



CHIEF DIRECTORATE: CONSULAR SERVICES SERVICE DELIVERY CHARTER

1. VISION

A client orientated, professional and proactive consular service.

2. MISSION

We are committed to render a professional, and people friendly consular service to all South Africans who travel, work, study and live abroad.

3. VALUES

The Chief Directorate: Consular Services of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) is committed to providing an effective and efficient service to all our clients throughout the world, irrespective of national origin, age, gender or religious orientation. Our clients include not only members of the public requiring Consular services, but also other government departments and institutions, South African representatives abroad and all business units within the DIRCO. Our commitment to render services can be clearly determined and measured at all times by sensitivity, empathy, courtesy, speed, accuracy and fairness.

4. SERVICES

The Chief Directorate: Consular Services works in close collaboration with the Consular Sections of the South African Diplomatic Missions (Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates-General) abroad and the services listed are often performed through or in conjunction with our Diplomatic Missions abroad. If you need Consular assistance whilst abroad, you can contact the Consular Section of the [South African Diplomatic Mission](#) in the country directly. Alternatively you could obtain the information via the DIRCO's switchboard in Pretoria at (012) 351-1000 during office hours (08:00 – 16:30).

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Emergency Consular services are available on a 24-hour basis. For emergency services you may contact the **Chief Directorate: Consular Services** during office hours and the DIRCO's Operations Room in Pretoria at telephone number (012) 351-1000/0035 after-hours. Officials at our Operations Room will liaise with the Chief Directorate: Consular Services, which will be available to provide specialised guidance and assistance after hours and over weekends.

4.1 The services we provide:

We have two areas of specialisation, namely:

- Consular assistance rendered to South African nationals abroad, including emergency Consular assistance.
- Consular Legalisation Services.

Consular assistance is rendered to South African nationals travelling, working, studying and/or living abroad. Routine consular assistance, excluding legalisation services, is rendered during weekdays from 08:00 – 16:30 (Monday – Friday, excluding public holidays).

After hours services are only rendered in the event of an emergency and excludes any enquiries of a general nature. Emergency Consular services can be described as services rendered to South African nationals who are distressed, destitute, seriously injured, assistance rendered to the next of kin in case of death or involved in natural/man-made disasters.

Legalisation services are rendered to South African citizens and foreign nationals requiring South African public documents to be legalised for use abroad. These services are rendered to provide legal validity to South African public documents to enable a person to use the documents outside South Africa. Consular legalisation service hours are from 08:30 – 12:30 (Monday – Friday, excluding public holidays). Telephone enquiries are dealt with during normal office hours (08:00 – 16:30).

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OVERVIEW OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE CHIEF DIRECTORATE: CONSULAR SERVICES

4.1.1 CONSULAR SERVICES:

Chief Directorate: Consular Services provide the following services:

Protection and assistance to South African nationals abroad as contemplated in Article 5 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963:

- Humanitarian assistance in emergencies (i.e. situations involving destitution or distress of South African nationals abroad). This includes, providing a support service in hostage cases as well as assistance rendered to South African nationals abroad in cases of political turmoil or natural disasters.
- In the event of an emergency, we communicate on behalf of South African nationals abroad with the next of kin and/or friends in South Africa.
- Logistical support and non-financial assistance for South African nationals who are in hospital abroad or who may need to be repatriated to SA for urgent medical or professional attention.
- Communication with the next-of-kin in the event of reported death or life threatening illness or injury. We also provide logistical assistance with the importation of mortal remains (including import permit applications) or burials of South African nationals abroad. We do not provide financial assistance arising from the death of a South African national abroad.
- Provide guidance to next-of-kin and liaison with relevant stakeholders in the search for missing persons abroad and/or determination of the whereabouts of South African nationals abroad under certain circumstances.
- Assistance to families under certain circumstances in facilitating the transfer of funds to family members in distress/destitute abroad where commercial means are non-existent or limited or where levels of destitution dictate. The family member in South Africa must deposit the funds at a regional office of the Department of Home Affairs.
- Advice, guidance and support to a custodial parent/guardian in matters of child abduction or child stealing. Where there is evidence that the health and safety of the child is in jeopardy, the matter is treated as an emergency.

