



Ministry of Internal Affairs
The Republic of Vanuatu



Department of Vanuatu Immigration &
Passport Services

PRESS RELEASE

Online Visa Processing System

Port Vila, VANUATU – 11th October 2024: The Department of Vanuatu Immigration and Passport Service, under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, introduced an Online Visa Processing System early July this year to streamline visa applications. The online system enables individuals to launch and make payment online for a visa application.

It is considered a milestone to transform immigration processes from manual to online platform through MIDAS Border Control technology. This also accelerates government service delivery via the Department of Vanuatu Immigration and Passport Services.

With the new system in place, it has positively impacted the process of launching a Visa application in the country. In support of this, the Director of Vanuatu Immigration, Mr. Jeffrey Markson, states that 941 visa applications was submitted via the system between July and early October and 513 application approved while the other application is still in process in just a 3 months as opposed to a year for a manual procedure. The system has also generated visa revenue as per the number of application submitted via system.

However, there are complaints raised by the public regarding issues clients encounter during their application process. Therefore, this PR provides clarification on the issues and informs the public of the solutions discussed.

Issues related to the system

There are several issues that the department has encountered during the visa application process. The Director wants to reassure the public that they are aware of the client issues and negotiations are underway to address these concerns as quickly as feasible.

Mr. Markson had a meeting with the immigration team on 9th October 2024 to discuss the issues raised and identify solution options:

- **UN Sanctions List** – The system does not allow citizens of nations who are on the UN Sanctions list to launch a visa application.
- **Grant Officers Accessibility** – Once an application is submitted to a particular officer and the officer is on leave, accessibility must be granted to another officer to complete the application.



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- **Payment options** – The online system does not accept manual payments for certain visa categories, only online payments made through the system are accepted.
- **Renewal Visa** - It is impossible to renew a visa that is not on the system unless a new application is submitted.
- **One-year Investment Visa** – The Visa Amendment Act does not apply to this visa application.

Here are the solution options discussed:

- *To launch an application, the system now accepts copies of passports only. However, system Immigration ICT team and the System developers will add a permanent residency card as the third document, which will allow clients that are originated from the UN country Sanctions list but are permanently residing in other country to submit their application via the system.*
- *The department has implemented an internal procedure that requires an officer to complete a form before taking a leave of absence to provide another officer with access to complete the application process.*
- *For people who are unable to make payments online due to problems with their Visa card, the system developer will enable or activate office payment to visa application that office payment is currently deactivated.*
- *Applications for visas not in the system can be renewed by submitting a new application.*
- *To enable interested clients to complete their application, the compliance team will prepare an amendment to the state law office to address the one-year investment visa.*

Although the department has proposed solutions to these issues, Mr. Markson acknowledges that the team will need two weeks to fully implement these improvements.

The Department of Immigration and Passport Services, despite receiving a great deal of criticism, has played a vital role in Vanuatu's economic development. Regardless of the obstacles across the border, the team will continue to succeed in their efforts to provide government services in an effective and efficient manner using available resources.



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About the Ministry of Internal Affairs

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is tasked with the implementation of major and essential policies related to the internal administration of the nation. It plays a crucial role in service delivery across the entire country, from Torba in the far North to Tafea Province in the far South. With six departments under its authority, the Ministry focuses on policies related to decentralization, border control management and national services. Central to its mission is the vision of fostering resilient governance for a vibrant, safe and secure Vanuatu. The Ministry is dedicated to establishing a robust governance system to manage, strengthen, and protect human and natural resources, ensuring the effective delivery of social, economic and cultural values.