

The Visa-On-Arrival Scheme



INTRODUCTION

Global mobility is a necessity for professionals in the corporate world as they need to commute in and out of several countries for work related engagements, business meetings, office set-ups etc.

The mobility coordinators/HR team of multi-national companies have the responsibility of organizing movement of the technical teams as well as top executives who frequently shuttle between several cross-border locations at short notices. Due to the tight travel schedule, there is usually not enough time to facilitate the visa applications of the top executives in their home country and this could potentially jeopardize planned business trips. In view of this, the Federal Government of Nigeria has introduced some incentive visa schemes for top executives towards creating an enabling environment that would encourage foreign direct investment and attract highly skilled professionals from foreign countries. The Visa-On-Arrival (VOA) scheme is one of such initiatives.

Visa-on-Arrival

The VOA is a short term visa, which can be utilized by the following category of individuals:

- Chief Executive Officers of Multi-national Corporations/Companies
- Top Management staff of Multi-national Companies not below the status of Directors
- Members of Government delegation for whom there are prior letters of notification from Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs both to the Airline and to the Nigeria Immigration Service.

Section 20 (7) of the 2015 Immigration Act states that "The Comptroller-General of Immigration (CGI) shall authorize the issuance of Short Visit Visas at the port of entry to frequent travel business persons of international repute, executive directors of multinational companies,

members of government delegations, holders of United Nations Laissez-passer, Africa Union Laissez-passer, Economic Community of West African States Laissez-passer, and holders of any other official travel documents of other recognized international organizations, who are on short visits to Nigeria".

With the VOA initiative, multi-national companies, which intend to invite executives from any part of the world for business meetings at short notice, do not need to explore the route of obtaining regular entry visas from Nigerian foreign missions to enable them come into the country. The VOA option provides a more convenient channel, as the process is less rigorous and more efficient.

The Application Process

The process of obtaining the VOA is initiated at the Nigeria Immigration

Service Headquarters, Abuja with an application letter by the requesting company accepting immigration responsibility on behalf of the expatriate, who intends to come into the country. Upon the CGI's approval, two letters would be issued. One letter would be addressed to the Company and the other to the Comptroller of Immigration at the Airport of entry of the visiting expatriate. It is important to note that the CGI can deny an application as it is a discretionary facility. However, an appeal for reconsideration can still be lodged in the event the CGI denies the application.

Payment Process and Arrival

Upon receipt of the approval letter from the CGI, the expatriate would be required to complete the online visa application form for VOA at www.immigration.gov.ng. The form should be duly updated, printed and payment made accordingly via credit card. Upon presentation of the approval

letter from Immigration, completed application form and evidence of online payment, the expatriate will be allowed to board the Aircraft.

Upon arrival in Nigeria, the expatriate would present the international passport and the above documents to the

Immigration Officers at the Airport for the visa to be issued and endorsed on the expatriate's international passport.

Conclusion

The VOA is not just for business meetings but also for other business-related

activities. This initiative will eliminate the challenges faced by the qualifying executives in processing Nigerian entry visa. Companies should therefore take advantage of the VOA scheme. Hopefully, the scheme will enhance the flow of foreign direct investment into the country, encourage rapid industrialization and boost tourism.

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