

# Immigration Regulatory Updates

May 2026

In this May 2026 edition of the Moroom Africa Immigration Update, we spotlight a wave of historic policy shifts redefining cross-border mobility across the African continent. From landmark visa-free agreements between African nations to Ghana's fully digital e-Visa launch, and from Togo's open-door policy to a US travel restriction triggered by an Ebola outbreak, and from the European Commission's decision to lift Schengen visa restrictions on Ethiopian nationals, as well as Nigeria's introduction of a 30-day visa-free entry regime for Rwandan nationals, this month's developments reflect an accelerating momentum toward greater travel facilitation, as well as the ongoing need for vigilance in global health-related travel advisories.

## 1. Nigeria Grants 30 Day Visa-Free Entry to Rwandan Nationals

Nigeria has introduced a 30-day visa-free entry regime for nationals of Rwanda, marking a further step in strengthening bilateral cooperation and facilitating intra-African mobility. The development follows discussions between President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of Nigeria and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda during the Africa CEO Forum in Kigali.

The measure reciprocates Rwanda's longstanding visa-free policy for Nigerian citizens and reflects a growing trend among African states towards reducing travel barriers and promoting regional integration. Under the arrangement, Rwandan nationals may enter Nigeria without obtaining a visa in advance and remain in the country for up to 30 days for lawful purposes, including business visits, tourism, investment exploration, official engagements, and cultural exchanges.

The Nigeria Immigration Service has confirmed that the policy is operational across all designated ports of entry, including international airports, land borders, and seaports.

Beyond its diplomatic significance, the arrangement has practical implications for businesses operating across West and East Africa. By simplifying travel procedures, the policy is expected to support commercial engagement, facilitate business travel, and encourage stronger economic ties between the two countries.

## **2. Botswana and Rwanda Seal Landmark Visa-Free Travel Agreement**

Citizens of Botswana and Rwanda can now travel between the two countries without visa requirements, following the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement on Visa Abolition during Rwandan President Paul Kagame's three-day State Visit to Botswana. The agreement covers holders of Diplomatic, Official, and National Passports and took effect immediately.

The arrangement builds on Rwanda's earlier decision to waive visa requirements for Botswana, extending the standard 90-day stay to six months. The visa-free regime is expected to stimulate trade, investment, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges. It was signed alongside several complementary instruments, including:

- A Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement
- A Bilateral Air Services Agreement
- MoUs on Health, Economic, Trade, and Investment cooperation
- Institutional collaboration between the Botswana Investment and Trade Centre (BITC) and the Rwanda Development Board (RDB)

This agreement reinforces Rwanda's long-standing commitment to open-border policies. In 2018, Rwanda became one of the first African countries to introduce visa-on-arrival access for all African Union citizens, a move aimed at eliminating travel barriers and accelerating intra-African trade. Today, Rwandan passport holders enjoy visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to numerous countries including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Mauritius, Singapore, Qatar, and now Botswana.

Organisations operating across sub-Saharan Africa should monitor expanding visa-free corridors as they present opportunities for easier talent deployment, client visits, and regional business expansion.

### **3. CDC Announces 30-Day Travel Restrictions in Response to Ebola Outbreak**

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has imposed 30-day entry restrictions on non-US passport holders who have visited areas affected by an ongoing Ebola outbreak. The restrictions, issued under a Title 42 public health order, apply to travellers who have been to **Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), or South Sudan** within the previous 21 days. US citizens, nationals, and lawful permanent residents are exempt from the restriction but remain subject to enhanced screening.

The outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola, for which no approved vaccine or treatment currently exists. The World Health Organization has declared the outbreak a “public health emergency of international concern,” reporting over 246 suspected cases and 80 suspected deaths in Ituri Province of the DRC, with two laboratory-confirmed cases in Uganda linked to travel from the DRC. The WHO estimates the strain’s fatality rate at 30 to 50 percent based on prior outbreaks.

The CDC confirmed that one American national tested positive for Ebola after exposure in the DRC and was transported to Germany for treatment. The agency is coordinating with airlines, international partners, and port-of-entry officials to identify and monitor potentially exposed travellers.

Organisations with staff or operations in Central and East Africa should immediately review travel risk protocols and ensure that employees in or transiting through affected regions are accounted for, properly screened, and briefed on current entry restrictions at international destinations.

### **4. Togo Removes Visa Requirements for All African Nationals**

The Government of Togo has announced the removal of visa requirements for nationals of all African countries, effective immediately. Holders of valid national passports may now enter Togo for stays of up to 30 days without a prior visa.

The announcement, made by Togo’s Ministry of Security via its official communications channel, was described by the government as a “historic step in strengthening African integration.” Togo joins a growing list of African nations, including Rwanda, Seychelles, and Burundi – that have moved to dismantle intra-continental travel barriers.

Togo's open-door policy adds another accessible gateway for West African business travellers. Companies exploring the ECOWAS region should factor Togo into logistics and expansion considerations.

## **5. Ghana Launches First Electronic Visa (e-Visa) System with Free Visas for Africans**

President John Dramani Mahama has officially launched Ghana's first electronic visa (e-Visa) system, enabling travellers to apply for visas fully online through the Ghana Immigration Service portal. The launch took place on Africa Day, 25 May 2026.

In a landmark announcement, President Mahama declared that effective from Africa Day, citizens of all African countries will receive e-Visas free of charge. Under the previous arrangement, African Union nationals paid up to \$150 for visas on arrival. Although fees are waived, all applicants including African nationals will still undergo the same security screening process as other travellers.

