

Minister Malusi Gigaba announces new Lesotho Special Dispensation

22 Sep 2015

On this day, 22 September 2015, Home Affairs Minister Malusi Gigaba announced measures to improve movement between the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa. This was after bilateral negotiations between the Ministers of Home affairs of the two countries and their senior officials in Lesotho, during the official visit of Minister Gigaba, of 21 to 22 September.

Minister Gigaba said management of movement between the two countries cannot be handled by South Africa on its own. Both countries have a role to play.

In this agreement, the beneficiaries will be travellers, especially frequent travellers.

Lesotho Special Dispensation

The Minister has said repeatedly that agreements on migrants between countries cannot be generic. They must be defined by specifics and dynamics of negotiation between respective countries. South Africa and Lesotho share a very different dynamic and therefore require measures that would take cognizance of these dynamics.

It is in this context that Minister Gigaba announced the Lesotho Special Dispensation to regularise the status of undocumented Basotho in South Africa. The Minister will announce commencement date and implementation modalities after consultations and preparations undertaken with Lesotho's Ministry of Home Affairs. The dispensation follows the roll-out of a similar one for Zimbabweans whose stay in South Africa had been regularised since 2009.

Lessons learnt from ZSP should put SA in a better position to do even better on the dispensation with the people of Lesotho. With permits for Zimbabweans the Department of Home Affairs has shown its capacity to process close to 200 000 applications in just 6 months.

Movement between the two Countries

Barriers on movement will be removed further through the implementation of a cross border movement control system in terms of which passports will be scanned but not stamped. This will be implemented during the last quarter of 2015.

This arrangement will be based on the existing ICT systems and use of machine readable passports. It will address the concerns of regular travellers who are inconvenienced daily by border delays and passports filling up due to full stamping of passport requirements.

A special study visa arrangement for Lesotho learners and students

Also agreed to was a special study visa arrangement for Lesotho learners and students studying in South Africa which will be implemented in time for the start of the 2016

school calendar year. This will facilitate easy cross border movement, with learners not required to take along many documents daily.

Trusted Traveller System between Lesotho and South Africa

The Ministers agreed also to explore the feasibility of implementing a trusted traveller system. Both Countries need a secure, convenient and fast cross-border movement control system for frequent travellers. This will assist to facilitate legitimate cross border business, trade and travel.

In the final analysis, the agreements entered into, and the drive towards free movement, with less administrative barriers, will have developmental benefits for Lesotho and South African citizens.

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