



**PRESENTATION BY**

**MR MATAIO RABURA, ISO, OBE, CHIEF MIGRATION OFFICER  
OF THE  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA IMMIGRATION & CITIZENSHIP SERVICE  
AUTHORITY**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL TOURISM CONFERENCE  
23 September 2016, Port Moresby.**

## **THE GOVERNMENT'S INTERVENTION FOR TOURISM**

### ***SALUTATIONS***

Honourable Minister(s)

Chief Executive Officer of TPA – Mr. Jerry Agus

Departmental Heads and CEOs

Representatives from International Organizations

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Ladies and Gentlemen

## **INTRODUCTION**

Good afternoon

It is indeed an honour for me to be invited to this **National Tourism Conference**.

This afternoon, we are gathered in this new hotel, built to accommodate the growing demand for tourists, particularly as we welcome tourists, from the 20 APEC economies, come 2018.

Growing the tourism industry is a priority for the Government and PNG's Immigration and Citizenship Service Authority has worked hard to support the industry through its 3 Key Priority Activities, being:

1. Organizational Reform and Service Delivery
2. Legislative and Policy Reforms
3. Travel Facilitation

The 3 KPAs are activities as directed by Government for ICSA to implement under its Alotau Accord.

## **BACKGROUND**

Since becoming an independent statutory authority in 2010, ICSA has set about changing the way that PNG manages the movement of people across borders. ICSA is a growing agency that is dedicated to improving its services to the Government, the PNG people and the travelling public.

In order to effectively deliver its services, ICSA has undergone a major restructure and organizational reforms, ICSA has over the last 4 years grown from 72 to 248 officers, with offices at Waigani, Gabaka Street, Jacksons Airport, Wutung, Vanimo, Tokua, Gurney, Mount Hagen and a Regional Office in Lae.

ICSA has officers' takings up postings at PNG's Diplomatic Missions and Posts in Australia, Malaysia, Philippines and the People's Republic of China as part of improving service delivery abroad.

## **ICSA's SUPPORT OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

One of ICSA's core functions is to facilitate travel and allow for smooth passage of travelers by issuing of the appropriate visas. It does this with quality checks on visa applications processes

as required. ICSA has contributed to the Government's efforts to promote tourism by removing visa fees for many tourists, reducing backlogs, decreasing visa processing times, electronic streamlined entry processing of cruise ship passengers and extending domestic services in provincial and border posts. These measures have all been welcomed by the travel industry.

By way of statistics, each month in 2015, an average of 35,862 foreign nationals arrived in or departed from PNG, totaling 574,487 movements. This is a slight increase from 2014, where PNG recorded 558,222 movements.

In 2015, 31,204 foreign nationals arrived in PNG waters on cruise ships, comprising 9,084 crew and 22,120 passengers.

A large volume of trade and movement of people transacts along the PNG border with Indonesia and Solomon Islands. Most of these transactions go unrecorded, for lack of facilities and infrastructure. This is where the whole of government approach is required to beef up the strength and capacity along the borders to boost tourism.

In policy areas, Cabinet in 2014, approved for the creation of Visa on Arrival for Eligible Countries as a means of facilitating the entry of approved low-risk travelers for selected short stay, single entry modes, pending the development of online or electronic visa processing to balance facilitation with border security outcomes.

The tourist industry has been supported by the removal of Visitor visa fees, the return of Visa on Arrival for Australian tourists and the designation of Tokua, Gurney and Mount Hagen in addition to Jacksons Airport as Visa-on-Arrival issuing Ports of Entry. Note that, the PNGICSA moved rapidly to establish a fully manned Immigration Post at Tokua as soon as Government announced East New Britain a Tourism Hub. This establishment has now been downgraded to one officer.

We have continued to support the expansion of reciprocal visa arrangements with the latest bilateral arrangements signed with Israel, The Republic of Indonesia and Japan.

