persons. The Department of Home Affairs will address the misunderstandings about the interpretation of 'unabridged birth certificate' through a communication programme. The intention is to accept alternative, locally issued equivalent documents that contain relevant information. Translation of an equivalent document would not be required.

The Ministers also welcomed a progress report on the piloting of a "trusted traveller programme" which could, in time, and in combination with biometric system roll-out, facilitate the transition to virtual visas.

It was a fruitful discussion. The Ministers and their departments are committed to mitigating the possible unintended consequences of the new Regulations and urgently addressing practical implementation barriers through ongoing engagement, information and best practice sharing, fast-tracking of interventions to build capacity and enhanced external communication aimed at eliminating confusion about the implications of the new Regulations.

Issued by:

Mayihlome Tshwete: 072 869 2477 (Department of Home Affairs)

Natasha Rockman: 076 429 2264 (National Department of Tourism)

Released jointly by the Departments of Home Affairs and Tourism