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FACILITATING BORDER CROSSINGS: A COMMONWEALTH OF PEOPLE

Report by the Ramphal Institute to the Commonwealth Secretary-General

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Introduction

Following the recommendation on improving the Commonwealth's profile by providing easier rights of entry for legitimate purposes to citizens across member countries, the Commonwealth Secretary-General tasked the Ramphal Institute to undertake a study.

In summary, based on consultations with capitals in 15 member countries, the study has concluded that the Heads of Government task a Ministerial Working Group to further examine this opportunity and report back to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Mauritius in 2015.

The study report undertaken by the Ramphal Institute is enclosed.

TOWARDS A DISTINCTIVELY COMMONWEALTH WELCOME
Proposals to reduce visa barriers for legitimate visitors, with greater speed and security

Report of the Ramphal Institute to the Commonwealth Secretary-General on easing movement between Commonwealth states

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1 Executive summary: conclusions and recommendations

This inquiry, focused on easing movement between Commonwealth states for business travellers, tourists, and those on official business, finds that the Commonwealth can help make a positive difference. In facilitating visa reform for travellers there is scope for specific, varied, pilot, bilateral and multilateral change. The range of geographical, regional and security interests in member states offers little prospect of a "borderless Commonwealth" or a one-size-fits-all visa regime. Strong goodwill in many capitals for a Commonwealth initiative does, however, justify Heads of Government in proclaiming, in a Statement, that it is the aim of the Commonwealth to promote easier movement for its citizens in bona fide travel between member countries, subject to the proper concern for sovereignty and national security. To progress this Statement, Heads of Government are recommended to authorise a four year Standing Committee on Easier Movement between Commonwealth States, to work with the Commonwealth Secretariat on the three fields listed. It is recommended that, on behalf of the Commonwealth, they investigate joining the APEC Business Card scheme, or trialling a comparable Commonwealth Business Card if that is not possible; they establish a confidential advisory service for governments which wish to strengthen their border IT and passport security, and relevant administrative arrangements, to enable them to meet higher standards for international collaboration; and they collaborate closely with regional organisations of Commonwealth significance, seeking to facilitate mutual visa recognition between two or more regional bodies.

2 Terms of reference

The Ramphal Institute was requested in February 2013 by the Commonwealth Secretary-General to investigate the visa situation applying between Commonwealth states, and the scope for easing movement for business travellers, for tourists, and for those travelling on official business. It was asked to consult senior government figures in a sample of 15 capitals, availing of the services of Ambassador Farooq Sobhan, Dr Michael Frendo, and Dr James Jonah, and taking into account the scope for positive change and the situation pertaining in regional organisations. It was commissioned to carry out research on these priorities covering all 54 members of the Commonwealth.[1] The Institute was asked to consult widely for the Secretary-General and to report to him, with a view to enabling him to make recommendations for consideration by Heads of Government at their meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka in November 2013; these recommendations might lead to appropriate intergovernmental and bilateral negotiations.

3 Introduction and context

The background to this commission lies in the continuing expansion of international travel, the efforts of several regional organisations to which Commonwealth members belong to ease movement between themselves and present a single visa request to citizens of other states, continuing changes to visa requirements by individual countries, and specifically to

[1] The Commonwealth Secretariat requested that the research should include Fiji Islands, currently suspended from membership.

recommendation 101 from the Eminent Persons Group (“A Commonwealth for the People”, 2011) which was tasked to recommend modernisation of this unique association.

The Group proposed “an Expert Group to report to the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) on ways in which entry to Commonwealth countries by Commonwealth citizens on business or holiday might be gradually improved either across the Commonwealth or through bilateral arrangements between Commonwealth states.” Its aim was to improve the Commonwealth’s profile and value to citizens, and to initiate a process that in prudent and appropriate ways would improve the situation at borders. It stated (p 146) “Already, as between some Commonwealth countries a general right of privileged entry for particular citizens is recognised. Further, the rapid digitalisation of passports and other identity documents renders it much easier than in earlier times to establish their authenticity and satisfy security concerns. In our view, if a system can be devised to meet such security concerns while providing Commonwealth citizens easier rights of entry for legitimate purposes, Commonwealth citizenship would gain greater worth for all Commonwealth peoples and strengthen the sense of meaningful association.”

During 2012 the Ministerial task force, which examined EPG proposals on which decisions had been deferred by the Perth summit, authorised a consultative inquiry which might lead to recommendations to Heads and subsequent pilot projects.

Following the request to the Ramphal Institute to undertake consultations and research, the Institute’s Trustees appointed three Ramphal Commissioners to make visits and consult Ministers and senior officials in a sample of 15 member states, and experienced researchers were recruited in the United Kingdom. The Institute was lucky to secure the services of three distinguished personalities -- Ambassador Farooq Sobhan, formerly Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, who visited Canada, Malaysia, Australia, India and Pakistan, as well as holding talks in Bangladesh; Dr Michael Frendo, formerly Foreign Minister of Malta, who met senior persons in the United Kingdom, Barbados and Jamaica, as well as holding talks in Malta; and Dr James Jonah, former Under Secretary-General at the United Nations, who consulted in Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania. The Secretary-General kindly provided “Notes Verbales” to advise these governments of the inquiry, and to ask for their assistance and courtesies. A biography of each Commissioner, and a full list of those they met is provided in an appendix. The Institute appointed Dr Raluca Nagy to provide briefings for the Commissioners, and a matrix of visa requirements among Commonwealth states; in this work she was assisted by Ms Ana Bleahu. A sample of briefs for the Commissioners, and an outline matrix indicating the variety of requirements, are in appendices.

4 General issues

a) Sensitivity of visa issues and border control

Without exception the issue of visas and border security is sensitive for Commonwealth governments and public opinion. Governments seek to balance the need to protect their populations from criminals, terrorists and undocumented migrants, with the need to encourage business, investment and tourism. The context is changing fast, with the expansion of international travel, the efforts by regional organisations to promote a united response,

and improved IT related to air tickets which can make visas redundant. In conversations with senior figures the Ramphal Commissioners emphasised that their interest, following the EPG, is with simplifying travel for legitimate business people and temporary visitors. It is not with migrants, "boat people" or asylum seekers. At the same time the Institute's work recognises that the situation for Commonwealth states, both with regard to IT and administrative resources, varies greatly. Within CARICOM the "Caripass", consequent to a free movement commitment by the Caribbean Community, has not taken off as intended because of limitations in security cooperation; South Africa admits citizens from other SADC states for 90 days without a visa, but excludes those from the Democratic Republic of the Congo because of its poor documentation. Concern about passport abuse and corrupt access to travel documents has, inter alia, led Canada to introduce visa restrictions for Malaysians, and remove visa exemptions for citizens from Botswana, Namibia, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Swaziland; the UK revoked visa-free travel for South Africans in 2009. It is therefore appropriate for the Commonwealth to consider offering confidential support, in IT and border security, to nations which will need to demonstrate more robust systems if they are to be welcomed into visa alliance with others.

b) Lack of consensus for a single pan-Commonwealth system

The consultations demonstrate that, even though there is widespread interest in the APEC Business Travel Card or a comparable Commonwealth Business Travel Card (see below), the concerns of member states are too diverse to make possible the adoption of a single visa regime. This is a matter of security, geography, prior regional commitment and the attitudes of domestic public opinion. What may however be possible, is what one Commissioner has described as "variable geometry": bilateral agreements, pilot projects, experiments along the lines of the APEC Business Travel Card, efforts to broker agreements between regional bodies to which large numbers of Commonwealth states belong. To achieve this may require intergovernmental negotiation, with the assistance not only of the Commonwealth Secretariat but of a Ministerial Standing Committee on Easier Movement between Commonwealth States.

c) Goodwill towards a Commonwealth initiative

While recognising the need for caution, the great majority of those interviewed thought it would be appropriate for the Commonwealth to provide a stimulus. They recognised that any action, even if small and tentative, would be welcome as a symbol that the Commonwealth can add value to the "real life" experience of business people, tourists, and those travelling on official business. In order to capture this goodwill, and to show that governments are willing to follow up on a significant EPG recommendation, it would make sense for the Sri Lankan CHOGM to make a formal Declaration of Intent. A draft might state, "It is the aim of the Commonwealth to promote easier movement for its citizens in bona fide travel between member countries, subject to proper concerns for sovereignty and national security. In this intention it is aware of the need to enhance the value of Commonwealth membership to citizens, to demonstrate that the Commonwealth is a unique global family, and to promote the tourism, trade, investment, and prosperity of all its nations." A Ministerial Standing Committee on Easier Movement between Commonwealth States would progress such a commitment.

d) Regional organisations

The majority of Commonwealth states belong to one or more regional bodies (eg CARICOM, ECOWAS, Pacific Islands Forum, SADC, EU). Membership, both of individual bodies and of the collectivity, is large. Rwanda, for instance, is providing visa-free access to citizens from all the other 54 members of the African Union. However progress within regional organisations can be slow: a panel at the African Development Bank meeting in Marrakech in June 2013 heard that Africans need visas to visit four fifths of African states. Several interlocutors advised the Ramphal Commissioners that one of the most useful roles of the Commonwealth could be to facilitate agreements between at least two regional organisations to simplify movement for travellers. Hence, for instance, an ECOWAS-CARICOM agreement could mean that a Ghanaian citizen had a CARICOM-wide visa, while a Jamaican citizen also got an ECOWAS-wide visa. The Commonwealth Secretariat has experience in bringing regional bodies together – for instance by facilitating an environmental agreement between Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean states at the Rio plus 20 meeting in 2012. Success here would demonstrate a cutting-edge Commonwealth role as a laboratory for international cooperation, and help to raise mutual security standards.

e) Finance

It was expected that the cost of issuing visas, and the revenue gained from selling them, would be significant points in the consultations. However, although there was criticism of the outsourcing of UK visa applications – eg a Mozambican has to send a passport to South Africa – and some criticism of the expense of visas to go to the UK, Canada and Australia, this was not a major question. In Dhaka it was believed that the move of Canada's visa office from Bangladesh to Singapore had coincided with an increase in the rejection rate for Bangladeshis applying to go to Canada.[2] The growth of on-line and on-arrival visa approvals has assisted many travellers. Australia provides consular services for many small Pacific island countries. There are of course variations in charges that countries make for visas, not always easily understood. For example, to take the example of Nigeria, a UK traveller to Nigeria pays $144 for a single entry visa, while the basic charge for a New Zealander is $2; a visitor from Antigua and Barbuda pays $148, while a visitor from Barbados pays nothing.[3] Some member states are earning considerable sums from the sale of visas. For the UK, for instance, total earnings rose from £399,321,000 in 2010-11 to £444,759,000 in 2012-13.[4] There are also situations where governments require visas, but do not charge for them. This applies, for example, to Indian nationals who visit South Africa. Just as important as visa prices are issues of turnaround time for visa applications, and political frictions which can inhibit travel. It is still difficult for Indians to visit Pakistan, and vice versa, and in that and other situations the visas can take weeks to come through. It would dramatise the value they put on the Commonwealth association if all governments could consider speeding up the turnaround on visa applications from other member states, and made a public commitment to that end.

[2] At a meeting with officials in Canada Ambassador Farooq Sobhan was informed that there was a refusal rate of only 4% over the last three years in applications for short-term visit visas.

[3] In fact the Barbados Government website states that a Barbadian needs to get a visa for Nigeria from the honorary consul in Trinidad and Tobago, at a cost of USD$31 for a single entry and USD$41 for multi entry. This is not the only example of governments' website information that does not tally.