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- Abduction and kidnapping covers forcible restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons for different outcomes. All instances of kidnapping outside of South Africa should be reported to the Operations Room immediately. We provide advice and guidance to the next of kin of affected nationals.
- Assistance and guidance to foreign representatives regarding their nationals in South Africa who need Consular assistance.

Assistance to South African nationals in detention:

- Notification of the next of kin of arrested or detained persons abroad if so requested in writing by the arrested or detained person.
- Assistance with the transfer of funds from next-of-kin in South Africa to prisoners abroad, where commercial means are non-existent or limited or where levels of destitution dictate, with due observance of the law and regulations of the arresting state.
- Facilitation of the sending of letters and prescription medication to South African nationals detained abroad subject to the provisions and prevailing fees of the DIRCO as may be amended from time to time and in compliance with the laws and regulations of the country of arrest/imprisonment. In exceptional cases, medicine will be forwarded if an original prescription from a registered medical doctor is submitted and a certificate that the medicine is unavailable in the country of detention/imprisonment.

Information - Local:

- Requests for Information and Advice: Reasonable requests for information on a foreign location or reference to available sources would be made available excluding travel advice.

Legal Request and Process Administration:

- Services of Process:
 - Facilitation of the services of process via diplomatic channels to have summons served to defendants abroad.
- Other Legal Processes:
 - Facilitation of other legal processes via diplomatic channels when requested to do so by the authorised authorities. These processes include, but are not limited to, requests for extradition, rogatory letters and evidence on commission.

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How to access Consular services:

Contact the Chief Directorate: Consular Services:

- a) In person during official working hours preferably by appointment.
- b) By mail: The address to be used is Chief Directorate: Consular Services, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Private Bag X152, Pretoria, 0001
- c) Telephonically, +27 12 351 1000, fax: +27 12 329 1752, email: Consular@dirco.gov.za or consult the Consular website, www.dirco.gov.za and click to Consular information. If you are abroad, you can contact the [South African Diplomatic Mission](#) in the country directly.

When requesting a Consular service be aware of the following:

Each case determines the documents needed to enable this office to render assistance. A valid form of identification, i.e. identity document or passport, may be requested. When in doubt, you are advised to contact the office before requesting a Consular service. You can also visit our [website](#) for more information.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Consular does NOT provide the following services

Institute court proceedings or obtain legal advice on behalf of South African nationals locally and abroad.

Intervene in local judicial procedures abroad to get South African nationals out of prison, on bail or an early trial.

Pay any expenses on behalf of nationals from State funds, i.e. medical bills, hotel or legal fees, air tickets, transport, food, funerals, cremation or return of mortal remains.

Obtain accommodation or any permits (i.e. work permits, study permits, etc.) on behalf of South African nationals.

Conduct investigations related to an offence.

Support a South African national financially whilst in prison.

Conduct a search without the assistance of local authorities or provide information regarding the whereabouts of a South African national without the express consent of that national.

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Assist with the transfer of funds to a national who is not in distress.

4.1.2 LEGALISATION SERVICES:

Consular provides the following services:

- Legalisation of public documents executed within South Africa for use outside the Republic of South Africa by means of an Apostille Certificate or a Certificate of Authentication and vice versa.
- Provision of guidelines to obtain the correct signatures/documents if documents submitted are incorrect or incomplete.
- Provision of information when telephone/mail enquiries are received with regards to legalisation of documentation.

How to access Consular legal services:

Submit the correct documentation to the Consular Legalisation Section through the following means:

- a) In person.
- b) By courier.
- c) By registered/fast mail.
- d) Via the South African Diplomatic Mission abroad (High Commission, Embassy or Consulate General).

