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BRICS visas

On the 26th February 2015 the Minister of Home Affairs Malusi Gigaba announced in a media release that in order to facilitate the movement of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India and China) business executives opportunity would be given to apply for a multiple re-entry business visa to facilitate short business trips and allowing the holder of a passport of any BRICS country multiple re-entries for the duration of the holders passport and valid for a period of a maximum of 10 years. Each entry to South Africa under this dispensation of business visa may not exceed 30 days.

It is abundantly clear that this dispensation only covers *de facto* business people who will legitimately be visiting South Africa for valid and proper business reasons.

The normal visa requirements for all types of short term visas still remain.

The only exceptions to this rule are when a *note verbale* has been issued by the authorities concerned in their country confirming that an applicant is on official business. In this instance, and only in this instance, then the holder of such *note verbale* will not have to provide bank statements nor would they have to give any financial assurances or proof of available funds.

The visa must still be applied for in the normal course but the Minister of Home Affairs has indicated in his media release that the Department of Home Affairs will continue to endeavor to meet a turnaround time of 5 days for processing of such visas. Whether this will be the case for a number of the South African Missions abroad is doubtful but it can be viewed as a minimum processing time.

Ostensibly South African citizens would be accorded these as privileges when going to any BRICS country.

The rationale for allowing a relaxed regime of business visa processing is to enhance the BRICS government efforts to increase trade and investment between the countries.

On a note of caution we wish to advise that there will undoubtedly be inconsistencies in the application of the process between the South African Missions abroad and accordingly requirements may differ from embassy to embassy.

It is therefore always important to first consult an Immigration Attorney prior to making the application in order to assess each case on a “case by case” basis.

**AS ALWAYS, WE ENDEAVOUR TO KEEP YOU UP TO
DATE ON ALL IMMIGRATION RELATED ISSUES**

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