The e-Visa application process follows five key steps:

- Check eligibility based on nationality
- Create an account using a valid email address
- Complete travel details and upload supporting documents
- Submit the application online
- Receive the approved e-Visa by email (can be presented digitally or in print upon arrival)

For non-African travellers, visa fees range from approximately \$260 for a standard single-entry visa to up to \$796 for urgent multiple-entry applications. The system is fully integrated with Ghana's Advanced Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) systems, allowing pre-departure background checks.

Ghanaian Foreign Affairs Minister described the platform as Ghana's "warm digital handshake with the world." The initiative aligns with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agenda and Ghana's Pan-African identity.

The e-Visa system significantly reduces administrative barriers for business travellers, investors, and professionals seeking to engage with Ghana's market. Organisations should update their travel management processes to leverage this digital platform and take advantage of the fee waiver for African nationals.

## **6. Burundi Joins the Visa-Free Movement for African Citizens**

The Government of Burundi has officially removed visa requirements for all African citizens, allowing valid African passport holders to enter the country for stays of up to 30 days. This positions Burundi alongside progressive peers such as Rwanda and Kenya in championing open-border regimes on the continent.

Previously, travel to Burundi required navigating e-Visa pre-authorisations, administrative hurdles, and significant processing fees. The new policy directly supports the goals of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by easing the movement of business personnel, traders, and entrepreneurs across the continent.

Burundi is endowed with significant, yet under-commercialised, tourism assets, including the shores of Lake Tanganyika and the world-renowned Royal Drummers of Gitega. The new visa framework is expected to attract intra-African tourism and stimulate the hospitality and services sectors.

However, the policy also presents implementation challenges that Burundi must manage, including:

- Modernisation of border infrastructure to manage increased traveller volumes.
- Enhanced cross-border intelligence sharing to maintain security.
- Labour market adjustments to balance regional talent mobility with local employment needs.

Burundi's open-border policy creates new opportunities for investment and regional partnerships in East Africa. Businesses active in the Great Lakes region should assess the potential for expanded operations in Burundi.

## **7. Republic of Congo Announces Visa-Free Access for all Africans from 2027**

At the African Development Bank Group's 2026 Annual Meetings held in Brazzaville to mark Africa Day, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo announced that as from 1 January 2027, nationals of all African countries will have visa-free access to the country. The announcement drew sustained applause from thousands of delegates attending the meetings. President Sassou-Nguesso urged African leaders to move beyond "selfishness and nationalism" and deepen regional integration through practical implementation of the AfCFTA.

He also called for increased collective investment in infrastructure – including roads, railways, airports, and energy systems – stressing that no African state could independently finance the transformation needed.

The Republic of Congo's visa-free commitment from January 2027 provides businesses with advance notice to plan for expanded engagement with Central Africa. Organisations should begin assessing market opportunities in the country ahead of the policy's implementation.

## **8. EU Lifts Schengen Visa Restrictions on Ethiopian Nationals**

The European Commission has approved the lifting of Schengen visa restrictions on Ethiopian nationals, marking a significant improvement in EU–Ethiopia travel relations. The decision will enter into force following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union, expected imminently.

The restrictions had originally been introduced by the EU in April 2024 and came into effect on 1 June 2024. Under the restrictive regime, visa processing times for Ethiopian applicants were extended from 15 to 45 days, the issuance of long-term multiple-entry visas was suspended, certain documentation flexibilities were removed, and visa fee waivers for holders of diplomatic and service passports were ended. These measures placed a significant burden on Ethiopian travellers and, critically, on European businesses operating in Ethiopia.

In February 2025, the European Chamber in Ethiopia submitted detailed feedback to the EU Ambassador to Ethiopia outlining the commercial impact of the visa restrictions on European businesses and broader EU–Ethiopia economic relations.

This advocacy, grounded in a survey of its members, is widely credited with influencing the European Commission's decision to revisit the policy.

The lifting of restrictions restores pre-2024 visa processing timelines, reinstates multiple-entry visa access, and removes the additional documentation burden for Ethiopian applicants. European businesses with operations in Ethiopia, as well as Ethiopian professionals seeking to engage with EU partners, should expect a meaningful improvement in the ease and speed of Schengen visa processing. Organisations should update their travel planning accordingly once the decision is formally published.

## **Conclusion**

May 2026 marks a pivotal month in the global immigration story. The simultaneous visa liberalisation moves by Togo, Burundi, and the Republic of the Congo, the Rwanda–Botswana bilateral visa waiver arrangement, the Nigeria–Rwanda reciprocal visa-free travel arrangement, and Ghana's launch of its first electronic visa (e-Visa) system with free e-Visas for African nationals collectively signal an accelerating continental shift toward open borders and economic integration. The EU's decision to restore normal Schengen visa processing for Ethiopian nationals further demonstrates that advocacy-driven policy reform can deliver real outcomes for businesses and travellers alike. These developments are not merely symbolic; they represent real reductions in the cost and complexity of cross-border mobility, with tangible implications for trade, investment, tourism, and talent deployment.

At the same time, the CDC's Ebola-related travel restrictions serve as a reminder that public health developments can rapidly alter the travel landscape. Organisations with regional footprints must maintain dynamic travel risk frameworks capable of responding to both opportunity and disruption.

Should you require further assistance or clarification on any of the above, please feel free to contact [pamilerin.akabunwa@moroomafrica.com](mailto:pamilerin.akabunwa@moroomafrica.com).

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