

GOVT DEVELOPS GUIDELINES ON NATIONAL DOCUMENT ACQUISITION

STOCKHOLM – 8th April, 2021 – GOVERNMENT has developed guidelines and procedures for the acquisition of national documents in order to resolve challenges experienced by Zambians living abroad whenever seeking to replace or acquire new documents.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Permanent Secretary, in charge of International Relations and Cooperation, Ambassador Chalwe Lombe disclosed this during a digital meeting organised by the Zambian Embassy in Stockholm with Zambians living in the Nordic region.

Ambassador Lombe was the Keynote Speaker at the event meant to sensitise the Zambian community in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland on the Diaspora Policy which was launched by Her Honour the Vice-president, Mrs. Inonge Mutukwa Wina, in April 2019.

The Permanent Secretary pointed out that in order to ensure that the Diaspora was fully engaged with the country, the Ministry has, in the first phase, focused on dealing with issues that facilitate the resolution of delays in the issuance of national documents such as national registration cards and passports.

Ambassador Lombe said the Government's commitment to engage the Diaspora has been exemplified through the delivery of the Dual Citizenship provision in the Constitution as well as the Diaspora Policy.

Ambassador Lombe noted that all the information required to acquire national documents had been consolidated and that the Guidelines and Procedures for the Acquisition of National Documents will be launched soon.

"We have been inundated with questions over the years on what procedures to follow when trying to obtain certain documents. We have now developed guidelines and procedures for the acquisition of national documents which is a novel idea. All the information has been put together we even have a Q&A with accompanying answers. This is one of the things we are doing to facilitate information provision for the diaspora," he said.

The Permanent Secretary disclosed that President Lungu has committed to holding bi-annual indaba with the Diaspora if only they could organise themselves into a global association.

Ambassador Lombe further informed the meeting that the MFA with the support of the International Organisation for Migration has engaged the Bank of Zambia, and the Ministry of Finance to commission a Remittance Study for the diaspora.

The MFA is also establishing a comprehensive information online portal and a diaspora database.

"The online web portal has been created. We are in the final stage and are just doing validation. It is going to go online very soon. It was meant to be launched in December 2020 but Covid-19 shook us a bit," Ambassador Lombe said.

The Permanent Secretary noted that the database was critical as it will help the Government target skilled Zambians from various parts of the world. He urged Zambians working in international organisations and were seeking higher positions to indicate their plans to government noting that "President Lungu has committed to sponsoring Zambians for positions in international organisations."

On land acquisition, the Permanent Secretary noted that the Diaspora Policy would facilitate the provision of information so that Zambians living within and outside the country could receive equal opportunities when land became available.

Ambassador Lombe informed the meeting that the government through institutions such as the Electoral Commission of Zambia would in the near future allow political

participation by Zambians abroad such as being able to vote in national elections from their respective countries.

During his presentation, the Citizenship and Passport Officer, Mr Emmanuel Tembo, outlined the categories of how to acquire dual citizenship and the necessary requirements. Mr Tembo also gave a step by step account of the application process for passports and the national registration card. He warned the diaspora against reckless handling of their passport applications as there were unscrupulous syndicates out there after such national documents.

Mr. Tembo advised that, just like some other countries, the Zambian government could not allow passports and other national documents to be issued from outside the country due to the security risks involved.

In responding to inquiries from the Diaspora, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director for Political Affairs, Mrs. Isabelle Lemba echoed the Permanent Secretary's sentiments by urging the Zambian community to mobilise themselves into associations in their respective countries or form a regional body through which they could engage the Zambian Government.

Mrs. Lemba advised the community to organise themselves and work with the Embassy to engage the government on issues to do with land acquisition, immigration and other matters.

And Charge D' Affaires at the Embassy of Zambia in Stockholm, Mr. Nicky Shabolyo pointed out that the Embassy believed that the Diaspora Policy was a well-crafted document which has covered a wide range of areas affecting Zambians abroad and has proposed workable interventions to address the various challenges.

He said in its short-to-medium-term plan, the Mission would organise specialised digital meetings with the participation of the parent Ministry and experts in areas that relate to the various interests of the Zambian community.

Mr. Shabolyo said this was meant to contribute to realising Government's desire to have a policy that would facilitate the participation of Zambians in the Diaspora in the country's socio-economic development agenda.

And speaking on behalf of the Zambian community, Mr. Benjamin Musuku, based in Finland pointed out that Zambians in the diaspora had always been interested in supporting the Zambian development agenda but that their efforts were hampered by lack of clear guidelines on how they could effectively participate. Mr. Musuku commended the government for formulating the Diaspora Policy and hoped that the initiative would help resolve the challenges.

He said apart from remittances, nationals in the diaspora would like to contribute to the social and economic development of Zambia through land acquisition and infrastructure development, job creation through business engagements, and promotion of tourism through cultural awareness campaigns in the diaspora.

Mr. Musuku commended the Embassy for "the remarkable collaboration between the Zambian community in the Nordic region and the Zambian embassy in Stockholm. The Embassy has given us overwhelming support, ranging from funerals to projects meant to compliment government efforts in developing our beloved country. This has not only made us feel to be part of Zambia, but given us the much needed impetus, to reorganize ourselves as a community, and step up our deliberate efforts, to be part of the good cause."

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