



SPEECH

BY

THE PRESIDENT, HIS EXCELLENCY

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AT THE LAUNCH OF THE ZIMBABWE ELECTRONIC PASSPORT

HARARE

14 DECEMBER 2021

Today marks an important milestone in the history of our great nation, as we launch the electronic passport (e-passport), and the state-of-the-art passport enrolment centre, at Makombe Building, here in Harare. This development is in line with my Government's vision for a modern and digitalised economy.

Strategic investment in key areas of the digital economy is critical for Zimbabwe to keep pace with the dynamic and ever changing technological environment.

This calls on us to modernize our economy through the use of ICTs and digital technology, which unlocks investment opportunities and serves as a catalyst to sustainable economic growth.

The rolling out of the e-passport project, therefore dovetails with the National Development Strategy 1 objective to **“modernise the economy through the use of ICTs and digital technology.”** It is also evidence of my Government's commitment, to ensure that every citizen has easy access to vital civil registration and travel documents. I am however, alive to the challenges that our people have been experiencing in trying to acquire travel and other official documents. This has resulted in the accumulation of a huge backlog.

Informed by this state of affairs, my Government entered into a Build, Own, Operate and Transfer partnership arrangement with Garsu

Pasaulis UAB, to set up infrastructure for the production of e-passports. This heralds our entry as a nation, into the modern era of smart technology in travel and identification documents.

The programme is further in conformity with the dictates of Regional and International Conventions, Protocols and Treaties that our country is party to, particularly those relating to issuance of civil and travel documents. The International Civil Aviation Organisation Convention requires that member states take measures to ensure the integrity, authenticity and security of travel and identity documents. As such, the partnership with Garsu Pasaulis UAB will ensure that we meet the required standards in the production of passports.

It also assists in our migration to digital, machine readable e-passports to eradicate the incidence of document counterfeiting.

Our people are set to benefit immensely with the introduction of the e-passport through the enhanced security standards at our ports of entry and exit. The key features of the new e- passport include, among others, an electronic cover with a chip, a security thread fully embedded in the inner booklet pages, as well as unique pages of the passport, each chronicling a story about Zimbabwe's rich cultural heritage and major tourist attractions.

These enhanced security features will go a long way in fighting cross-border organised crimes and illegal migration, thereby fostering the integrity of our immigration system.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Once implementation of the biometric system goes full throttle, we will begin to witness increased production of not just e-passports, but also national identity cards, birth certificates, entry visas as well as residence permits. The era of long queues and corrupt tendencies in the issuance of vital civil registration documents is indeed coming to an end.

The new passport enrolment centre format will be replicated across all passport offices countrywide and at our diplomatic missions abroad. Passport application processes will therefore be more convenient and easily accessible.

In addition, an Online Passport Application System is set to be introduced, to allow applications and payment for the documents from the comfort of one's home. The physical appearances at registry offices will only be required for biometrics. These achievements, by my Government will undoubtedly contribute to enhanced public service delivery as well as overall developmental trajectory of the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the midst of these achievements, my government is cognisant of the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the civil registration process. This has not only been the case with Zimbabwe, but the world at large. In light of this, a massive national mobile registration exercise will be rolled out commencing the second quarter of 2022 to issue primary documents. This exercise has been timed to coincide with voter registration in readiness for the 2023 Harmonised General Elections.

Meanwhile, allow me to extend my gratitude to Garsu Pasaulis and the Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage, for seeing this process through to fruition. This is a clear demonstration that the public and the private sector can foster win-win partnerships for national development.

I, therefore, urge other investors as well as Ministries, Departments and Agencies to follow suit and respond positively to the call for enhanced service delivery as enshrined under NDS-1.

As I conclude, the increasing cases of COVID-19 infections, requires each and every one of us to remain vigilant. Those who are yet to be vaccinated, I urge you to go and get vaccinated. This includes going to get a third booster vaccine jab for those who have already been vaccinated to enhance their immunity. Let us continue to mask up, sanitising and maintaining social distance. No one is safe until everyone is safe.

With these remarks, it is now my singular honour and privilege to declare the Zimbabwe Electronic Passport officially launched.

God bless you all.

God bless Zimbabwe.

I thank you.