[4] Source: UKBA Report and Accounts, courtesy House of Commons Library and office of Frank Field MP. Revenues are not broken down to match Commonwealth membership but from South Asia they fell from £87,468,000 to £78,561,000 over the three years, while growing from Africa from £64,141,000 to £72,970,000 over the same period.

f) Speed of change

The area of visa reform is one of dynamic change, being led by the growth of international travel (including the introduction of larger aircraft on more routes), the administrative needs of governments at a time of tight official budgets, public concerns about security and illegal migration, progress in cooperation within regional organisations, and advances in IT. Merely during the seven months of the Ramphal Institute research the following changes are among those observed: a visa-free agreement between Nigeria and South Africa to assist those travelling on official business; potential extension of the APEC Business Travel Card to members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, with its twelve Commonwealth states; discussion within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) about introducing a UNIVISA among an initial group of six states, which would allow a tourist applicant from outside the region to move freely between them; a one-stop shop for Indian visitors to the UK introduced following a February visit by the UK Prime Minister to South Asia, and a proposal in June for a £3000 bond for all visitors to the UK from seven Commonwealth countries in Africa and South Asia (Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) which on 2012 numbers would affect 296,000 visitors to the UK from India and 101,000 from Nigeria. Given the dynamism in the visa sector, and the heterogeneity of Commonwealth membership, there is a strong case for Commonwealth support to be given to processes that are moving alongside the strongest international currents. This implies support for schemes such as the APEC Business Travel Card, and trying to broker agreements between regional bodies.

g) Reciprocity

A major cause of irritation among officials and travellers is the lack of reciprocity in visa arrangements between Commonwealth countries. While citizens of both Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth states that belong to ECOWAS enjoy free movement, for example, the visa regimes obtaining between Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia and the other 50 member states of the Commonwealth vary considerably. Much of the irritation is directed from developing countries against Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, perceived as restricting the offer of visas when their own citizens may be able to travel visa-free (eg for UK citizens visiting South Africa or Jamaica). But closer analysis suggests that the lack of reciprocity affects other states too. Ramphal Institute research indicates, for instance, that Malaysia offers visa-free access to persons from 46 other Commonwealth states, but Malaysians can only visit 32 on the same basis. The UK and Canada do not impose any short-term visa requirements on Australians, while the opposite applies. Disparities of access and cost may undermine the valued “family” sense of Commonwealth citizenship.

5 Business travel

Some Commonwealth states already offer favourable access to senior business people, allowing multiple visits to pre-accredited persons, with the object of increasing trade and investment. Two established schemes are the APEC Business Travel Card, and the SAARC exemption scheme, and in addition several states have bilateral arrangements.

a) APEC Business Travel Card

The APEC Business Travel Card was introduced in 1999 and consultations by the Ramphal Commissioners, in eleven of the 13 states they visited which do not currently use the Card, indicate a willingness to investigate this or a similar scheme. States where officials said they were willing to explore this possibility include: Bangladesh, Barbados, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and the United Kingdom. In all these countries it was emphasised that there has to be a robust security infrastructure underpinning mutual recognition of visas, and progress might need to be in gradual, pilot stages.

The APEC Card is valid for three years, allowing multiple short entries for a maximum of 59 days, and is issued to senior business people by the authorities where they reside; eligibilities vary slightly between members, and once approved by the home government the application is vetted by the other states; the whole process takes up to three months and business travellers in a hurry can get an interim card covering only five states. The scheme is overseen by the Business Mobility Group within APEC, which estimates that it reduced travel costs by 38 per cent for users between 2010 and 2011. There is speedier lane processing for arrivals who hold the Card.

The coverage within APEC is not universal, and so far Russia, the United States and Canada are regarded as transitional members, not offering reciprocal benefits. The long border between Canada and the United States, and their close alliance for security purposes, explains why Canada is unlikely to use the Card unless its southern neighbour joins the scheme. But the economies which do use the Card are significant: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. The Business Mobility Group is investigating making the Card biometric, extending its duration to five years, and tying it into a Regional Movement Alert System which would add security without impeding passengers. Australians are significant users of the Card, whose total membership grew from 88,421 in 2010 to around 140,000 at present; there are currently over 18,300 Australian passport holders with the Card.[5] In Australia the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry facilitates applications and an Australian wanting access to all states using the Card will pay A$2000. The large role of China in the contemporary world economy makes the fact of Chinese participation a significant attraction.

Given that this is a scheme with a lengthy track record and strong Commonwealth participation it is recommended that the Commonwealth should examine whether it may be possible for other members to join it or, if that is not possible, whether a similar Commonwealth Card may be introduced for interested states, perhaps with reciprocal access to APEC Card states, and capable of access to the Schengen group within the European Union. An approach to APEC's Business Mobility Group, beyond the scope of the present research, will establish what is possible. It is also relevant that the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, based in Mauritius, with its twelve Commonwealth states (Australia, Mauritius, South Africa, Tanzania, Bangladesh, India, Seychelles, Kenya, Malaysia, Mozambique, Singapore and Sri Lanka) is considering a Business Travel Card based on the

[5] Latest Australian figures from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship; message from Adam Henry to Dr Nagy, 9 August 2013

APEC Card. The IOR-ARC decided on a feasibility study last year, a concept note has been circulated, and working groups will examine this in Perth, Australia from 30 October to 1 November, 2013. Australia has just taken the chair of this Association. The current proposal is important from a Commonwealth viewpoint for three reasons. It means potentially that very similar Cards, with similar pre-clearance procedures, will spread from the Pacific and Asia to the eastern coast of Africa. Effectively these Cards, if they can lead to mutual recognition between the two systems, will become less region-specific, and 15 out of the 54 member states of the Commonwealth may before long be using almost the same Card for business facilitation.

b) SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme

The visa exemption scheme was launched in 1992 under the aegis of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, to which Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka belong. This provides for a one year exemption for named business people, government functionaries and certain other categories. The scheme would appear to be more modest than the APEC Business Card, and has been periodically bedevilled by political frictions within South Asia, for instance between India and Pakistan, and between Pakistan and Bangladesh. Some member states would like to extend its use, but it may be a less valuable exemplar for Commonwealth business facilitation than the APEC Card. It should be noted that while Bangladesh and India would come into something similar to the APEC scheme if a comparable scheme is adopted by members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, two Commonwealth members of SAARC – Maldives and Pakistan – would not benefit.

c) Bilateral and other arrangements

Many states have bilateral arrangements of value to business travellers. For example Malaysia, which has a liberal visa regime, still requires visas for visitors from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria and Rwanda. But it is working on a scheme for five year, multi entry visas for business people from these countries. The UK offers ten year multiple entry visas for approved Nigerian business people. South Africa offers Nigerians three year multiple entry visas for the same purpose, renewable for a further three years. High Commissioners representing Commonwealth governments in most states have discretion to use their power to award visas to approved business people, sometimes on special terms.

d) Conclusions

Commonwealth Heads should authorise an investigation, with the Business Mobility Group of APEC, to see whether member states which so wish may join the APEC Card scheme on a basis similar to that which applies to existing members, and/or join with members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation in the scheme it is developing. The proposed Standing Committee on Easing Movement between Commonwealth States could oversee this negotiation, with the assistance of governments whose business people already use the APEC Card. If it is not possible to achieve agreement with APEC or the IOR-ARC, the Standing Committee and Commonwealth Secretariat could consider creating a similar scheme limited to Commonwealth states to which APEC and IOR-ARC Card holders might have access. This may require the Standing Committee to set up a small subcommittee, perhaps chaired by a government which uses the APEC Card, to negotiate a Commonwealth Business Card.

6 Tourism

Almost universally, Commonwealth governments wish to increase the number of tourists who visit their countries, and this is already a key factor in setting national visa regimes. However the consultations carried out by the three Ramphal Commissioners, and the additional research conducted for the Institute, found no potential for a "one-size-fits-all" regime that would simplify tourist travel within the Commonwealth. Had there been such a possibility it might already have been negotiated by Commonwealth Ministers of Tourism at their successive meetings in Kuala Lumpur (2004), Abuja (2005) and London (2008). Instead the concerns for security in an era of international terrorism, abuse of tourist visas by overstayers, and conceivably the competition for tourists are among the reasons why progress has been slow, bilateral, or restricted to regional organisations. However the sheer growth in tourism, which has led to e-tickets, on-line visa applications, and outsourcing by overworked diplomats, is heightening pressure for faster progress. Countries or regions which can offer tourists a better deal will get more of them.

What therefore can be done? The effort by SADC, to introduce a single visa which would encourage visitors from outside the region to enjoy facilities in more than one member country, suggests one way forward. This is also the pattern of the European Union, with its Schengen visa which enables a visitor from outside to visit 26 European countries, although not the United Kingdom or Cyprus. As proposed above, the Commonwealth could facilitate arrangements covering two or more regional groupings which could provide a mutual recognition regime. But this would also require enhanced confidence in security cooperation between large numbers of states, and reliable IT back-up.

There are other ways forward, available to individual states. Consultation in Barbados, for example, revealed an interest in using a valid entry visa issued by the United Kingdom, Canada or South Africa as being acceptable for entry to Barbados. This solution had been adopted by Malta, prior to joining the Schengen area: Schengen visas were considered as valid for entry to Malta. The same method is currently adopted by non-Schengen EU member states such as Croatia and Bulgaria. The United Kingdom has a Trusted Traveller scheme involving persons from the United States, Australia, Canada and Japan and is collaborating with selected friendly non-Commonwealth states on a global entry visa scheme. The disadvantage for the United Kingdom in not being part of the EU's Schengen treaty has been much discussed by the UK media in 2013, because it has meant that high-spending Chinese tourists have preferred to come to Paris and other European destinations rather than London.

<u>Conclusions</u>

It is recommended that the proposed Standing Committee share progress and best practice with regard to tourist visas and relevant IT, air passenger information and biometrics, assist the Commonwealth Secretariat in negotiation of at least one exemplary agreement between regional organisations, and encourage higher standards in border security. Of particular value to tourists, and travel agents who help them, would be a commitment to a faster turnaround in response to visa applications. The Ramphal Institute has not researched variations in visa

delays but is informed anecdotally that they can run into several weeks and a "Commonwealth clearance commitment", for a faster turnaround, would assist many.[6]

7 Travel on official business

Definitions of what constitutes travel on official business, or who in this context can be described as "official", vary between Commonwealth countries. At their most extensive, definitions of "officials" can include not only government servants and diplomats, but also members of parliament, senior judges, vice-chancellors, senior military, and other categories. Sporting, local government, cultural and other delegations are among those who may be considered to be travelling "on official business." At the restrictive end, however, UK civil servants will normally travel abroad on their own passports, obtaining their own visas, except where invited by another government, with an official programme in which they must participate, when they are deemed to be "on official business". Ramphal Commissioners were told in several capitals that because senior public servants are rated as low security risks it was justifiable to provide a special regime for them. Some countries, such as Barbados, provide visa waivers for those travelling on diplomatic passports. Malta, although a member of the EU's Schengen agreement, has an agreement with Libya which provides for visa-free travel for those with diplomatic passports and the principle could be extended to Commonwealth states. Although not precisely comparable, there may be scope for pre-accreditation of humanitarian or emergency teams, to avoid delay when a Commonwealth country is hit by a hurricane or other natural disaster. Another special category are staff above a certain level in the inter-governmental Commonwealth organisations – Secretariat, Foundation and Commonwealth of Learning – for there is nothing comparable to a UN passport in the Commonwealth. Ramphal Commissioners thought it appropriate to introduce a visa-free regime for senior Commonwealth officials travelling on Commonwealth business.

Consultations showed that, as in the other fields covered by the terms of reference, there is no consensus in favour of a Commonwealth-wide scheme to facilitate travel on official business. Countries such as Australia, Canada and India, would be unlikely to support one and Malaysia, Bangladesh and Pakistan could have reservations in the light of current problems. In the circumstances any prospects for movement here lie in bilateral arrangements, such as the 2013 agreement for visa-free travel between Nigeria and South Africa, noted earlier; in agreements between regional organisations which cover officials, however defined; and in an attempt to define what counts as travel on official business for Commonwealth governments which wish to ease movement for such priority groups.