Be advised that when the services of a courier company are used, the client has to arrange payment with the courier to have the documents returned to him/her. The client must contact the Consular Legalisation Section with the airway bill number as soon as confirmation is received from the courier company that the documents have been delivered. The Consular Legalisation Section will provide the client with a reference number to be quoted by the courier when collecting these documents.

In all instances of submission by mail or courier, the client must include a covering letter with his/her contact details and indicating in which country the document will be used. If the services of a courier company will be used for the return of the documents, the letter must also give authorisation to the courier company to collect the documents on the client's behalf.

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For documents sent via mail (registered, fast mail or otherwise), kindly include a self-addressed, franked (for registered mail) envelope to allow this Section to return the documents to the client upon completion thereof.

Enquiries can be made by contacting us at telephone number (012) 351-1726 or fax number (012) 329-1752 or e-mail address legalisation@dirco.gov.za

Information regarding Legalisation services and contact details are also available on the [Departmental website \(http://www.dirco.gov.za/Consular/legalisation.htm\)](http://www.dirco.gov.za/Consular/legalisation.htm).

Prerequisite to request for legalisation service:

The document to be legalised is determined by the client. The foreign representative in South Africa of the country in which the documents will be used would usually provide the client with the list of documents required for authentication/legalisation. The Section can issue the relevant authentication or apostille certificate subject to the following rules:

- The client needs to advise the Consular Legalisation Section of the country in which the document will be used to enable the Consular legalisation section to determine if an apostille or authentication certificate is required.
- Before the Consular Legalisation Section can issue the relevant authentication/apostille certificate, the document has to be legalised/authenticated by:
 - A Magistrate, an additional Magistrate or Assistant Magistrate.
 - A Registrar or an Assistant Registrar of the High Court of South Africa.
 - A Government official whose signature is registered on the signature database of the DIRCO.

IMPORTANT NOTE

The signature of a Commissioner of Oaths, Notary Public, Justice of the Peace or any court employee who is not a Registrar has to be legalised by a Magistrate, Additional Magistrate or Assistant Magistrate or by a Registrar or an Assistant Registrar of any division of the High Court of South Africa within the jurisdiction of which such Commissioner of Oaths or Justice of the Peace exercises his or her function or such Notary Public is in practice, before documents are submitted to the Legalisation Section for authentication.

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The following documents need not be legalised by the Court as stipulated above, provided the documents were signed by the relevant authority as listed below:

- a) Unabridged or full birth, marriage and/or death certificates and letters confirming an individual's citizenship status signed and stamped by the authorised Home Affairs employee.
- b) Adoption papers signed and stamped by the Registrar for Adoptions at the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and the Department of Social Development.
- c) Export documentation signed and stamped by the relevant Chamber of Commerce.
- d) Educational certificates signed and stamped by the authorised employee at the Department of Education.
- e) Police Clearance Certificates signed and stamped by the Criminal Records Centre of the South African Police Service in Pretoria (a Police Clearance Certificate is only valid for three months).
- f) Letter of No Impediment (marital status letter) signed and stamped by the authorised Home Affairs employee.
- g) Registration of a company signed and stamped by the Registrar for Close Corporations.
- h) Medical certificates stamped and signed by the authorised officials at the Health Professions Council of South Africa.
- i) Documents pertaining to the transportation of livestock, including pets, signed and stamped by an authorised State Veterinarian.

Copies of documents need to be notarised by a Notary Public (any lawyer who is registered as a notary) and legalised by the Registrar of the High Court or Magistrate in the same area of jurisdiction before submitting these to the DIRCO. The Legalisation Section cannot legalise copies of documents, whether these are certified true copies or not.

4.2 When you call, visit or write to Consular Services, we will:

- Serve all clients in an unbiased, polite, helpful and impartial manner.
- Address you appropriately and professionally, respecting you as clients.
- Treat all visitors as clients as they are entitled to receive high standards of service.
- Be punctual in the execution of our duties. The timeframes for responding to clients are specified in paragraph 4.3.