ICSA has also helped make it easier for Papua New Guineans to travel. We are opening provincial offices to make it easier for our citizens to obtain travel documents, and have negotiated with Australia to provide access to online visa applications, reduced documentary requirements and dedicated arrival lanes at Brisbane and Cairns airports.

In 2015 ICSA effectively partnered with PNG Customs, NAQIA, NAC and the Pacific Games Organizing Committee to ensure PNG's hosting of this event was of the highest standard in terms of traveler facilitation. 2015 also saw a record number of people cross its international borders and we expect further increases in the lead up to and during the hosting of the 2018 APEC meetings.

The successful hosting of the recent ACP Ministers Meeting was a testament of the whole of Government approach where ICSA ensured that all visitors visa and entry and departure were promptly attended to. The Authority is improving its processes and utilizing modern technology to keep abreast of this rapid growth.

In recent years we have established a new visa category, the Special Exemption – Designated Events Visa to facilitate entry of foreigners participating in government sanctioned regional and international events.

More than 196,000 APEC Business Travel Cards (ABTC) have been processed by ICSA since it became a participating member in the scheme in 2005. This figure includes both citizens of participating foreign economies and PNG nationals.

For PNG, the ABTC can be both used for tourism and business and for APEC Business travel card holders; PNG has a dedicated lane at the airport for ABTC travelers. I encourage you all to make use of this product for ease of travel, by applying for the APEC Business Travel Card.

### **THE FUTURE**

Moving forward we are in the process of procuring a modern Integrated Border Management System that enables connectivity with current standalone visa, passport, citizenship, administrative and alert systems and hopefully with key Government Agencies such as Police, Customs, IRC, NIO, Health Department and National ID systems. The new system will also enable PNG to introduce Advance Passenger Processing and Advance Passenger Approval systems. These will enable foreigners to apply online and obtain pre-clearance to enter the country under the short-term entry visa categories, whilst enhancing National Security by providing traveler data prior to travel. The new system will also enable our citizens living abroad to lodge PNG Passport applications online. Payment of migration service fees will also be electronic under the new system.

We are also working to cut unnecessary red-tape – the departing passenger card will ultimately be phased out to save the taxpayer money, and to reduce time and bureaucracy at the border.

To further support the growing tourism industry into the future, we are looking to modernize the Migration Act and Regulations in 2017. The current review of the Migration Legislation and the Migration Policy are now in their final stages and will be submitted to Cabinet before the year ends. This revision will provide the legislative backing for the use of technology in providing migration services and expand on current visa categories and classes.

Our discussions with Australia on reciprocal visa arrangements are way behind in terms of progress, and government needs to maintain the pressure.

ICSA will continue to implement government directives and PM O'Neil's announcement made in 2013 for PNG to explore opportunities to attract foreign investors, countries and economies to invest in the country. He made particular mention to promoting trade and investment and promoting PNG as a tourist destination. He mentioned several countries of interest that included Republic of China, Russia, Israel and Indonesia. Whilst arrangements have been concluded and signed and in implementation with Israel and Indonesia (for diplomats and officials), plans are also underway to enter into reciprocal visa waiver arrangements discussions with Malaysia, Philippines, South Korea, India and the European Union and even the United States have shown interest in this arrangement as well.

Finally, we will also be exploring the option of e-Passports for PNG citizens. This type of biometric passport would provide our citizens with access to overseas automated border gates.

While not directly related to tourism, you may be interested to note that the Dual Citizenship Initiative will enable citizens and foreigners from prescribed countries to apply for dual citizenship. We hope implementation will commence later this year when Parliament approves Consequential Amendments in the October Session of Parliament.

## ***CONCLUSION***

ICSA has introduced substantial reforms and initiatives and is actively planning for further change to support PNG's growing tourism industry. We are committed to working alongside our Government and private sector counterparts to facilitate travel while maintaining the security of PNG's border.

**THANK YOU.**

**Mataio Rabura, ISO, OBE**  
**Acting Chief Migration Officer**