<u>Conclusions</u>

It is recommended that the Commonwealth Secretariat's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division produce a model agreement for states wishing to enter into bilateral arrangements covering those travelling on official business, taking account of the precedent from Nigeria and South Africa; that the proposed Standing Committee, working with the Secretariat, investigate a) the potential for agreed definitions of travel on official business among sympathetic states, and put forward such definitions to regional organisations of

[6] Mr Phil Duffy, Director for Visas and Migration at the UK Home Office, advised Dr Frendo that it might be possible to achieve response in a week for a Commonwealth traveller.

Commonwealth interest for their consideration and b) the scope for pre-accrediting persons or organisations to provide faster humanitarian and emergency support to Commonwealth states which have suffered from natural disasters; and that the coming Heads of Government Meeting in Sri Lanka approve in principle a visa-free regime for key international officials working for the three intergovernmental Commonwealth organisations.

8 Other matters

The Ramphal Institute and three distinguished Ramphal Commissioners have stuck closely to the three terms of reference in their consultations and research. However, inevitably, other issues were raised by governments. These included fears that security may be compromised by liberalisation in any category (eg that terrorists might enter India in the guise of business people), hostility in Jamaica and Sierra Leone to the UK's prisoner deportation policies, severe concerns about illegal migration in the context of the difficulty of monitoring overstaying tourists, and a desire in some countries to see easier visa regimes for sports people and students. The issue of overstaying is not only resonant in the UK, but in South Africa and other states also, which are closely watching the UK's controversial £3000 bond proposal. There was also a widespread desire to see a faster turnaround in visa clearance by the UK and Canada.

Conclusions

It would be premature for the Heads of Government Meeting in Colombo to comment on issues beyond the three issues referred to the Ramphal Institute – business travel, tourism and travel on official business – given the difficulty of reaching consensus, and the significance for the Commonwealth in achieving modest, initial movement in these three areas. If a Standing Committee is established for the next four years, to assist progress here, it could in the light of experience recommend cooperation in other areas of importance to governments.

9 Recommendations

A: Statement

Heads of Government in Sri Lanka should declare that it is the aim of the Commonwealth to promote easier movement for its citizens in bona fide travel between member countries, subject to proper concerns for sovereignty and national security. In this intention it is aware of the need to increase the value of Commonwealth membership for citizens, to demonstrate that the Commonwealth is a unique global family, and to promote the tourism, trade, investment and prosperity of all its nations.

In making this Statement, Commonwealth leaders would be setting out an aspiration, not committing to an unrealistic "one-size-fits-all" visa regime for 54 member states for which there is no consensus. But what this Statement could lead to would be gradual, pilot, and other easements, bilateral and multilateral, facilitated by the Commonwealth, working in conjunction with other agencies and technical developments in 21st century travel for legitimate travellers. It reflects the findings by the Ramphal Institute of substantial goodwill, among the sample of governments directly consulted, for some bilateral, regional and Commonwealth-wide progress, and recognition that the Commonwealth can give an appropriate stimulus.

B: Standing Committee on Easier Movement between Commonwealth States
To further implementation of the Statement, the Secretary-General should constitute a Ministerial Standing Committee on Easier Movement between Commonwealth States, with a duration lasting up to the scheduled Heads of Government Meeting in Mauritius in 2015.

This Ministerial Standing Committee would oversee the exchange of information between member states on visa changes, report to two CHOGMs, propose combined methods of facilitating travel such as the use of pre-aircraft boarding clearance and the use of biometric passports, and have a particular care for the interests of smaller states not widely represented in other capitals, and encourage the developments set out from **C** below. It is recommended that the SCEMCS should include member states currently using the APEC Business Card, the SAARC business exemption scheme, and the EU's Schengen visa, and representatives of regional bodies with significant Commonwealth membership. It should be open to the Committee to include in membership the Commonwealth Business Council, and to consult IT and border security experts. The Committee should limit its oversight over the four years to business travel, to tourist travel, and to travel on official business, but in its final report should recommend whether, in the light of its experience with them, there is scope for further Commonwealth cooperation in other fields. It has been suggested to the Ramphal Institute that, if there is forward movement in the designated fields, it could subsequently be worth looking at visa facilitation for sporting, academic, student and organised youth travellers.

C: Business
The Ministerial Standing Committee, with the Commonwealth Secretariat, should examine with APEC and its Business Mobility Group whether the APEC Business Travel Card might be extended to other Commonwealth states which wish to join; a similar approach should be made to the IOR-ARC if it goes ahead with its plan for an IOR-ARC Card. Should such extensions to other Commonwealth members not be acceptable to APEC or the IOR-ARC, it is recommended that the Ministerial Standing Committee should pilot and trial a Commonwealth variant, which could also allow multiple entry over three years to pre-accredited senior business people.

It is suggested that information on arrangements designed to facilitate business travel should be shared among Commonwealth governments. If the APEC/IOR-ARC options are unavailable it is recommended that the Ministerial Standing Committee should constitute a subcommittee, chaired by a Minister from one of the six Commonwealth governments using the APEC Card, to trial a comparable Commonwealth Business Card; if the trial is successful, the Standing Committee and Commonwealth Secretariat could negotiate access for Commonwealth Business Card users to the European Union, and its Schengen Area, and to other regional groupings. Administrative, IT and security support would need to be robust (see **F** below).

D: Tourism
Commonwealth governments should aspire to provide a faster turnaround for visa applications for visitors coming on holiday. This could be described as a "Commonwealth clearance commitment." The Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division at the Commonwealth Secretariat should devise and offer a model bilateral agreement for states to use to facilitate

the movement of tourists between them. Where interstate traffic is heavy, the model of the Nigeria-UK Memorandum of Understanding, with its regular meetings of officials in alternate capitals, may be a valuable precedent.

Many countries now provide on the spot visa purchase for arrivals, and border agencies have advance airline access to information about visitors who cannot be accepted on security grounds. The proposed "Commonwealth clearance commitment" – perhaps a commitment to provide a response within one or two weeks, as interpreted by different governments – should not be confused with any attempt to introduce a "Commonwealth lane" for arrivals at a border. A "Commonwealth lane" for passport-holders would be unviable. But individual governments could gain credit, and more Commonwealth tourists, if they were able to advertise such a visa clearance commitment. All governments would be well advised to look at their visa arrangements from the customer viewpoint.

E: Travel on official business

The Standing Committee should seek consensus on definitions of official business travel, as accepted by a majority of member states, and bring these guidelines to the attention of regional organisations. It must be accepted that "official travellers", like senior business people using the APEC Card, may need advance security clearance. The Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division at the Commonwealth Secretariat should draw up a model bilateral agreement, using such examples as the recent agreement on visa-free travel for officials travelling between Nigeria and South Africa. Heads of Government, aware that there is a United Nations passport for UN officials, may consider that it is time to introduce visa-free travel within the Commonwealth for officials above a certain level at the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Foundation and Commonwealth of Learning who are travelling on Commonwealth business.

There is a strong argument for speeding official travel, in the interests of Commonwealth cooperation, and even modest progress in this field will benefit governments. While some senior officials in the intergovernmental Commonwealth bodies, on secondment from their governments, carry diplomatic passports, there are others who do not; in the circumstances a special visa regime for senior Commonwealth officials is justifiable. The Standing Committee could also look at the needs of a special class of non-governmental officials – those working for disaster relief and humanitarian organisations, whose instant support for Commonwealth states hit by natural disaster can be crucial. They could be seen as undertaking a kind of official business travel.

F: Security and IT

The Commonwealth Secretariat, assisted by the Standing Committee, should provide a confidential advisory service on IT and visa and border security to member states requesting assistance. This will involve collaboration with governments with advanced security systems, and expert IT firms, and could be funded from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation.

This recommendation is crucial, for all states have an interest in establishing robust security systems at their borders, designed to protect them, and to separate bona fide travellers from criminals or those who would do them harm. Further, with improvements in IT links between

airlines and border agencies, and biometric passports and other innovations, time-consuming traditional visa checks are being overtaken. However administrative and IT capacities vary widely around the Commonwealth, and the lack of sufficient robustness or slow checking procedures may inhibit the growth of effective alliances for visa and border security purposes. In encouraging progress in this area the Standing Committee and Commonwealth Secretariat should avoid the pitfalls that can befall large-scale IT schemes, and prioritise assistance to smaller and poorer states, to enable them to meet higher standards at modest cost.

G: Regional organisations

The Standing Committee and Commonwealth Secretariat should keep in touch with developments in key regional organisations in which Commonwealth states are represented (eg SADC with its UNIVISA scheme, CARICOM with Caripass, the EU with Schengen). Specifically they should monitor the IT and management aspects, the likely impact on Commonwealth states outside that regional body of greater harmonisation, and seek to broker an exemplary agreement between two geographical separate bodies (eg CARICOM and ECOWAS) for mutual recognition which might cover business travel, tourism and travel on official business. In the narrower field of business travel they should investigate possible harmonisation between APEC and the planned IOR-ARC Cards.

More ambitious schemes of regional collaboration depend on building trust between states in the areas of security and administration, and in meeting the concerns of public opinion. The Commonwealth can help here, if recommendation **F** is adopted. It is recognised that regional organisations have faced challenges in agreeing and implementing schemes covering all of their member states; it is noteworthy that the EU has not yet achieved this with the Schengen agreement. Nonetheless the Commonwealth should seek to facilitate an agreement between two regional bodies, following high level inquiries which demonstrate a willingness to negotiate. Any success would illustrate the Commonwealth's cutting-edge role as a laboratory for global cooperation.

Appendices

a) **Biographies of Ramphal Commissioners**
b) **Persons seen by Ramphal Commissioners**
c) **The APEC Business Travel Card; information collected by Dr Raluca Nagy and Ms Ana Bleahu**
d) **Existing visa recognitions among Commonwealth states for business and tourist visas; these tables are not comprehensive, were the product of online and other research, where information was sometimes contradictory, and should not be relied on by travel agents. The Ramphal Institute and the authors, Dr Raluca Nagy and Ms Ana Bleahu, apologise in advance for any errors or changes which have taken place since their study**
e) **Sample initial briefings provided for the three Commissioners prior to their country visits, including Barbados, India, Tanzania. Dr Raluca Nagy and Ms Ana Bleahu prepared 15 briefings in all, and correlated the visa requirements of each of them with those of other member states.**
f) **Glossary of acronyms**

Appendix A

Biographies of Ramphal Commissioners

Ambassador Farooq Sobhan

Ambassador Farooq Sobhan has had a long and distinguished career in the diplomatic service of his country, Bangladesh, rising to be head of the service as Foreign Secretary from 1995-1997 and Special Envoy of the Prime Minister from 1997-1999. During his career he served as Ambassador/High Commissioner to India, China, Malaysia and the United Nations. He was also the Special Envoy of his country's Caretaker Government with the rank and status of a Cabinet Minister on visits to Washington and the United Nations in May 2007. Ambassador Sobhan is currently President and Chief Executive Officer of the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute which was established in October 2000 as an independent research institute, committed to the development of the private sector in Bangladesh. The Institute also promotes dialogue between the Government and the private sector as well as regional cooperation in South Asia.

The Hon Dr Michael Frendo

The Hon Dr Michael Frendo was Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta from 2004-2008. He was a member of the Maltese Parliament for over 23 years, where he served in several Ministerial posts. He recently stepped down as Speaker of the Parliament. Dr Frendo has been closely involved in Commonwealth affairs throughout his career and was a member and later Chair of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) and Chair of Commonwealth Connects, the Commonwealth ICT Programme for Development. He has been a member of the European Convention on the Future of Europe and a signatory to its Draft Constitution Treaty as well as a signatory to the Treaty of Lisbon which superseded it and which came into force in December 2009. Dr Frendo has published numerous books on European affairs and also writes on legal issues.

Dr James Jonah

Dr James Jonah served the United Nations in a variety of posts for over three decades, first entering the service in 1970 as Political Adviser in the Office of the Secretary General. He was in that post until 1979 when he was appointed Assistant Secretary-General for personnel services (1979-82) and then was in charge of Field Operations and External Activities (1982-87) and for Special Political Questions (1991-1992). He retired as the Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs in 1994. After leaving the UN he was appointed by his own country, Sierra Leone, as Permanent Representative at the UN from 1996-1998. He then became Minister of Finance, Development and Economic Planning (1998-2001). He is currently a Senior Fellow at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Affairs at the City University of New York. He has published several books on international issues as well as a biography.

Appendix B

Persons seen by Ramphal Commissioners in official consultations, May-July 2013

Ambassador Farooq Sobhan

Canada

Senator Hugh Segal, Special Envoy for Commonwealth Renewal and member, Eminent Persons Group, 2010-2011; Mr Mark Davidson, Director-General, International and Intergovernmental Relations; Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Canada; Mr Robert Stephenson, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Canada (responsible for security-related matters); Mr Terry Brown, Director, Asia-Pacific and Americas, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Canada; Ms Tina Matos, Director, Document and Visa Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Canada; Mr Boniface Kabore, Senior Policy Analyst, International and Intergovernmental Relations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada; Ms Kate Flounder, Policy Advisor (Commonwealth), Democracy, Commonwealth and Francophone Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada; Ms Joanne Warren and two senior officials of the Conference Board of Canada (CBOC)

Bangladesh

Mr Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary; Hon Mr M.A.K Alamgir, Home Minister; Mr Mushtaq Ahmed, Home Secretary of Bangladesh; Dr Kamaluddin Ahmed, Additional Secretary (Political Affairs), Ministry of Home; and Mr Shafiqul Islam, Additional Secretary (Immigration and Security); various contacts with Bangladesh High Commissioners and diplomats and Commonwealth High Commissioners and diplomats serving in Bangladesh

Malaysia

Dato' Rohana Ramli, Acting Secretary-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ms Osmawani Osman, Principal Assistant, Multilateral Division; Mr Mohhommed Radzi Harun, Head of the International Affairs Division, Attorney-General's Chambers, and other officials; Dato' Sri Abdul Rahim Bin Mohamad Radzi, Secretary-General, Ministry of Home Affairs; with Mr Sakib Bin Kusmi, Deputy Director-General of Immigration, Immigration department of Malaysia and officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs;

Australia

Ms Michelle Pearce, Director, Labour Market Branch, Migration and Policy Division and Mr Ben Meagher, Director, Visitor Policy, Education and Tourism Branch, Department of Immigration and Citizenship; Mr Martin Bowles, Permanent Secretary, Department of Immigration and Citizenship; meetings at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with: Ms Paula Watt, Director, Counter Terrorism Policy Section; Ms Janet Rawson, First Assistant Secretary, South and West Asia and; Middle East Division; Mr Noel Campbell, Assistant Secretary, International Organizations Branch; Mr Bassim Blazey, Assistant Secretary, Environmental Branch, Legal Division; Ms Melissa O'Rourke, Director, UN and Commonwealth Section, International Organizations Branch; at the Australian Chamber of Commerce and

Industry (ACCI), Mr Bryan Clark, Director, Trade and International Affairs; in Melbourne, Ms Freda Miriklis, President, International Federation of Business and Professional Women.

India

Hon Mr Salman Khurshid, Minister of External Affairs, with Mr Pavan Kapoor, Joint Secretary (UN Political); Mr Anil Goswamy, Union Home Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs; Mr A.R. Ghanshyam OSD (CPV and Hajj) and Dr Neena Malhotra, Joint Secretary (Passport and Visa) Ministry of External Affairs; H E Tariq Karim, Bangladesh High Commissioner in India

Pakistan

Dr Sartaj Aziz, Advisor for National Security and Foreign Affairs, with Mr Ayaz Muhammad Khan, Joint Secretary, Europe-I (responsible for the Commonwealth); Ambassador Tareq Fatemi, Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs; Mr Qaman Zaman Chaudhury, Secretary, Ministry of Interior

Hon Dr Michael Frendo

United Kingdom

HE Kamalesh Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary-General, with Simon Gimson (Head, Office of the Secretary-General) and Ram Venuprasad (Office of the Deputy Secretary-General); Rt Hon Frank Field MP; James Sharp, Deputy Director, Migration Directorate, Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP, Chair, Commons Home Affairs Committee; Richard Ottaway MP, Chair, Commons Foreign Affairs Committee; Phil Duffy, Director, Visas and Migration, Home Office

Barbados

The Hon Maxine P. McClean, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade; Senator the Hon Darcy Boyce, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister; Ms Gabrielle Springer, Permanent Secretary, Defence and Security; Immigration officials, including Mr Farrell, Deputy Chief Immigration Officer; Sir Shridath Ramphal (Commonwealth Secretary-General, 1975-1990); Sir Ronald Sanders, member Eminent Persons Group, 2010-2011

Jamaica

Hon Arnaldo Brown, State Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade; Ms Jennifer McDonald, Chief Executive Officer, Passport, Immigration and Citizenship Agency (PICA); they were accompanied by officials including Delita McCallum, Foreign Service Officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, and Karl St. C Hamilton, Director, International Security Relations Unit, Ministry of National Security; the Hon P J Patterson, former Prime Minister and Chair, Ramphal Commission on Migration and Development, 2009-2011

Malta

Hon Joseph Muscatt, Prime Minister; Dr George Vella, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Mr Paul Demajo Albanese, Head, Central Visa Unit, Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security

Dr James Jonah

Sierra Leone

Mr E.B.Osho-Coker, Secretary to the President, with officials from the consular, administration and finance sections of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation;

Ghana

Mr Kwesi Qaurtey, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, chaired a meeting with staff from the legal and consular departments of the Foreign Ministry

Nigeria

Mr Martin Uhumoibi, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; consular staff and immigration staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

South Africa

Mr Jackie McKay, Deputy Director-General, Immigration Services, Department of Home Affairs, assisted by Ms Maria Marques

Tanzania

Mr Nathaniel D. Kaaya, Minister Plenipotentiary, Multilateral Department

Appendix C

The APEC Business Travel Card

By Raluca Nagy and Ana Bleahu[7]

What is the APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC)?

A card that enables business people to visit APEC economies only with the passport and ABTC, WITHOUT A VISA

Which states participate in the ABTC Scheme? - 18 countries (6 Commonwealth members)

Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, China, Hong Kong (China), Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, **Malaysia**, Mexico, **New Zealand**, **Papua New Guinea**, Peru, The Philippines, **Singapore**, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, and Vietnam

Who can get an ABTC?

Passport holder of a participating economy
Business traveller withtrade and investment activities in the region

Who issues an ABTC?

Government/Authorities of each APEC state

For how long is the Card valid?

The Card is valid for 3 years from the date of issue and it allows multiple short term entries for a minimum of 59 days stay for each visit in participating countries

"APEC Lane" for border processing

ABTC holders can use special processing lanes at the airports

[7] This information was gathered from the Internet

1. Short description

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Business Travel Card scheme (APEC Business Travel Card - ABTC) is an initiative that commenced took effect in March 1999. The ABTC allows business travellers pre-cleared, facilitated short-term entry to participating member states. The APEC Business Travel Card was developed in response to the need for business people to gain streamlined entry to the economies of the Asia-Pacific region. The card contributes to APEC's goal of free and open trade within the Asia-Pacific region.

The ABTC scheme is managed by the APEC Business Mobility Group (BMG), one of the sub-fora working groups of the APEC Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI). The BMG was established in 1997 when the APEC made the facilitation of business travel a priority. The role of the BMG is to enhance the mobility of business people in order to facilitate trade and investment activity in the APEC region. The BMG does not issue an ABTC; the card is issued by the Immigration Authority in the home state of the traveller.

The ABTC removes the need to apply individually for visas or entry permits, saving valuable time, and allows multiple short term entries for a minimum of 59 days stay each visit in participating states during the three years the card is valid. Current efforts are being made by APEC to consider extending the validity period of the ABTC to five years. Card holders also benefit from faster immigration processing on arrival via access to fast-track entry and exit through special APEC lanes at major airports in participating states.

The ABTC helps to enhance border integrity and security in participating states by providing benefits to border agencies, as it increases the number of low risk travellers: each applicant is checked against “watch lists” of other participating countries.

At the end of 2010, there were 88,421 active ABTC holders in the APEC region. 27.6% of the total ABTC applicants in 2010 were repeat applicants[8]. Since the creation of the scheme in 1997, data indicate that the growth rate has continued to accelerate steadily. In 2007 the increase in applications doubled, compared with the year before. By March 2008, the number of business people using cards was more than 34,000, with the highest share reported by Australia (nearly 40% of the total amount issued).

2. Participant countries

18 of the 21 APEC economies fully participate in the APEC Business Travel Card scheme (the 6 Commonwealth participants are highlighted):

- **Australia**
- **Brunei Darussalam**
- China
- Chile
- Hong Kong
- Korea
- Indonesia

8 see *Reducing Business Travel Costs: The Success of APEC’s Business Mobility Initiative*

- Japan
- Peru
- The Philippines
- **Malaysia**
- Mexico
- **New Zealand**
- **Papua New Guinea**
- **Singapore**
- Chinese Taipei
- Thailand
- Vietnam

The remaining three APEC economies (the Russian Federation, **Canada** and the United States of America) are currently transitional members of the scheme. Transitional members do not offer reciprocal arrangements for entry. They only provide fast track immigration processing lanes.

3. Eligibility

In order to apply for the card one needs to be a business person who:

- Is a passport holder of a participating state i.e. citizen;
- Travels frequently to conduct trade and investment activities in the APEC region; and
- Has not been convicted of a criminal offence.

Some states require additional information and may impose additional eligibility criteria.

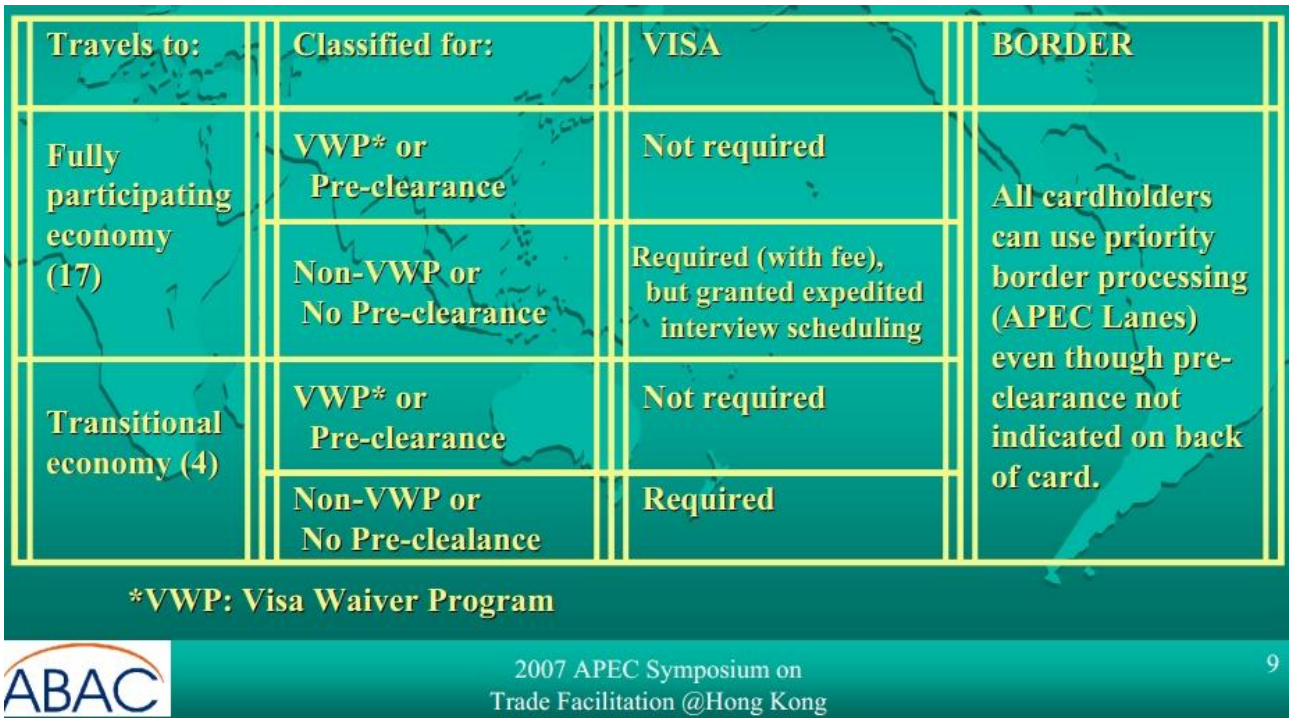
For example: to be eligible for an APEC Business Travel Card, an Australian applicant must:

- Demonstrate frequent travel for business purposes
- Be either:
    - a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Chief Financial Officer (CFO), board member, regional/country head or owner/director of a business entity
    - an employee nominated by one of the above people in their business entity (except a board member)
- Be employed by a registered business entity, or Australian-based peak business body, engaged in international trade or investment between APEC member economies which:
    - has been certified by an approved body or
    - is identified in the current Forbes Global 2000 business list or
    - has received an Export Market Development Grant from Austrade during the previous five years or
    - has been a national finalist in the Australian Export Awards (supported by Austrade and ACCI) during the previous five years.

4. Procedure

The card is issued by the Immigration Authority in the home country of the traveller. When all information (variable from country to country) is supplied with an application to the specified body of the Immigration Authority, eligibility assessments should be finalised within 6 to 8 weeks. The ABTC Client Service Framework provides a best practice benchmark by which states can self-assess their existing regimes.

Once the eligibility assessment is finalised, the other states participating in the APEC Business Travel Card scheme will vet the application. This second stage of processing is commonly referred to as the **pre-clearance process**. Each APEC government retains its sovereign right to refuse pre-clearance to an applicant. Most states are working to finalise the pre-clearance process within two to three months. In some member states one can track online the status of one's clearances from other countries.



(Source: http://www.tid.gov.hk/english/trade_relations/tradefora/files/theme4_3_japan.pdf

Note: meanwhile Mexico went from transitional to fully participating member)

As the BMG continually works to improve the ABTC scheme, priority processing was implemented in 2008, whereby ABTC applicants could nominate up to five economies to which they seek pre-clearance as a priority and upon which an interim card could be issued. The interim card can be used while one waits for the remaining economies to finalise their pre-clearance process.

The BMG is also currently investigating the potential of a biometrically-enabled ABTC (ABTC Smartcard). The APEC Regional Movement Alert System (RMAS) allows real time validation of passport data between participating economies, thereby enhancing security at the point of departure without impeding other travellers' movements. Australia, New Zealand and the

United States have successfully implemented the system and more members are expected to participate in the future.

5. Advantages

In an assessment by BMG, ABTC has been rated very successful in reducing transaction costs related to cross-border business travel in the APEC region over the 2007-2010 period. Business travel costs for ABTC holders were reduced by 38% in the 12- month period between March-July 2010 and March-July 2011 as a result of the ABTC scheme, which translates to total savings of USD $3.7 million.

ABTC holders, engaged in cross-border business travel in the APEC region, experienced the following total reductions in transaction costs:

- 43.3% reduction in time costs to complete visa applications (savings of USD $272.214);
- 52.4% reduction in time costs to complete immigration processing (savings of USD $1,905,202);
- 27.8% reduction in fees spent on visa applications (savings of USD $1,520,380).

6. Commonwealth countries specificities

Australia

Australia has the largest number of active ABTC holders (27.5%, namely 25,165, of the total number at the end of 2010). As a full participating member of the scheme, Australian citizens who are frequent bona fide business travellers can apply for a card through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship by post for AUD$200. Foreign holders of the card can visit Australia visa-free for 90 days, and special fast-track lanes are available for them at Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Darwin, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney airports.

Since 16 November, 2011 Australia has expanded eligibility and introduced new eligibility criteria regarding ABTC (http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/pdf/new-arrangements-aust-applying-abtc.pdf). The change in policy is particularly beneficial to small and medium-sized businesses that did not qualify under prior criteria.

Discussion:

Each applicant must have made at least four business trips to other APEC member countries in the 12 months preceding the application – this might be a bit of a tight criterion.

In Australia, owning an ABTC card may result in the cancellation of an existing visa.

Canada

Canada is currently only a transitional member of the scheme. Transitional members do not offer reciprocal arrangements. Although not a full participant of the scheme, card holders are able to use special service lanes at major international airports upon arrival in Canada, but are still subject to the regular entry/visa requirements.

Discussion: Possibility of expanding into full participating member could be envisaged.

Malaysia
A Payment of RM100 is charged for each APEC card issued.

New Zealand
New Zealand citizens can apply for an ABTC if they travel frequently on business and are of a good character through Immigration New Zealand for NZD$150.

As a full participant of the scheme, foreign cardholders can enter New Zealand visa-free for up to 90 days.

No specific information on the APEC card could be found so far related to Brunei, Papua New Guinea or Singapore.

7. Issues to be raised regarding the expansion / introduction of ABTC (or of a similar instrument) to Commonwealth members

One debatable aspect regarding the possibility of introducing an equivalent card for Commonwealth states is the pre-clearance process which might be lengthy when it comes to 54 states. The interim card, with pre-clearance to a maximum of five economies, might be a solution to speeding-up the process. Twenty per cent of the ABTC holders indicated that they would most like the validity period of the ABTC to be extended, closely followed by shortening the time it takes to obtain an ABTC (18%)[9]

Card holders should not use the ABTC to travel to countries for which they already hold a visa. In some countries this may result in the cancellation of the existing visa. Travellers should seek advice from their immigration service provider about the potential implications of entry using an ABTC when they hold a visa for the destination country.

8. Sources

http://travel.apec.org/abtc-summary.html
http://www.apec.org/about-us/about-apec/business-resources/apec-business-travel-card.aspx
http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/apec/
http://totallyexpat.com/global-immigration-news/australia-australia-expands-apec-business-travel-card-eligibility/
http://www.immigration.govt.nz/apec/
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http://www.tid.gov.hk/english/trade_relations/tradefora/files/theme4_3_japan.pdf
Reducing Business Travel Costs: The Success of APEC's Business Mobility Initiatives, APEC Policy Support Unit, October 2011

9 see Reducing Business Travel Costs: The Success of APEC's Business Mobility Initiative

Appendix D

Sample initial briefings provided for Commissioners visiting Barbados, India and Tanzania

BARBADOS - COUNTRY BRIEFING

By Raluca Nagy and Ana Bleahu

This is an initial country briefing for Dr Michael Frendo, Ramphal Commissioner, based on the latest available data gathered from the internet as well as inputs from other sources.

It focuses on the current state of the visa system (tourist and business visas) as between Barbados and other Commonwealth members. The report comprises three parts: 1) Travelling from Commonwealth countries to Barbados, 2) Travelling from Barbados to Commonwealth countries, 3) Issues to be flagged regarding Commonwealth members' tourism and business visas to and from Barbados.

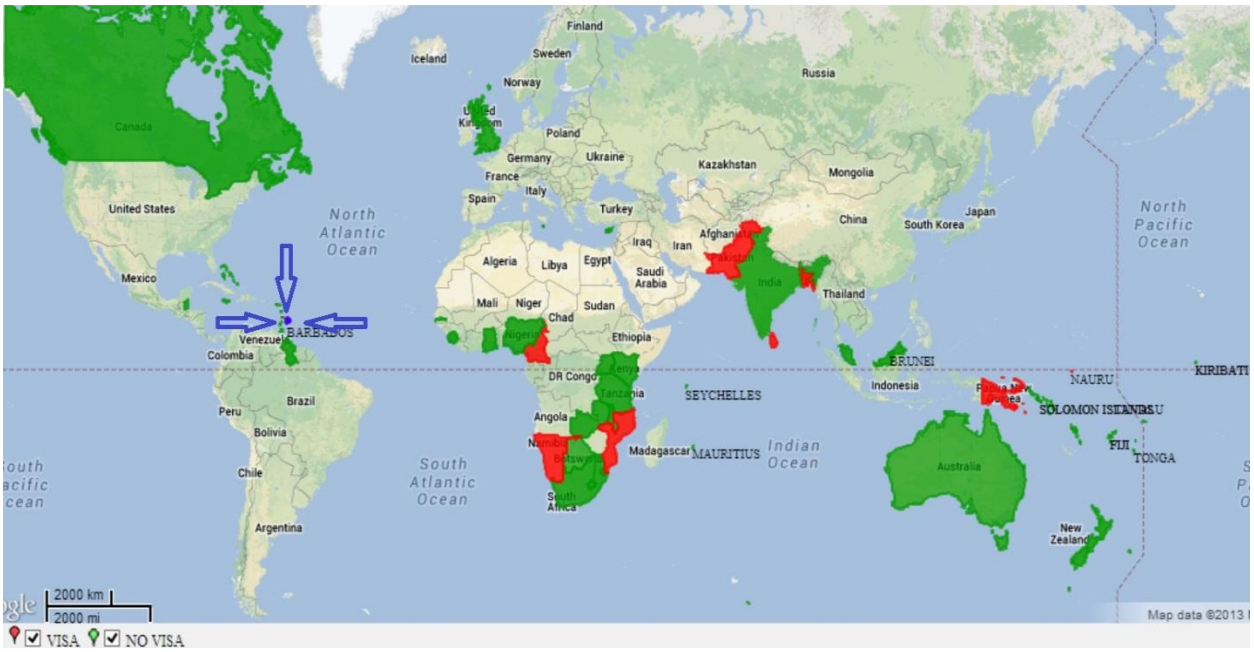
1) TRAVELLING FROM COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES TO BARBADOS

There are three different categories of entries for Commonwealth nationals travelling to Barbados:

1. CARICOM countries
   Barbados, together with another 12 Commonwealth member states, namely Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago are members of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and benefit from CARICOM free movement.
   Travellers staying for no more than three (3) months (Guyana), six (6) months (Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Jamaica), eight (8) months (Bahamas) do not need a visa for Barbados. Nationals of Grenada can stay for an unlimited period.

2. EU short-stay visa waiver for Cyprus and Malta.
   Short-stay visa waiver signed between Barbados and the European Community on 28 May, 2009. Nationals of both countries may visit the other country for a stay of up to three (3) months in any six month period.

