

FREE MOVEMENT OF CARICOM NATIONALS

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The Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas

- Art. 46: Member States commit themselves to the goal of free movement of their nationals within the Community (this puts an obligation on the Member States);
- A lot has developed within the context of free movement within CARICOM; we have not yet achieved this objective
- We've had several cases in court as well as complaints,
- - SHANIQUE MYRIE vs The State of Barbados, and
- -Maurice Tomlinson vs the State of Trinidad &Tobago, and we have
- complaints from Member States about how their nationals are being treated at airports in other Member States.

Today I will not discuss those issues. The Courts have already ruled.

My focus will be : how to facilitate free movement through data gathering and sharing of information and putting security measures in place

Art.46 of the Revised Treaty

Par. 2 “ Member States shall establish appropriate legislative, administrative and procedural arrangements to:

- (a) facilitate the movement of skills within the contemplation of this Article (10 categories of skilled nationals have been approved – artisans with CVQ, artistes, Associate Degree Holders, Domestic helpers / housekeepers with CVQ, Media persons, musicians, nurses, sportspersons, teachers and university graduates);
- (b) provide for movement of Community nationals into and within their jurisdiction without harassment or the imposition of impediments,
 - (i) The elimination of the requirement for passports for Community nationals travelling to their jurisdiction.”

- In the same Art. It is also mentioned that “ Member States public interest” may require restrictions. These include state security, public moral, etc. etc. issues that must be taken into consideration.
- One should not forget that CARICOM has 3 continental Member States: Belize, Suriname and Guyana. These member states have their own peculiarities within the context of Security.

- What does FREE Movement mean for the CARICOM National:
- Travelling without paper / documents? Easy no time consuming entry?
- Travelling : first point thorough check (immigration and customs), after that ease of travel.
- Every intransit stop enroute to final destination in CARICOM: passport , customs, check bag.

Travelling using land route:

- Both sides:
- Immigration / customs forms;
- Baggage checks.

- How can security measures facilitate free movement:
- CARICOM Machine readable Passports were introduced 2003

- Creation of a data system whereby once a CARICOM national starts to travel the info. automatically goes in all Member States respective data systems accessible to immigration and customs authorities. This info. also goes to the security authorities;
- All authorities will have info. If a CARICOM national has travelled to its respective country 10X in a month or only once;
- Data sharing and info. sharing are crucial if we want to have free movement of our nationals within the region.
- We should not give our travellers the feeling as if they are enemies and we are doing them a favour for visiting the country. There must be a difference of how we are servicing our own nationals compared to those from outside the region. The CARICOM nationals Line is clearly not giving the results.
- Our Security Authorities, Immigration and Custom Authorities are service providers and must treat citizens as their allies and not as their enemies.
- Through facilitation of travel support , trust and credibility can be rooted in the minds of our CARICOM Nationals which in the end can only benefit our Authorities to keep the Region safe and secure for its people and future generations.

Points to note

- In the past year more than 15,000 CARICOM nationals with skill certificates were granted access to Member States.
- The Community has in place an Advanced Passenger Information System (APIS) which allows the authorities in the receiving state to view beforehand all passengers travelling to the country.

- CARICAD, IMPACS and the Secretariat have been conducting training for Immigration Officers with respect to the free movement aspect of the CARICOM arrangements.