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Statement on Cabinet decision on the immigration amendment acts and regulations

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The Department of Home Affairs has welcomed Cabinet's decision regarding the recommendations of the Inter-Ministerial Committee the President had established in August 2015 to look at the unintended consequences and mitigating factors relating to the implementation of the **Immigration Amendment Acts (2007 and 2011)** and **Immigration Regulations, 2014**. The law, as amended, will remain with adjustments to be made in implementation, to make it easier for people to comply.

In terms of the decision, on the requirement for travellers to apply for visas in person, in countries where there is no SA mission, the Department of Home Affairs will receive applications, including by post, and capture biometrics of travellers on arrival at ports of entry. To address concerns around the geographical spread of countries like China, India and Russia, certain measures will be put in place to ease the process of application, in particular for tourists.

With regard to the travelling of children Cabinet approved four processes. Child-travel requirements for outbound travelling will stay, including proof of parental relations through unabridged birth certificates, and, as necessary, parental consent. In respect of inbound travel where visas are required, it will still be required that original birth certificates and, as necessary, parental consent or certified copies are submitted during the visa application process. Requirements regarding unaccompanied minors will remain, like providing copies of the identity document or valid passport and visa or permanent residence permit of the person who is to receive an unaccompanied minor.

For visa-exempt countries a strong advisory will be issued, with travellers advised to have proof of relationship and consent from the absent parent/s or guardian/s, in case they are asked to provide such on arrival. Cabinet has mandated DHA to put in place the necessary legal instruments to give effect to this decision. The status quo will remain until such time the DHA has provided a legal instrument for this category of travellers. In the meantime travellers are encouraged to comply.

The decision to retain the IMC on Immigration Regulation will greatly assist in dealing with whatever difficulty might arise as a result of the implementation of its recommendations until such time that the main decisions have been implemented.

In order to implement Cabinet decisions on this matter, the Department will do the following:

In the next three months,

- Implement the capturing of biometrics at ports of entry starting with a pilot at OR Tambo, King Shaka and Cape Town airports,
- Look at introducing an Accredited Tourism Company Programme for countries like China, India and Russia,
- Consider a long-term Multiple Entry Visa for a period exceeding 3 months and up to 3 years for frequent travellers (for business meetings), business people and academics,
- Principals will issue letters confirming permission for children to travel on school tours,
- Extend the validity of the parental consent affidavit to 6 months.

Within a year,

- Add visa facilitation centres, including in Zimbabwe, United Arab Emirates and Botswana,
- Consider a visa-waiver for India, China, Russia and other countries,
- Look at issuing visas on arrival for persons travelling to SA having in their passports valid visas for the UK, USA and Canada or any other country that applies stringent checks on visitors to their countries, to ease travel for tourists,
- Consider granting a certain category of frequent travellers (business and academics) from Africa a 10 year Multiple Entry Visitor's Visa,
- Open two Business Visa Facilitation Centres in Durban and Port Elizabeth, in addition to the centre recently opened in Sandton,
- Print parents' details in their passports so that they do not have to carry birth certificates.

In the long term, one year and beyond,

- Install systems for pre-flight checks at international airports,
- Upgrade Advance Passenger Processing systems and implement Passenger Name Record, to enhance risk assessment,
- Finalise automation of the visa and permitting system

These measures will ensure the balance between national security and economic interests of the country. Child safety will not be compromised.

ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS