

RMCE/APEI /2017

ACCELERATED PROGRAM FOR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

1st Workshop on the Roadmap for the Implementation of MOU for the Facilitation of Movement of Business Persons and Professionals among APEI Countries

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1. INTRODUCTION

The first workshop on the Roadmap for the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding for the Facilitation of Movement of Business Persons and Professionals among APEI Countries took place from 30th to 31st March, 2017 in Port Louis, Mauritius. The objective of the workshop was to discuss the framework of the implementation of the MOU on Mobility of Business Persons and Professionals and agree on a uniform approach towards its implementation.

The workshop was attended by delegates from Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zambia, officials from the Regional Multidisciplinary Centre of Excellence (RMCE), and an independent consultant. The list of participants is attached as **Annex I**.



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2. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

2.1 Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Fletcher Nyirenda, the Chief Permits and Border Affairs Officer of the Malawi Department of Immigration and Citizenship Services chaired the meeting on behalf of Mr. Crispin Kulemeka, Technical Chair of APEI who was not able to attend due to other reasons beyond his control. The Chair led the meeting in consideration and adoption of the agenda. The workshop adopted the agenda with amendments as follows:-

- 1) Introduction of participants;
- 2) Opening remarks by Chair (Malawi) and Representative from Mauritius;
- 3) Brief overview of the MoU on facilitation of the movement of business persons and professionals;
- 4) Discussion on the framework for the Implementation of the MoU on facilitation of the movement of business persons and professionals
- 5) Adoption of the Report

A copy of the agenda is at Annex II.

2.2 Opening Remarks

In his opening remarks, the Chair was pleased to note continuity in attendance of meetings by officials from APEI Member States which was key for the sustained institutional memory and necessary for the successful implementation of the APEI agenda. He thanked Mauritius for hosting the workshop and further informed the meeting that the purpose of the meeting was to agree and adopt an implementation matrix for the signed MoU on the facilitation of the movement of business persons and professionals.

The Chair also advised the Secretariat to share the report of the workshop with Mozambique which was not represented at the workshop. He then extended an apology for any inconvenience caused by the postponement of the workshop from the previous week. He concluded by encouraging Member States to commit to the implementation of the MoU.

Mr. A.K. Jhoerreea, Assistant Permanent Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office of Mauritius welcomed the APEI delegates and emphasized the importance of the implementation of the MoU. He further highlighted that the signing of the MoU was an important milestone of APEI. He stressed that the implementation of the MoU would facilitate the attainment of the APEI objectives.

Zambia also expressed gratitude for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded by Mauritius.

2.3 Brief overview of the MoU for facilitation of the movement of business persons and professionals



Mr. Felix Kadewere, Consultant, gave a detailed overview of the MoU for facilitation of the movement of business persons and professionals, including its contents and scope.

Members noted that according to the provision under Article 21 (1) the MoU came into force when it was signed on 16th September 2016 by the four countries namely Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zambia.

Mr. P.Hurry of RMCE informed participants that at the last APEI meeting of Senior Officials held in February 2017 in Mauritius, it was agreed that the Action matrix of APEI should include progress on the implementation of all MoUs concluded in the APEI programme, such as the Mutual Recognition Agreement and the Education Services Sector.

2.4 Presentation and Discussion on Framework for the Implementation of the MOU for facilitation of the movement of business persons and professionals

The meeting considered the proposed framework of action for the implementation of the MoU on movement of business persons and professionals using a plenary discussion format, moderated by the Chair

In the ensuing discussions on the APEI Business Travel Card (ABTC):

- Mauritius noted that the ABTC should be a standard document across member countries and that national institutions be mandated to issue travel documents should also be authorized to issue the ABTC. Currently, all citizens from APEI countries do not require a visa to enter Mauritius.
- Zambia informed the workshop that currently citizens from APEI countries do not require a visa to enter Zambia except Mozambique who are able to get the visa at the port of entry. However, discussions are underway with Mozambique to remove the visa requirement. Zambia noted that the proposed ABTC may imply effecting legal changes so that the ABTC has legal recognition. Zambia observed that under the current permit system, it should be easy to issue short term work permits to APEI citizens.
- Seychelles informed the workshop that it has an open border policy which does not require use of ABTC.
- Malawi reported that citizens from other APEI members do not require a visa to enter Malawi and that a project is underway to set up an automated system for issuance of business and work permits which could also meet the requirements for the ABTC.

The Chair noted that the issue of ABTC is not only about facilitating entry at the border ports but to facilitate free conduct of business and engagement in employment. He observed that the ABTC should be standalone instrument complementing the permit and visa systems in the member states. He stressed that there is need for APEI to embrace the concept of the ABTC not because currently the countries under APEI do not require a visa to enter other countries within the APEI region (except for the case of Mozambique and Zambia). He

urged the Member States to consider the bigger picture where other countries may join APEI group.

Further, Mauritius observed that the definition of business persons in the signed MOU does not only focus on nationals of APEI countries but it extends to all those legally resident in the APEI countries. In view of the foregoing it was observed that the ABTC will serve as a means of identification for business persons and professionals.

Zambia observed that in the larger context of APEI there are fundamental issues that ought to be considered such as the harmonization of the visas and permit systems, review of the legal frameworks, and that there is need for a common understanding on the ABTC.

It was therefore proposed that, what is required is a comprehensive project that will support APEI countries to design a responsive ABTC system and have it implemented.

All the countries agreed with the proposal and mandated the Secretariat to prepare a comprehensive project concept covering all aspects of the ABTC, business permits, short and long term work permits, including country regulatory framework, design, and modalities of systems to make the ABTC operational.

3.0 Recommendations

In view of the above, the Workshop agreed that:

- I. RMCE should, within three weeks, facilitate the preparation of TORs for a comprehensive project concept covering all aspects of the ABTC, business permits, short and long term work permits, including country regulatory framework, design, and modalities of systems to make the ABTC operational;
- II. RMCE should circulate the TORs and all countries should provide inputs within two weeks;
- III. There is need for peer-to-peer learning on similar systems in other regions where travel cards are implemented (Gulf Countries and APEC); and
- IV. RMCE should continue to serve as the secretariat of APEI and mobilize funding for the proposed comprehensive ABTC project

4.0 Adoption of Report

The minutes were agreed by all four participating countries and thereafter signed, on 31st March 2017 as reflected hereunder.

5.0 Closing of the Workshop

In his closing remarks, Mr. Fletcher Nyirenda, thanked the delegates for their active participation, RMCE for organizing the workshop, and the Government of Mauritius for hosting the delegates. He noted that the workshop had achieved its objectives and that there were some assignments to be carried out. He also wished the delegates a safe return to their respective countries.



In his remarks, Mr. Prakash Hurry, Officer in Charge of RMCE, thanked the delegates for their contribution and clear direction regarding the Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.

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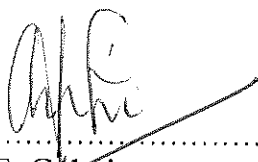
SIGNED



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Mr. Fletcher Nyirenda
For Chair, APEI
Malawi



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Mr. A. K Jhoerreea
Assistant Permanent Secretary
Prime Minister's Office



.....
Mr F. Galmier
Senior Immigration Officer
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.....
Mr. Japhet M. Lishomwa
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