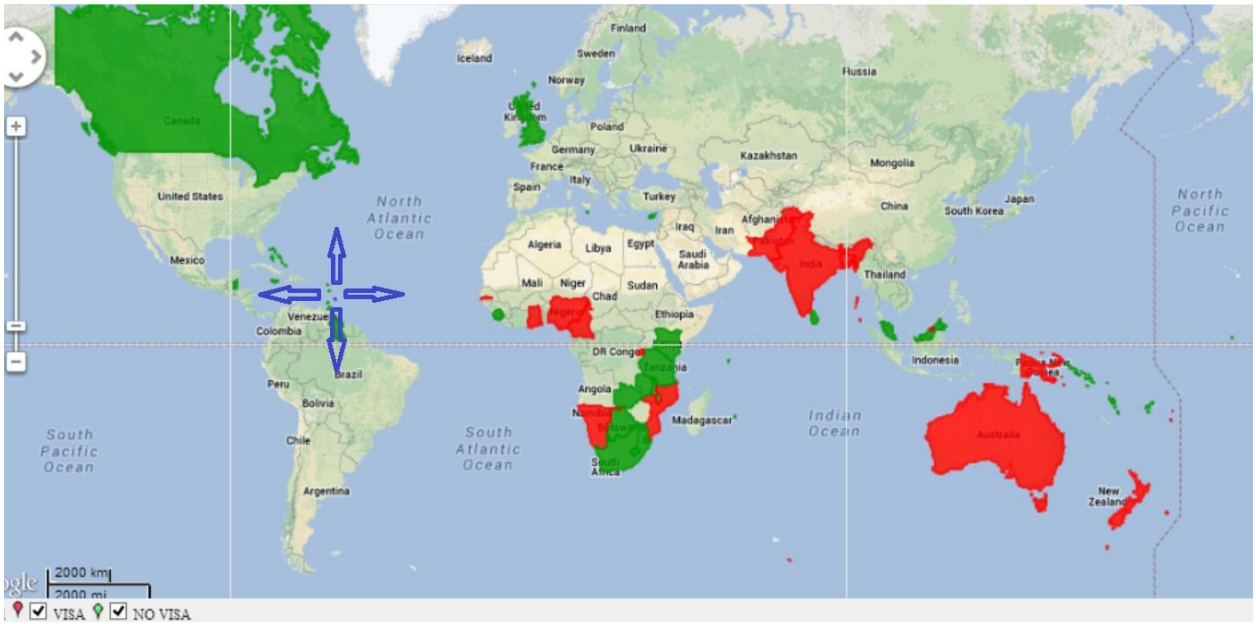
3. Commonwealth country nationals who can stay for a maximum of six (6) months in Barbados: Canada, Fiji, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore Solomon, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Zambia.



Map no. 1: Visa requirements for foreign nationals entering in Barbados.

2) TRAVELLING FROM BARBADOS TO SELECTED COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

The visa requirements for Barbados nationals travelling to selected Commonwealth members are as follows:



Map no. 2: Visa requirements for Barbados nationals.

There are visa requirements for Barbados nationals for: Mozambique, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Gambia, Ghana, New Zealand, Nigeria, Tonga, Cameroon, India, Nauru, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, and Tuvalu.

COUNTRY	VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR BARBADIAN NATIONALS TRAVELLING ABROAD	VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS ENTERING BARBADOS	TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA	No visa required Maximum stay six (6) months	No visa required CARICOM country	CARICOM
BAHAMAS	No visa required Maximum stay eight (8) months	No visa required CARICOM country	CARICOM
BELIZE	No visa required Maximum stay of six (6) months	No visa required CARICOM Country Nationals of Belize can stay for a maximum of six (6) months without a visa	CARICOM
DOMINICA	No visa required	No visa required CARICOM Country	CARICOM
GRENADA	No visa required Unlimited stay	No visa required CARICOM Country Grenadians can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	CARICOM
GUYANA	No visa required Maximum stay is three (3) months	No visa required CARICOM Country	CARICOM

JAMAICA	No visa required Maximum stay of six (6) months	No visa required CARICOM Country Nationals of Jamaica can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	CARICOM
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO	No visa required Maximum stay of six (6) months	No visa required CARICOM Country Nationals of Trinidad and Tobago can stay for a maximum of Six (6) months	CARICOM
BOTSWANA	No visa required Maximum of ninety (90) days	No visa required Nationals of Botswana can stay for a maximum of sixty (60) days without a visa	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
CANADA	No visa required Diplomats on transfer – one Entry Application Form & One (1) photo	No visa required Valid passports with effect March, 2004 Canadians can stay for a maximum of six (6) without a visa	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
FIJI	No visa required Maximum stay of four (4) months	No visa required Nationals of Fiji can stay for a Maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
KENYA	No visa required	No visa required	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
KIRIBATI	No visa required Maximum stay is twenty-eight (28) days	No visa required Nationals of Kiribati can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS

LESOTHO	No visa required Unlimited stay	No visa required Nationals of Lesotho can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
MALAWI	No visa required Maximum stay of ninety (90) days	No visa required Nationals of Malawi can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
MALAYSIA	No visa required Maximum stay of two (2)months and an Ex-- tension of one (1) month is applied	No visa required Nationals of Malaysia can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
MAURITIUS	No visa required Maximum stay of three (3) months	No visa required Nationals of Mauritius can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
MOZAMBIQUE	Visa required	Visa required	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
NAMIBIA	Visa required	Visa required	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
SEYCHELLES	No visa required Maximum stay of six (6) months	No visa required Nationals of Seychelles can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS

SIERRA LEONE	No visa required	No visa required Nationals of Sierra Leone can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
SINGAPORE	No visa required Maximum stay of thirty (30) days with extensions up to three (3) months	No Visa required Nationals of Singapore can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
SOLOMON ISLANDS	No visa required Maximum stay of three (3) months	No Visa required Nationals of Solomon Islands can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
SRI LANKA	Visa required as a tourist 2 Photos Invitation letter from Sri Lanka Completed visa form Visa Fee US $6.00 (International money order)	No visa required Nationals of Sri Lanka can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
SWAZILAND	No visa required Maximum stay of two 2) months	No Visa required Nationals of Swaziland can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
TANZANIA (United Republic of)	No visa required On arrival a visitor's pass is issued	No visa required Nationals of Tanzania can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
UGANDA	No visa required Maximum stay of six (6) months	No visa required Nationals of Uganda can stay for a period of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS

VANUATU	No visa required Maximum stay of thirty (30)days	No visa required Nationals of Vanuatu can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
ZAMBIA	No visa required	No visa required Nationals of Zambia can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	COMMONWEALTH COUNTRY NATIONALS
CYPRUS	No visa required	No visa required Short-stay visa waiver signed between Barbados and the European Community on May 28, 2009. Nationals of both countries may visit the other country for a stay of up to three (3) months in any six month period.	EU SHORT STAY VISA WAIVER
MALTA	No visa required	No visa required Short-stay visa waiver signed between Barbados and the European Community on May 28, 2009. Nationals of both countries may visit the other country for a stay of up to three (3) months in any six month period.	EU SHORT STAY VISA WAIVER
AUSTRALIA	Visa required Visa obtained through High Commission in Ottawa CAN $ 75.00 – Bank Draft to Australian High Commission 1 photograph necessary 1 application form Visa required	No visa required Australians can stay for a maximum six (6) months without a visa	NON-RECIPROCITY

BANGLADESH	Visa required Visa can be obtained from the High Commission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in Ottawa, Canada	No visa required Bangladeshis can stay for a maximum of six (6) months without a visa	NON-RECIPROCITY
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM	Visa required Visa obtained through the British High Commission	No visa required Nationals of Brunei can stay for a maximum six (6) months without a visa	NON-RECIPROCITY
GAMBIA	Visa required	No visa required Nationals of Gambia can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	NON-RECIPROCITY
GHANA	Visa required Visa obtained from Hon. Consul in Barbados Single visa fee is US $55/ Barbados $100 Multiple US $100/ BDS $200 4 photographs 1 original application form	No visa required Nationals of Ghana can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	NON-RECIPROCITY
NEW ZEALAND	Visa required Visa obtained through HC/Ottawa Visa fee is CAN $ 110.00 for all passports except for Official& Diplomatic on gov't. to gov't business 1 photograph 1 application form Visa required	No visa required. Nationals of New Zealand can stay for a maximum of six (6) months visa process in 3 weeks	NON-RECIPROCITY
NIGERIA	Visa required Visa obtained through Honorary Consul in Trinidad 2 photographs Original application form filed out in duplicate USD $31. (single entry) USD $41. (mult. Entry)	No visa required Nationals of Nigeria can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	NON-RECIPROCITY

	(No Fee attached for Ord., Official or Dip. Passports for Barbadians)		
TONGA	Visa required	No visa required Nationals of Tonga can stay for six (6) months	NON-RECIPROCITY
CAMEROON	Visa required 2 application Forms 2 photographs Visa fee US $65.22 for three (3) months (bank draft) Business: letter bearing financial responsibility Visitor: airline ticket, bank statement	Visa required Requirements at Embassy in Washington: Official or Diplomatic Passport 2 Application Forms 2 Photos Travel Itinerary Invitation Letter Diplomatic Note	RECIPROCITY
INDIA	Visa required Visa obtained through Embassy in Suriname Visa fee is USD $40 Bank draft is US $45. 2 photographs 1 application form	Visa required	RECIPROCITY
NAURU	Visa required	Visa required	RECIPROCITY
PAKISTAN	Visa required Visa obtained through HC/London (or Washington, D.C. Embassy) 2 photographs 1 application form Visa fee is £20.	Visa required	RECIPROCITY

PAPUA NEW GUINEA	Visa required Valid Passport 1 Completed app. 1 photo Diplomatic Note from Embassy	Visa required	RECIPROCITY
RWANDA	Visa required through Washington 2 Forms - signed by applicant 2 Photos Letter of invitation Single Entry: US $60. 00 Multiple Entry US $90.00 (Drafts) Yellow Fever Vac.	Visa required	RECIPROCITY
SOUTH AFRICA	No visa required Max. stay Thirty (30) days Over Thirty (30) days Visa Fee is US 47.00 (Draft)	No visa required Nationals of Barbados can stay for a maximum of thirty (30) days Nationals of South Africa can stay for a maximum of six (6) months	RECIPROCITY
TUVALU	No visa required	No visa required Nationals of Tuvalu can stay for a period of six (6) months	RECIPROCITY
UNITED KINGDOM	No visa required Maximum stay of six (6) months. Diplomats on transfer - 2 Entry forms and 2 photos	No visa required	RECIPROCITY

3) ISSUES TO BE FLAGGED REGARDING COMMONWEALTH MEMBERS TOURISM AND BUSINESS VISAS TO AND FROM BARBADOS

1. **Significant changes in the pipeline**

In February 2013, the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) Aviation Task Force (a committee established to facilitate air transportation into and throughout the Caribbean and to enhance air traffic) recommended a review of visa regimes in member countries in order to improve the visitor experience.

In addition to a single visa regime, the Task Force recommended a standardized entry and exit card– otherwise called immigration or ED card - across the Caribbean.

The CTO Aviation Task Force agreed that this best practice would be reviewed after its implementation for possible replication across the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) region and beyond.

On the other hand, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, (OECS) is in the process of establishing a single economic space and is expected to implement full clearance at the first point of entry into the sub-group.

In June 2013, Ministers of Transport for CARICOM member states recommended the reintroduction of the single domestic space.

2. **Reciprocity issues and bilateral visitor visa exemptions for Commonwealth states**
While Barbados grants visits without visa to citizens of many Commonwealth members, the reverse is not always the case (Australia, New Zealand, and most of the African countries: Ghana, Nigeria, and Gambia).
3. **The general Commonwealth access is not necessarily inferior to that of citizens from states which are members of regional bodies** (e.g. Caribbean Tourism Organization, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, CARICOM). However, citizens of six Commonwealth members (India, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Pakistan, and Cameroon) need visas for Barbados.

INDIA – COUNTRY BRIEFING

By Raluca Nagy and Ana Bleahu

This is an initial country briefing, for Ambassador Farooq Sobhan, Ramphal Commissioner, based on available data gathered from the internet.

It focuses on the current state of the visa system (business and tourist visas) between India and selected other Commonwealth members. The report comprises three parts: 1) Travelling from Commonwealth countries to India, 2) Travelling from India to Commonwealth countries, 3) Issues to be flagged regarding Commonwealth members' business and tourist visas to and from India.

