



## The International Advocacy for Human Rights and Anti-Corruption e.V.

HE Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR,  
President and Commander-in-chief,  
Three Arms Zone,  
FCT, Abuja,  
Nigeria.

**Our ref:** sp-rep/em-mi/Pr-IAH  
**Your ref:**.....

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022

Your Excellency,

**Re:** Special Report on the Effective Representation of Government Services to Nigerians in Diaspora

The International Advocacy for Human Rights and Anti-Corruption wishes to submit to your office fact-finding reports relative to the services provided to Nigerians in Diaspora by the nation's embassies/missions for your kind perusal.

We hope this would be of immense benefit to the embassies/missions, Nigerians in Diaspora and to Nigeria as a great nation.

We look forward to receiving your feedback on this report.

Sincerely yours,

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Head of Affairs

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# **A Special Report of the International Advocacy for Human Rights and Anti-Corruption (IAHRAC)**

## **Effective Representation of Government Services to Nigerians in Diaspora through the Missions**

**1.0 Preamble:** This is a special report undertaken by the International Advocacy for Human Rights and Anti-Corruption (IARHAC) under its mandate and initiative. The essence of this was to assess the complaints by Nigerians in diaspora and other related services which the various Nigerian missions/embassies in Europe offer to Nigerian citizens.

**1.1** Rightly or wrongly, Nigerians in diaspora expect more than they receive from the Nigeria missions/embassies relative to the protection of their interests and their well-being in the face of several challenges they face in foreign lands, some of which include racism, human rights abuse, fair play in judicial and immigration arbitration, consular and non-consular services to Nigerians, ease of communication and prompt response to dire situations involving Nigerians among others.

**1.2** We are aware that some of the common complaints that have consistently played out from the voices of Nigerians abroad include passport procurement – ease of process and response duration, the assuredness of getting support from the mission offices in situations involving Nigerians and government/organisations in their respective places of occupation, study, and vocation.

**1.3** In response to all these, IARHAC has intervened by listening to over five hundred (500) complaints raised. These complaints were investigated on their merits by IAHRAC and came up with solutions/suggestions to share with the embassies/missions, which might help them resolve the issues.

**1.4** For the purpose of this report, we stand on the integrity of our organisation to exercise due regard to confidentiality about the embassies/missions spoken to. However, suffice it to address the issues raised: the prevailing issues and circumstances confronting Nigerians in the diaspora, and to reflect the perception with which Nigerians in the diaspora express their expectations of Government services through the embassies/missions (consular and non-consular).

**1.5** IAHRAC investigation revealed some of the opinions and issues identified and discussed with the embassies/missions' representatives, and by so doing confers on IARHAC the responsibility of reporting and making recommendations towards these to the Nigerian governments and in fairness to the missions and to the authorities in Nigeria.

**2.0** The meetings held with some of the missions/embassies served to:

- i. Examine the problems faced by Nigerians relative to welfare issues in European countries
- ii. Understand the embassies/missions' constraints preventing them from effective and satisfactory services to Nigerians
- iii. Understand why some embassies' phone calls and emails are unanswered
- iv. Problems with delay in passports issuance among others.

**3.0** Issues raised in discussions with the embassies/missions are:

**3.1** Problems faced by Nigerians relative to welfare issues in European countries.

A common denominator across most missions was related to the processes of passport issuance. There were complaints that showed people face challenges in making payments easily. These involved the use of digital/online payments and/or through third (3<sup>rd</sup>) parties.

In addressing the issues raised in paragraph **3.1**, IARHAC is of the position that:

- I. The payment system should be simplified to allow Nigerians to be able to pay with their credit cards. Most credit cards are currently secured, the use of invalid or lack of fund credit cards is no longer possible.
- II. The distribution of passport booklets to countries should be pro rata, i.e, based on the Nigerian population in the different countries.
- III. To put an end to or reduce the issue of passport problems, intensifying the implementation of the 10-year passport validity could serve as an immediate solution to the current problems.
- IV. The various missions should have a photocopier for photocopying documents for applicants at a reasonable fee

**3.2** The constraints faced by the missions. On the issue of constraints faced by the missions, the Ambassadors/High Commissioners were very cautious in responding to this question. Some of them instead posited that they help Nigerian students and others in need of their services. Some did say they have dedicated teams to manage requests made by Nigerians.

Given the clarification from the relevant missions/embassies' officials, IARHAC suggests that:

- I. More funding should be made available to help them discharge their duties effectively.

**3.3** The possession of the National Identification Number (NIN) as a condition for the issuance of travel documents such as Emergency Travel Certificate (ETC) and passport. We recommend that:

- I. The facilities for the processing of NIN should be easier to access for all Nigerians to facilitate the processing of the document.
- II. The issuance of an Emergency Travel Certificate (ETC) should not only be easy when the host country requests it for citizens' deportation, it should follow a similar procedure as when Nigerian requests it themselves.

#### **4.0 Further Recommendations**

- I. IAHRAC urged the Nigerian government to take a bold step toward addressing the above-outlined problems in the interest of Nigerians and for the country's reputation.
- II. The Federal Government should be mindful of the fact that Nigerian missions/embassies are the de facto flag bearers of Nigeria, representing the government.

#### **5.0 The embassy structures in most countries**

The Federal Government should, as a matter of urgency, provide additional funds for the renovation of certain embassies/missions. Most of the embassies/missions are dilapidated and located in deprived areas. We are of the opinion that Nigeria as a great country in Africa should go beyond the current status, where the embassies' buildings do not measure with some of the least developed countries in the world.

#### **6.0 Delay in passport issuance**

IAHRAC understood that the delay in passport issuance was due to booklet shortages. As asserted earlier, considering the size and position of Nigeria in Africa, it should measure up to expectations as expected, if its reputation is to continue to maintain pace. It is undeniable that countries occasionally face difficulties, but passport booklets should not be a problem in a country like Nigeria. Also, IAHRAC identified that supplies of passport booklets are not distributed based on the population of Nigerians in the different countries. Therefore, the appropriate quota system of distribution in direct proportion to the population will reduce the burden most embassies/missions face.

#### **6.1 Recommendations**

- I. The provision of enough passport booklets will cut down the constraints of the passport issuance delay.
- II. Where possible, the creation of a Consul general in bigger countries like the UK, the Nordic countries and Italy is imperative.

## 6.2 Final Recommendations

This Report ultimately seeks to engage the goodwill and political/operational support of the Government to:

- a. Ratify and endorse the submissions stated above for urgent and actionable instructions for the smooth and better capacity in the interest of Nigerians in diaspora and the greater good and image of Nigeria in the international community.
- b. Encourage organisations and citizens whose interests are geared towards promoting a positive image of Nigeria both at home and abroad.
- c. Continue providing relevant in-service training to the auxiliary staff at the embassies to acquire bespoke customer service skills.
- d. Encourage the embassies/missions to build a stronger relationship with Nigerians across the countries they represent
- e. Provide disabled people with accessible moveable materials that would accommodate their needs at the embassies/missions
- f. Create more phone lines or increase the number of employees to operate the switchboard. This will ease the frustrations many Nigerians face while trying to reach/contact the embassies/missions.
- g. Have a timeline for responding to emails or phone calls. This could be within 24 or 48 hours with the exemption of public holidays.
- h. Encourage the creation of an ambassadorial forum, which could help the outgoing and incoming High Commissioners/Ambassadors to share good practices
- i. Make citizens' registration forms found on the embassies/missions' websites more visible and functional
- j. Provide additional funds for the renovation of the embassies/missions' buildings and for welfare departments to meet the needs of Nigerians at difficult times.