



9th September 2019

Dear Minister,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State with responsibility for Visas and Immigration. As the Chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Groups for Africa, for Diaspora, Development and Migration and for Malawi we would like to draw your attention to our recently published joint report- “Visa Problems for African Visitors to the UK” a copy of which is enclosed.

Home Office statistics show that African visitors to the UK are twice as likely to be refused a visa than applicants from any other part of the world. After a 6 month inquiry looking into the issue we found the UK visit visa system is inaccessible to many Africans, under resourced, unaccountable and widely perceived as biased or even discriminating against Africans. Overall, the impact is that many Africans and companies working in Africa are deciding to carry out their business elsewhere, often in other European cities with economic consequences for the UK.

The report recognises that a system of visas is necessary: there are some applicants with illegitimate reasons to visit, or who deliberately intend to overstay. We are also aware that the visa process works under significant resource constraints. But the current level of dissatisfaction with the way the system works for African applicants, and for UK organisations inviting African visitors, needs to be addressed in order to protect the UK’s own national interests in developing good relations and exchanges with African countries.

The UK cannot be an outward- looking nation or ‘open for business’ without improving the systems that allow access to people. UKVI’s treatment of Africans is entirely at odds with the narrative of a post-Brexit “Global Britain”, which risks being an empty slogan if changes are not made. Our report makes eight key recommendations and we hope you will consider implementing these whilst preparing UKVI for Brexit.

The former Immigration Minister, The Rt. Hon. Caroline Nokes MP, engaged positively with our inquiry and spoke at the report launch in July. The then Minister committed to respond formally in writing to the numbered recommendations in our report and we hope you will be able to honour this.

The Secretariat of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa is provided by the Royal African Society
21 Russell Square, London, WC1B 5EA.

Chair: Chi Onwurah MP Co-Chair: Lord David Chidgey

E-mail: baileyh@parliament.uk Tweet: @AfricaAPPG Tel: 0 (+44) 20 7074 5127

Web: <http://www.royalafricansociety.org/appg-africa>



Given the importance and urgency of this issue, the APPGs would welcome the opportunity to meet with yourself to discuss the report's findings. We would be grateful if your office could liaise with Henrietta Bailey-Morgan (baileyh@parliament.uk), the secretariat to the APPG for Africa, on your availability.

Yours sincerely,

Chi Onwurah MP
(Chair of the APPG for Africa)

Jeremy Lefroy MP
(Chair of the APPG for Diaspora, Development and Migration)

Patrick Grady MP
(Chair of the APPG for Malawi)