

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MOVES TO ENHANCE THE EASE OF PROCESSING VISAS

As part of efforts towards improving the ease of doing business in Nigeria, the Federal Government on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2017 re-emphasized its enhanced policy for streamlining access to immigration facilities, particularly the ease of obtaining requisite visas by investors and expatriates intending to visit Nigeria. Highlighting the policy, the main thrust of which is the issuance of Business on Arrival to business visitors, the Minister of Information and Culture announced that the recently introduced measures are part of a holistic plan to boost tourism and make the business environment conducive and attractive to foreign investors. He noted that the policy aims at streamlining the process for the issuance of Visa on Arrival, Business, Tourist and Transit Visas to investors and expatriates.

The Minister also announced 28 additional offices had been opened for the issuance of Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Aliens Card (CERPAC) in Nigeria, bringing the facility closer to the doorstep of employers of expatriate in all 36 states of the Federation and the FCT.

The announcement by the Federal Government is a re-statement of the policy on “Visa on arrival” put in place with the enactment of the Immigration Act 2015 (“The Act”). Section 20 (7) of the Act, provides that *“the Comptroller of Immigration 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 delegation, holders of United Nations Laissez-passer, Africa Union Laissez-passer, Economic Community of West Africa States Laisses-passer, and holders of any other official travel documents of other recognized international organizations, who are on short visits to Nigeria”*.

The Short visit visa also known as Visa on Arrival, guarantees the issuance of visas to qualified persons upon their arrival in Nigeria and obviates applying through the Nigerian Embassies and High Commissions in their home or country of residence with the attendant bureaucratic bottlenecks.





Noble as the current initiative is, it goes without saying that adequate enforcement measures that will guarantee that the overall objectives are met must be put in place. It is therefore imperative for relevant government agencies, particularly the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) to key into this initiative and give the requisite support by ensuring that the relevant resources and processes are put in place to ensure the swift processing of visa applications.

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