

Immigration Regulatory Updates

— SEPTEMBER 2026 —

September 2026 brought two themes. Enforcement is tightening: Kenya has started a 90-day countdown to enforcement against unpermitted foreign workers, and Nigeria is building closer document-verification and intelligence-sharing links with China. Access is, in places, getting easier: Tanzania has dropped its two-month clearance requirement for Nigerians, and Nigeria and Canada have opened a direct channel on visa delays. The change with the most immediate practical effect is the least obvious: since 1 August 2026, U.S. routine visa appointments for Nigerian applicants are handled only in Lagos, not Abuja.

This edition highlights these key developments and considers their practical implications for key stakeholders navigating immigration and cross-border mobility requirements.

Mobility Spotlight: What's Changing in Immigration

Development	What changed
U.S. visas	Routine visa services now processed only in Lagos; Abuja keeps diplomatic and official categories.
Kenya	90-day window to obtain/regularise permits and licences, before strict enforcement.
Canada	Nigeria–Canada working group on visa and study-permit delays; direct flights under discussion.
Tanzania	Nigeria removed from Referral Visa category from 25 September; standard visa procedure now applies.
UK passports	Nigerian passport intervention exercise: 2,296 enrolled in first six days; fee dispute resolved with £50 overpayment to be refunded.

Development	What changed
Nigeria–China	Agreement to deepen intelligence and information sharing and document verification.
South Africa	105 more Nigerians evacuated; total now 1,821.
Nigeria	2027–2031 National Border Management Strategy under development.

Beyond the Headlines: Immigration and Mobility Developments

1. United States of America: U.S. Embassy in Abuja remains Operational, Lagos Now Nigeria’s Only Routine Visa Venue

Effective 1 August 2026, the U.S. Department of State moved routine visa processing away from Abuja and a number of other African missions to designated regional hubs. For Nigeria, the hub for routine visa processing is the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos, which the Embassy’s advisory describes as the only location for routine visa services.

Following reports circulating that visa services had been “suspended” at the U.S. Embassy in Abuja, the U.S. Mission clarified that the Abuja Embassy is not closing. It continues to provide American citizen services and limited consular services, and still processes visas for diplomatic and official travel, international organisations and certain transiting officials. The Department of State says the realignment is intended to strengthen security screening and improve efficiency.

Applicants are advised to confirm the appropriate processing location for applications before making travel arrangements or appointments are scheduled. Applicants travelling on official or diplomatic business should liaise with the relevant protocol office to confirm the applicable process.

2. Kenya: A 90-Day Regularisation Window for Foreign Workers, Then Enforcement

Early September, the Kenyan Government issued a directive restricting foreigners from operating certain small businesses and engaging in hawking activities. The directive caused concern among foreign nationals, particularly members of the East African Community (EAC), many of whom work or trade in Kenya.

On 8 September the President's office softened its position. It announced a regularisation exercise and grace period over the next 90 days to enable foreign nationals obtain the right identification, work permits and business licences. Counting from that announcement, the window closes in early December 2026, after which the government says immigration rules "will be enforced firmly and strictly". We have not seen a formally gazetted end date, so employers should treat early December as the working deadline until confirmed.

Foreign nationals in Kenya impacted by this directive should use the regularisation period to review their immigration and business status and obtain any outstanding permits, registrations or licences before enforcement resumes.

3. Nigeria and Canada: Joint Working Group on Visa Delays

Nigeria and Canada have agreed to set up a joint technical working group to address delays in Canadian visa processing timelines for Nigerians. This agreement follows the meeting between officials of Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Interior and the Canadian High Commission in Abuja.

The Nigerian side highlighted students who have been unable to start their programmes because study permits were delayed, even after visa approval. The meeting also covered the expansion of the Nigeria–Canada Air Transport Agreement, which could enable direct flights and spare passengers connections through Europe or the United States. Both sides discussed a Standard Operating Procedure with the Canada Border Services Agency on removing people without legal status in Canada; no terms or timeline have been published.

Overall, the working group is expected to facilitate regular engagement between the Nigerian and Canadian authorities and develop practical measures to improve visa processing times. While the establishment of the working group is a positive development, it has produced no change to processing times. Applicants are advised to account for prolonged timelines when planning travel, study or relocation to Canada.

4. Tanzania: Nigeria Removed from the Referral Visa Category

Travel to Tanzania becomes simpler for Nigerians, though a visa is still required. Under amendments published in Government Gazette No. 246 of 2026, Tanzania has taken Nigeria off its Referral Visa list. Tanzania's Immigration Services Department says the change applies from 25 September 2026, with immediate effect.

Under the old regime, Nigerians needed advance approval from senior immigration officials, typically supported by a host invitation. However, the change means that visa applications from Nigerian nationals will now follow Tanzania's standard visa application procedures through the official immigration portal or designated points of entry.

The removal of Nigeria from the referral visa category should simplify travel arrangements for Nigerians travelling to Tanzania for tourism, business, study and other permitted purposes.

