

NIGERIA | THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TO PHASE OUT THE VISA-ON-ARRIVAL SYSTEM

Summary

On February 22, 2025, The Nigerian Minister of Interior, Dr Olunmi Tunji-Ojo (the **"Minister"**), announced the Federal Government's plan to discontinue its visa-on-arrival (**"VOA"**) policy due to perceived inefficiency, security concerns and the need to implement a more data-driven visa system.

In place of the VOA policy, the government intends to introduce a new immigration policy requiring real-time clearance from Interpol, criminal record databases, and other background-checking agencies for entry and exit approvals.

Background

The VOA policy was introduced by the former president of Nigeria, President Muhammed Buhari in 2020 as a short-stay visa issued at the point of entry into the country. It was designed to simplify entry procedures for eligible foreign nationals visiting for business or tourism including frequently travelled high net worth investors and visitors unable to obtain visas in their countries of residence due to the absence of Nigerian missions or embassies in those countries. Under the VOA system, qualified travellers could receive entry approval upon landing, provided they met all documentation and fee requirements.

However, during the closing ceremony of a capacity-building training for Nigeria Immigration Service ("NIS") personnel, the Minister emphasized the need to harmonize immigration data and implement integrated solutions for migration-related decisions.

According to the Minister, the proposed reform will require pre-arrival clearance from Interpol, criminal record system and other background-check agencies in real time. Additionally, the government plans to deploy an application interface and passenger name record (API/PNR) system across the country land borders will be undertaken to ensure that Nigeria harbours only legally fit persons.

This reform is expected to take effect between March 1, 2025, and April 1, 2025.

Implications of the Reform

This reform, although aimed at addressing the inefficiencies of the VOA system and mitigating migration-related security risks, it may also deter investment and tourism in Nigeria. The VOA policy was originally introduced to streamline entry processes and reduce bureaucratic barriers to foreign direct and portfolio investments.

It, however, remains unclear whether the new system will mandate visa applications at Nigerian embassies or missions abroad before entry or if it will merely enhance security checks for pre-arrival and on-entry screening while still permitting entry without a visa obtained from an embassy. The extent to which this reform impacts investment and tourism will largely depend on how it is implemented. Greater clarity is expected once the reform takes effect.

How we can help

We specialize in providing comprehensive support to businesses navigating the complexities of Nigerian immigration law. Our expert services encompass providing advice and assistance to ensure seamless compliance with the continually evolving relevant regulations.

For additional information, please contact Immigration Team Bloomfield LP - Email immigration@bloomfield-law.com or call +234 1 454 2130

This alert is for general information only. It is not offered as advice, on any matter, whether legal, procedural, or otherwise.