1) TRAVELLING FROM SELECTED COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES TO INDIA

All citizens of Commonwealth member states are required to obtain a visa for India.
The SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES)[10] is an arrangement of visa facilitation among SAARC Member States, namely Afghanistan, **Bangladesh**, Bhutan, **India**, **Maldives**, Nepal, **Pakistan** and **Sri Lanka** (Commonwealth members highlighted).

Citizens of **New Zealand** and **Singapore** are given permission by the Government of India to obtain a tourist visa on arrival. This visa holds a maximum validity of 30 days with a single entry facility and can be obtained from immigration points at Delhi and Mumbai.

Pitching for a liberalised visa regime among Indian Ocean Rim (IOR[11]) members, India is considering a visa on arrival facility (for the moment it is gratis) for citizens from **Mauritius**.[12] There is no Mauritius Tourist Visa for Indian citizens staying up to 15 days, but a Business Visa is required. It is worth keeping an eye on possible IOR free movement agreements, since 12 Commonwealth members are part of it: Australia, Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.

Types, Costs and Other Parameters for Business and Tourist Visas

Business Visa

A business visa is granted to those who do business in India such as sales, or who establish contacts on behalf of a company outside India. Indian business visas are normally granted for 6 or 12 months. However, multiple-entry for up to two years validity may be granted. Irrespective of the duration of visa validity, on each visit the maximum period of stay in India is limited to 6 months (180 days) only. The duration of the visa is at the sole discretion of the issuing authority.

10 For more information see SVES document

[11] For more information see IOR document

12 http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-07-04/news/40371812_1_arrival-facility-visa-indian-ocean-rim-association

Business Visa Fees

Gratis Business Visa (Commonwealth Members)	
1	Bangladesh
2	Jamaica
3	Maldives
4	Mauritius
5	South Africa

Business Visa Fees for Australia, New Zealand and Nigeria							
	Country Name						
		Visa Fee GBP (£) Up to One Year	**Service Charge**	**Total**	**Visa Fee GBP (£) More than One Year**	**Service Charge**	**Total**
1	Australia	147	10.2	157.2	202	10.2	212.2
2	New Zealand	92	10.2	102.2	142	10.2	152.2
3	Nigeria	197	10.2	207.2	252	10.2	262.2

Business Visa Fees for Pakistan and Sri Lanka					
Passport	**Validity**	**Fees GBP (£)**	**Additional Charges (£)**	**VFS Service Charge (£)**	**Total(£)**
Sri Lankan	Multiple Entry – 30 Days	18	10	10.2	38.2
	Multiple Entry – 90 Days	27	10	10.2	47.2
	Single Entry – 90 Days	19	10	10.2	39.2
Pakistani	All Visa Categories	2.5	10	10.2	22.7

Visa Fees for Other Commonwealth Members				
Type of Visa	**Validity**	**Fees GBP (£)**	**VFS Service Charge (£)**	**Total (£)**
Business	Up to 6 months	57	10.2	67.2
	One year (maximum stay of 180 days per visit)	82	10.2	92.2

Tourist Visa

A tourist visa is granted to those who visit India for tourism. Tourists wishing to visit India are normally granted a short-term Indian tourist visa, valid for three months, six months or one year with single, double or multiple entries. Irrespective of the duration of visa validity, on each visit the maximum period of stay in India is limited to 6 months (180 days) only.

A tourist visa can only be granted to a foreigner who does not have a residence or occupation in India and whose sole objective of visiting India is recreation, sightseeing or a casual visit to meet friends and relatives, etc. No other activity is allowed on a tourist visa. A tourist visa is non-extendable and non-convertible. The duration of the visa is at the sole discretion of the issuing authority.

There has to be a gap of at least two months between two visits to India on a tourist visa on re-entry for nationals of **Bangladesh** and **Pakistan**.

Tourist Visa Fees

Gratis Tourist Visa (Commonwealth Members)	
1	Bangladesh
2	Jamaica
3	Maldives
4	Mauritius
5	South Africa

A fee of USD ($) 60 - or an equivalent amount in Indian rupees per passenger (including children) - is charged from each foreigner for the grant of Tourist Visa-on-Arrival.

Visa (on arrival) Fees for New Zealand and Singapore Passport Holders		
Type of Visa	**Validity**	**Fees GBP (£)**
Tourist	Valid for up to 6 months (Multiple entries)	22
Transit	Valid for 15 days (Single/Double entry)	17

Visa Fees for Sri Lanka and Pakistan Nationals			
Passport	**Validity**	**Fees GBP (£)**	**Additional Charges (£)**
Sri Lankan	Double Entry – 30 Days	12	10
	Single Entry – 90 Days	12	10
	Double Entry – 90 Days	18	10
Pakistani	All Visa Categories	2.5	10

2) TRAVELLING FROM INDIA TO SELECTED COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

Indian citizens do require a visa for entry into most Commonwealth countries, except Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica and Samoa.

Business Visa (for citizens of India)

There are different business visa fees and conditions for citizens of India going to other states in the Commonwealth, depending on the period, number of entries, etc.

Country	Business Visa Fee and Conditions	Comments
Australia	Single entry for up to 90 days £73	Proof of status, itinerary, business letter, business invitation
Bangladesh	Single entry for up to 60 days, double entry up to 90 days, multiple entry up to 180 days £78	Business letter
Canada	Single entry for up to 180 days £72 Multiple entry for up to 180 days £122	Proof of status, itinerary, business letter, business invitation, hotel reservation
Cameroon	Single or multiple entry up to 90 days £63	Itinerary, letter of invitation, inviting person's ID
Ghana	Single entry up to 90 days £52 (£72 or £103 for fast track) Multiple entry up to 180 days £72 (£92.5 or £123 for fast track) Multiple entry up to 1 year £112 (£133 or £164 for fast track)	Business letter, business invitation
Jamaica	Not required.	Jamaica business visa is not required for citizens of India for a stay up to 180 days.

Kenya	180 days, single entry £30	Business letter
Maldives	Visa required. [No tourist visa required for 30 days]	No further information available
Malta	No information on fees available	Itinerary, travel insurance, bank statement, employment letter, hotel reservation, business letter
New Zealand	Single entry up to 180 days £75	Itinerary, bank statement
Pakistan	Single entry up to 90 days £140 Double entry up to 180 days £158 Multiple entry up to 180 days £368	Proof of residence, itinerary, bank statement, business letter, hotel reservation
Singapore	Single entry up to 90 days £15	Itinerary, employment letter, business letter, invitation form
Sri Lanka	Single entry up to 90 days £38 Multiple entry up to 90 days £114 Multiple entry up to 1 year £189	Employment letter, business letter

United Kingdom	Controversial cash bonds of £3000 may be introduced	Business letter, itinerary, company profile, bank statement, tax return, employment letter, hotel reservation, business invitation, personal letter

The parameters for the tourist visa such as fees and conditions do not differ significantly from the business visa, for this reason they will not be outlined in this briefing.

Exceptions:

1. Gambia tourist visa is not required for citizens of India for a stay up to 90 days while a business visa is required
2. Maldives, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles and Vanuatu: tourist visas are not required for citizens of India for a stay up to 30 days, while business visas are required.

3) ISSUES TO BE FLAGGED REGARDING COMMONWEALTH TRAVELLERS' BUSINESS AND TOURIST VISAS TO AND FROM INDIA

1. **Reciprocity issues and bilateral visitor visa exemptions for Commonwealth states**
Everybody needs a visa for India and in return Indians citizens need a visa to go almost everywhere. Nationals of India do not need a visa for Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica and Samoa while citizens of these countries do need a visa for India (even if it is gratis for Jamaicans).

Applicants of **Bangladeshi, Pakistani** and **Nigerian** origin, wishing to go to India, are required to submit a letter from their employer as well as three months of bank statements; they should expect longer processing times. In some cases the High Commission send applications to India for authorisation, extending the processing time to around two months.

2. **The general Commonwealth access is not necessarily inferior to that of citizens from states which are members of regional bodies** (e.g. SAARC, IOR), except for New Zealand and Singapore citizens who get a 30 day visa on arrival. All citizens of Commonwealth members need a visa for India.

3. **Financial aspects**
Different online sources provide varying information on visa fees for India.

4. **Current issues**
In February this year the UK announced a new visa system enabling frequent Indian travellers simplify their visits for tourism or business in the UK[13].

Four months later, as of the end of June, UK Ministers announced a £3,000 deposit[14] scheme for visa-seekers from India and six other Asian and African countries: Bangladesh, Pakistan,

13 https://www.gov.uk/government/news/super-priority-visa-service-offers-greater-flexibility-for-indian-travellers

14 http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2013/06/24/uk-curbs-visas-for-bangladesh , http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2013/06/25/bangladesh-in-radar-for-uk-visa-scheme

Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya. This bond will be confiscated if visitors stay beyond the permitted duration.

The British Home Office feels these seven countries posed 'the most significant risk of visa abuse'. Last year, 296,000 Indians, 101,000 Nigerians, 53,000 Pakistanis, 14,000 Bangladeshis and 14,000 Sri Lankans were allowed six-month tourist visas. The British Home Office did not specify how many of them had stayed on illegally.

If introduced and effective, the system will be regularised and made permanent, perhaps being extended to visa-seekers from other countries. Other Commonwealth countries may be tempted to introduce similar schemes, which could limit intra-Commonwealth traffic of tourists and business people. Diplomats and Ministers from the seven countries concerned are now discussing these British proposals with the UK.[15]

15 http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-07-07/india/40420145_1_uk-visa-financial-bonds-london

TANZANIA – COUNTRY BRIEFING

By Raluca Nagy and Ana Bleahu

This is an initial country briefing, for Dr. James Jonah, Ramphal Commissioner, based on available data gathered from the internet.

It focuses on the current state of the visa system (tourist and business visas) between Tanzania and other Commonwealth members. The report comprises three parts: 1) Travelling from Commonwealth countries to Tanzania, 2) Travelling from Tanzania to Commonwealth countries, 3) Issues to be flagged regarding Commonwealth members' tourism and business visas to and from Tanzania.

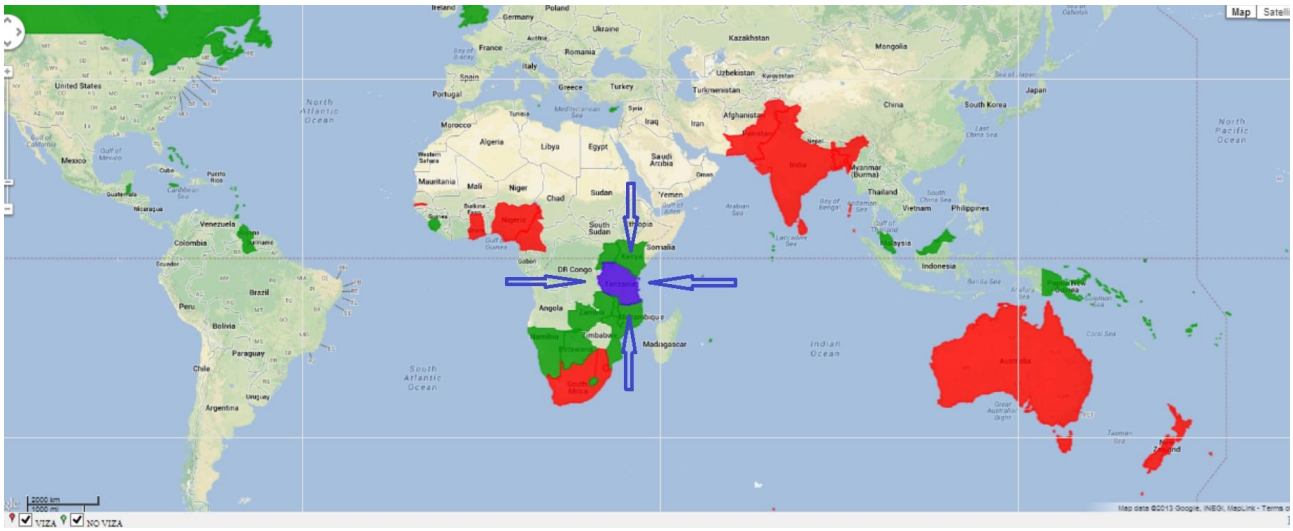
1) TRAVELLING FROM COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES TO TANZANIA

Most citizens of Commonwealth countries are not required to obtain a visa for Tanzania, unless they are citizens of Australia, United Kingdom and Canada, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, India, Pakistan, New Zealand, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and South Africa. However, this list can change from time to time.