5. Nigeria: Nigeria Immigration Service Records High Demand for UK Passport Intervention Exercise

On 7 September 2026, the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) commenced its Special Passport Intervention Exercise in the United Kingdom, to address delays and provide additional passport processing capacity for Nigerians resident in the UK. In its first six operational days of the exercise, **2,296 applicants were enrolled:** 1,709 in Manchester and 587 in London. Given the turnout, the NIS extended the exercise in both cities to 3 October 2026, and passport production and dispatch for enrolled applicants began during the exercise.

Applicants had to book appointments in advance and bring a completed application form, payment receipt, appointment slip, a self-addressed return envelope and their current passport where applicable. Payments were stated to be automated and cashless.

The Nigeria High Commission in the UK separately clarified that the standard administrative fee remained £20, following reports that some applicants had been charged £70. Applicants who paid the higher amount were advised that the additional £50 would be refunded.

Nigerians in the UK requiring passport renewal should use the NIS and Nigerian High Commission's official channels for current information on passport services, eligibility and applicable fees.

6. Nigeria and China: Closer Cooperation on Migration and Border Security

On the sidelines of the Sub-Forum on Migration Management Cooperation in Lianyungang, Jiangsu Province, the Comptroller-General of the Nigeria Immigration Service met China's National Immigration Administration.

Both agencies agreed to deepen cooperation in five (5) areas:

- intelligence and information sharing;
- technical exchanges and capacity building;
- document verification;
- combating document fraud and falsification; and
- wider cooperation on irregular migration and cross-border crime.

The discussions reflect the increasing importance of international cooperation in addressing irregular migration, identity and document fraud, and cross-border security challenges.

Greater cooperation between immigration authorities is likely to result in increased information sharing and scrutiny of travel documents. Applicants should therefore ensure that all documents submitted in support of immigration applications are accurate, consistent and verifiable.

7. South Africa: 105 More Nigerian Evacuated

The Federal Government of Nigeria has further evacuated 105 Nigerians from South Africa, who arrived in Lagos on Thursday, 24 September 2026, on a South African Airways flight. The latest exercise brings the total number of Nigerians evacuated from South Africa since the programme commenced in June 2026 to **1,821**.

The Federal Government has continued to engage key stakeholders regarding the safety and welfare of Nigerians in South Africa, and encourages Nigerians visiting and resident in South Africa to remain vigilant and maintain contact with Nigerian diplomatic missions where consular assistance is required.

8. Nigeria: NIS and IOM Review Nigeria's 2027–2031 Border Management Strategy

The Nigeria Immigration Service, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and with support from the European Union, held a three-day Top Management Workshop to review Nigeria's National Border Management Strategy. The workshop reviewed the implementation of the action plan from the **2019–2023 National Border Management Strategy** and set priorities for the **2027–2031** cycle.

A follow-up NIS Executive Management Endorsement Session reviewed recommendations, prioritised interventions, considered financing options and validated the proposed strategic direction. The Comptroller-General of Immigration stressed three foundations: credible migration data, effective implementation mechanisms and sustained inter-agency collaboration.

Overall, the review is intended to develop a framework capable of responding to emerging migration, border security and other cross-border challenges while strengthening Nigeria's position in integrated border management across Africa.

Conclusion

The immigration developments recorded in September 2026 demonstrate a continuing shift towards stronger immigration compliance and enforcement, enhanced border controls and greater cooperation between immigration authorities. At the same time, several jurisdictions are taking steps to make legitimate travel and mobility more efficient by simplifying visa procedures, addressing processing delays and providing opportunities for foreign nationals to regularise their status.

For businesses and individuals, these developments reinforce the importance of monitoring changes to immigration rules and procedures and ensuring that travel, work and residence arrangements remain compliant. Employers sponsoring foreign nationals should also ensure that immigration documentation and work authorisations are kept up to date, particularly where new enforcement measures or regularisation exercises are introduced.

As immigration policies and processing arrangements continue to evolve, proactive planning and reliance on current guidance from the relevant immigration authorities will remain important in reducing delays, compliance risks and disruptions to international mobility.

Should you require further assistance or clarification on any of the above, please feel free to contact **pamilerin.akabunwa@moroomafrica.com**.

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KEY CONTACTS



Pamilerin Akabunwa

Deputy Managing Partner

pamilerin.akabunwa

@moroomafrica.com

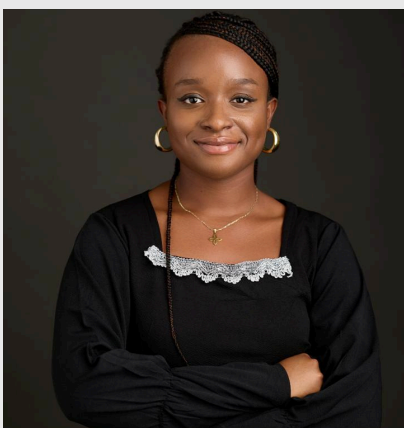


Halima Aigbe

Executive Associate

halima.aigbe

@moroomafrica.com



Uzochukwu Kpaduwa

Associate

uzochukwu.kpaduwa

@moroomafrica.com



Aro Toluwanimi Ruth

Intern

intern@moroomafrica.com