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- Co-operate fully with other employees to advance the public interest. We share information, work as a team to maintain the standards and to achieve our objectives.
- Execute all reasonable instructions by persons officially assigned to issue them.
- Execute our duties in a professional, competent and accountable manner.
- Honour the confidentiality of matters, documents and discussions.
- Take responsibility for our own work and the work and workflow of the Chief Directorate as a whole.
- Communicate all services to clients in English. If a client wishes to be served in any of the other official languages, every attempt will be made to find an employee in the Chief Directorate to assist in the client's language of choice.
- Make all effort to avoid error. Accuracy of at least 90% is guaranteed.
- The Chief Directorate: Consular Services is in continuous consultation with relevant role-players to ensure that information provided to the public is correct and up to date. Information provided by the Chief Directorate is reliable subject only to the accuracy and timeliness of data received from outside agencies.
- Deal with one client/case/telephone enquiry at a time, giving the client his/her attention during this period in order to provide the best possible service to our clients.
- The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963 includes corporate clients within its ambit. As such, South African corporate legal entities are entitled to consular services in the same manner as individuals, exclusive of intervention in commercial, civil or criminal disputes where recourse to recognised legal recourse is available.

4.3 The service standards of the Chief Directorate Consular Services:

The services listed in the Schedules are meant to be generic and the listing is not intended as a definitive itemisation of the range of requests that Consular Services staff are expected to respond to. The listings will be reviewed from time to time in order to keep it current with changing conditions.

The response times provided in the minimum operational standards are targets based on best efforts and existent conditions. Our ability to meet the stated times in the Services Delivery Standards is, in many instances, governed by factors that are beyond our control. Notwithstanding, we will make every effort to meet the stated standards. When it is not possible to do so, we will explain to our clients the reasons for not being able to meet the required standards.

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In the event that clients submit documents for legalisation during periods when the Chief Directorate: Consular Services is without electrical power, the client's documents will be processed once power is restored. The time frames mentioned for the processing of documents cannot be adhered to under such circumstances.

It is very important to note that during times of emergencies and disasters these matters will receive preference. During such periods all other Consular services may be limited and the timeframes set out in the standards might not be met. It might be necessary to involve all employees in the Chief Directorate: Consular Services and as such the response times on other issues may be negatively affected.

We have set the following minimum operational standards for the level and quality of services provided by the **Consular Section** specifically:

SERVICE	TIMEFRAME TO RESPOND
Consular Protection & Assistance	
Respond to enquiries related to an identified emergency	Immediate response
Communication with family and/or friends in the event of an emergency (pending availability of contact particulars)	Immediate response
Non-financial assistance for medical evacuation to SA	Response within 24 hours
Notification of next-of-kin in the event of death (pending availability of contact particulars)	Immediate response
Notification of next-of-kin in the event of life-threatening illness or injury (pending availability of contact particulars)	Immediate response
Non-financial assistance with importation of mortal remains/burial abroad (the time frame for the completion of the actual burial/return of mortal remains is subject to various factors and cannot be pre-determined)	Response within 24 hours
Facilitation of financial transfers to destitute or distressed SA nationals abroad (time frame refers to action taken after confirmation is received that funds have been deposited by a family member at a regional office of the Department of Home Affairs)	Response within 24 hours
Liaison with relevant stakeholders in cases of missing	Request initiated to relevant

