

SA lifts visa restrictions against Zimbabweans

PRETORIA: South Africa has lifted visa restrictions against Zimbabwean citizens visiting the country for a period of 90 days.

The announcement was made shortly after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by Home Affairs Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula and the two Zimbabwean joint ministers of Home Affairs.

"South Africa has lifted visa restrictions against Zimbabwean citizens visiting the country for periods of up to 90 days," she said.

This is in line with similar agreements with Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mauritius.

The MoU signed by South Africa and Zimbabwe is aimed at facilitating the legal movement of people between the two countries.

The lifting of visa restrictions is a further step towards implementing the SADC Protocol on Facilitation of Movement, which South Africa has signed and ratified.

Minister Mapisa-Nqakula said the MoU was also a measure for the two countries to strengthen their efforts to fight human trafficking, human smuggling and other cross-border crimes.

In future, the Zimbabwean departure permit, or border pass, will be accepted as a legitimate travel document.

"It is my wish that any capacity building and cooperation in this agreement will support the efforts to rebuild the Zimbabwean economy.

"The signing today is a token of our sincere desire to build a stronger southern African region", she said.

The Zimbabwean signatories to the MoU were joint ministers of Home Affairs General GT Mutsekwa and KCD Mohadi.

In both their speeches, the ministers thanked the South African government for making it easier for Zimbabwean nationals to travel to South Africa.

"Our people back home are happily awaiting the results of this joyous occasion. It is now possible for our nationals to come to South Africa freely, knowing they have safe entry," General Mutsekwa said.

Minster Mohadi said that the SADC protocol is the precursor to free movement of people on the whole continent.

He also committed the Zimbabwean government to adhering to the letter of the agreement.

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