Tanzania, together with ten other Commonwealth member states, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia are members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC); eight of these member states benefit from the SADC Protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons. Provided they have a Laissez-Passer that is issued by the SADC and are travelling on official business, travellers are eligible to stay for no more than 90 days without a visa for Tanzania. Staff members of the SADC who travel on SADC Laissez-Passers are exempt from visa requirements for bona fide official business visits up to 90 days and transit.

For tourists and other visitors, the exemption is as follows:

4. Visas are not required by passport holders of Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia (90 days)
5. Visas are not required by passport holders of Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Swaziland (30 days)



Map no. 1: Visa requirements for foreign Commonwealth nationals entering Tanzania.

Types and General Fees for Tourist and Business Visas

There are four types of visas valid for entry into Tanzania:

- Ordinary Visa
  - An ordinary visa is issued at any Tanzania Mission abroad or at any official entry point on the Tanzania boarder.
- Carrying on Temporary Assignment (CTA)
  - CTA is issued to prospective visitors who intend to visit Tanzania for purposes of making feasibility studies, establishing professional and business contacts, and making arrangements for investments during the start-up period. The validity of this visa is two months. This type of visa is issued at the entry point.
- Multiple Entry Visa
  - Foreigners who, because of the nature of their business or investments, need to make frequent visits to the United Republic of Tanzania may be issued with a multiple-entry visa. The validity ranges from three months to one year. This type of a visa is required for the nationals of the following Commonwealth members: Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Sierra Leone.
- Transit Visa
  - A transit visa is a permission to pass through Tanzania from one entry point to an exit point. It is for the people whose purpose of entry into Tanzania is simply to pass through to a destination abroad without visiting.

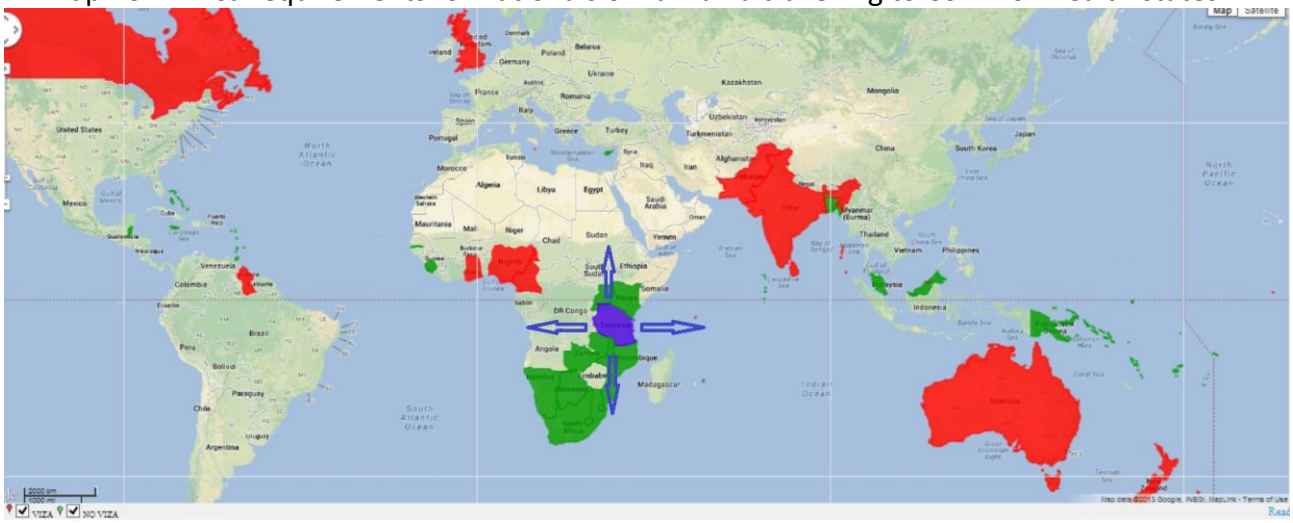
The visa fee for Holiday and Ordinary visas is USD $50 (£32). The multiple-entry visa for six months to one year is USD $100 (£64), while a three month multiple-entry visa fee is USD $50 (£32).

2) TRAVELLING FROM TANZANIA TO SELECTED COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

No-visa reciprocity applies for all countries listed at point 1) except for Brunei, Guyana, Kiribati, Malta, Papua New Guinea and Seychelles.

Citizens of Bangladesh travelling to Tanzania do need a visa while Tanzanians travelling to Bangladesh do not need a visa. The same applies for Gambia and South Africa.

Map no. 2: Visa requirements for nationals of Tanzania travelling to Commonwealth states.



Countries and territories	Conditions of access
Antigua and Barbuda	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 30 days
Australia	Visa required before arrival. Australia's accredited representative is in Nairobi
Bahamas	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
Bangladesh	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
Barbados	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 6 months
Belize	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 30 days
Botswana	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
Brunei	Visa required before arrival. Brunei has embassiess in Cairo and Rabat
Cameroon	Visa required before arrival
Canada	Visa required before arrival. Apply through the Canadian high commission in Dar es Salaam
Cyprus	Visa required except for holders of a valid Schengen Type C visa (single, double or multiple), provided the passenger previously entered the Schengen territory. When holding a single entry visa, passenger must travel directly from a Schengen member state to Cyprus. Maximum period of stay is equal to period that visa is valid. Cyprus has a high commission in Nairobi
Dominica	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 6 months
Ecuador	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
Fiji	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 4 months. Visitor permits issued on arrival
Gambia	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
Ghana	Visa required before arrival except that a visa is issued on arrival if prior approval has been obtained from the Ghana Immigration Service
Grenada	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
Guyana	Visa required before arrival. Guyana's accredited representative is in Lusaka
India	Visa required before arrival. Apply through the Indian high commission in Dar es Salaam
Jamaica	No visa is required
Kenya	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
Kiribati	Visa required before arrival
Lesotho	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days. "Visitors who wish to stay longer than 14 days (probably should say 90 days) should apply for extensions at the Lesotho Immigration Authorities within the initial 14 day (probably should say 90 day) period."
Malawi	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
Malaysia	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 30 days
Maldives	30-day free visa issued on arrival, if have sufficient funds to cover expenses while there
Malta	Visa required before arrival. Malta has an embassy in Cairo. Schengen country
Mauritius	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 60 days for touristic purposes or 90 days for business purposes
Mozambique	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 30 days
Namibia	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
Nauru	Visa issued on arrival for a maximum stay of 30 days
New Zealand	Visa required before arrival. New Zealand's accredited representative is in Harare
Nigeria	Visa required before arrival. Apply through the Nigerian high commission in Dar es Salaam
Pakistan	Visa required before arrival. Pakistan's High commission in Dar es Salaam
Papua New Guinea	Visa required before arrival. No Papua New Guinea embassies in Africa
Rwanda	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
Saint Kitts and Nevis	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
Saint Lucia	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 6 weeks
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 30 days
Samoa	Visitor permit issued on arrival for a maximum stay of 60 days
Seychelles	Visa required before arrival except that a visitor's permit may instead be obtained on arrival, which initially allows a maximum stay of 30 days
Sierra Leone	Visa required before arrival except that a visa is issued upon arrival to those who have made pre-arrangements
Singapore	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 30 days
Solomon Islands	Visa required before arrival
South Africa	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days per calendar year
Sri Lanka	Visa required before arrival
Swaziland	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 30 days
Tonga	Visa required before arrival
Trinidad and Tobago	Visa waiver issued upon arrival to those having prior approval from the Immigration Division
Tuvalu	Visa issued on arrival for a maximum stay of 30 days
Uganda	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days
United Kingdom	Visa required before arrival. Apply through the British embassy in Dar es Salaam
Vanuatu	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 30 days
Zambia	No visa is required for a maximum stay of 90 days

Tourist visa (for citizens of Tanzania)

There are different tourist visa fees for citizens of Tanzania going to other states in the Commonwealth, depending on the period, number of entries, etc.

Further, there is a selection of tourist visa conditions for citizens of Tanzania going to 14 Commonwealth states.

Country	Tourist Visa Fee	Conditions Tourist Visa
Australia	Single entry for up to 90 days £73	Itinerary, bank statement, employment letter, hotel reservations, personal invitation, host's bank statement, mortgage / lease The High Commission of Australia may extend the processing time up to 6 weeks for certain applicants. This decision is entirely at the High Commission's discretion.
Bangladesh	Not required	Visa is not required for a stay up to 90 days.
Barbados	Not required	Visa is not required for a stay up to 6 months.
Canada	Up to 180 days, single entry £72, multiple entry £122	Payment authorization, itinerary, bank statement, employment letter, hotel reservations, invitation letter, family information form, supplemental form, additional documents for children under 18
Ghana	Single entry up to 90 days £52 (£72 or £103 for fast track) Multiple entry up to 180 days £72 (£92.5 or £123 for fast track) Multiple entry up to 1 year £112 (£133 or £164 for fast track)	

India	Single entry or double entry up to 180 days, £92.20 Multiple entry up to 1 year £61.24 Multiple entry up to 2 years £287.20	Multiple entry letter, itinerary, additional documents for children under 16
Jamaica	Not required	
Malaysia	Not required	Visa is not required for a stay up to 30 days.
Malta	Required, more information needed for fees.	Itinerary, travel insurance, bank statement, hotel reservation, tourist voucher.
Nigeria	Up to 90 days single entry £191 Up to 180 days multiple entry £406	Bank statement, hotel reservation, employment letter
Pakistan	Single entry up to 90 days £140 Double entry up to 180 days £158	Itinerary, bank statement, employment letter, copy of confirmed hotel reservations
Sierra Leone	Single entry up to 90 days £50 Multiple entry up to 180 days £75 Multiple entry up to 1 year £100	Itinerary, round trip tickets, bank statement, invitation letter

South Africa	Not required	Visa is not required for a stay up to 90 days.
United Kingdom	Short-term £80	

For redundancy reasons we shall not enumerate in this country briefing the parameters for all the 53 Commonwealth states, nor the Business visa conditions, since fees and conditions do not differ significantly from the Tourist visa.

3) ISSUES TO BE FLAGGED REGARDING COMMONWEALTH MEMBERS TOURISM AND BUSINESS VISAS TO AND FROM TANZANIA

1. **Reciprocity issues and bilateral visitor visa exemptions for Commonwealth states**

No-visa reciprocity applies for all countries listed at point 1) except for Brunei, Cyprus, Guyana, Kiribati, Malta, Papua New Guinea and Seychelles.

Nationals of South Africa do need a visa for Tanzania while Tanzanians do not need a visa for South Africa.

Citizens of Bangladesh travelling to Tanzania do need a visa while Tanzanians travelling to Bangladesh do not need a visa. The same applies for Gambia.

2. **The general Commonwealth access is not necessarily inferior to that of citizens from states which are members of regional bodies** (e.g. SADC or AU). However, citizens of several Commonwealth members need a visa for Tanzania.

Appendix E

Glossary of acronyms

APEC: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

CARICOM: Caribbean Community

CHOGM: Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

ECOWAS: The Economic Community of West African States

EPG: Eminent Persons Group

EU: European Union

IOR-ARC: Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation

SADC: Southern African Development Community