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SERVICE	TIMEFRAME TO RESPOND
persons/whereabouts of South African nationals	authority within 24 hours
Liaison with relevant stakeholders in child custody matters, abductions and adoptions	Request initiated to relevant authority within 24 hours
Liaison with relevant stakeholders in kidnapping/hostage situations	Immediate response to situation – Next-of-kin support by SAPS facilitated within 24 hours
Respond to foreign missions in South Africa and other role-players	Response within 48 hours
Prisoners	
Facilitation of funds to prisoners abroad: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge receipt of proof of payment with the family members Confirm receipt of funds from DIRCO's Finance Section once family submitted proof of payment; Notify the South African representative of funds deposited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response within 24 hours Response within 24 hours Notification to SA representative done within 72 hours. <p>(Payment of funds to the prisoner will depend on the arrangements with the Prison Authorities in the country concerned).</p>
Contact family of arrested or detained persons abroad if so requested by the detainee	Contact initiated within 72 hours
Facilitate the sending of letters and prescription medication to detainees abroad	Action taken within 72 hours of receipt – dispatching of items reliant on Departmental mail service schedules
Legal and Notary	
Facilitation of Service of Process	Documents forwarded to relevant

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SERVICE	TIMEFRAME TO RESPOND
	authority within 72 hours
Facilitation of other Legal Processes	Documents forwarded to relevant authority within 72 hours
Ad hoc Consular Support Services	Response within 72 hours
Respond to other Government Departments, Institutions, South African Representatives abroad and Business Units within the DIRCO	Response within 24 Hours

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Time refers to response time in working days and may be subject to factors beyond our control. Each Consular case develops according to its own dynamics and complexity. We facilitate the process but the exact timeframe for completing a case cannot be pre-determined

We have set the following minimum operational standards for the level and quality of services provided by the **Legalisation Section** specifically:

SERVICE	TIMEFRAME FOR COMPLETION
Opening hours to the public (Monday - Friday, excluding public holidays)	08:30 – 12:30
Notice of closure of the Legalisation Section on days other than mentioned above	7 Days
Processing of documents where between 1 and 5 documents are received between 08h30 and 12h00	30 to 45 minutes
Processing of documents received between 12h00 and 12h30	Next working day
Processing of documents where more than 5 documents are submitted	Next working day
Advise client of non-delivery within given timeframe due to staff absences or technical failure	Immediately
Signature verification: Contact signatory of the document whose signature is required to be verified (Note: It is regretted that we are not able to provide	24 Hours

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SERVICE	TIMEFRAME FOR COMPLETION
an undertaking as to how long it will take the signatory to forward their specimen signature to the Legalisation Section.)	
Respond to telephone enquiries	24 Hours
Respond to written correspondence (mail, e-mail, fax)	24 Hours
Keep documents not yet collected before destroying	6 Months
Be identifiable by nametags	Continuously
Provide clients with information of authorities whose signatures can be authenticated	Immediately
The security staff at the entrance to the OR Tambo Building can provide clients with the necessary directions.	Continuous

4.4 Our performance against our standards

- We will be open and transparent about how our actual performance compares with our standards of service.
- Service recipients have the right to all the Batho Pele principles. We commit ourselves to the principles of Batho Pele (consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness & transparency, redress and value for money) and will indicate to you as our clients what you can expect from us with regard to service delivery standards.

5. COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS:

A record on the number of documents and cases processed, the number of errors and complaints received each day is kept. Where possible, corrective measures will be taken. All complaints and suggestions will be responded to within one week of receipt thereof. We value and appreciate your feedback of our service on quality, timeless and responsiveness of our services. In order to ensure that your needs and expectations are being met, we encourage you to provide us with your comments and suggestions in the suggestions box at the Legalisation Reception or via e-mail. The client can contact the Chief Directorate: Consular Services at e-mail address Consular@dirco.gov.za or telephonically at (012) 351-1900. The feedback form can also be accessed electronically ([Click here for a form](#)).

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Physical Address:

Legalisation Section - NE2A - Ground Floor
OR Tambo Building
460 Soutpansberg Road
Rietondale
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IN RETURN WE EXPECT THE PUBLIC TO BE CIVIL AND COURTEOUS AND TO RESPECT THE DIGNITY OF OUR EMPLOYEES AT ALL TIMES.

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