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MEDIA INFORMATION

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VFS Global reinforces applicant awareness and trusted mobility solutions in South Africa as international travel demand grows

Applicants encouraged to use official channels, plan for student, business and group travel, and remain vigilant against fraudulent intermediaries promising early appointments, faster processing or guaranteed visa outcomes.

The advisory comes as outbound travel demand from South Africa remains strong across business, tourism, education and visiting friends and relatives (VFR) segments as per latest data shared by VFS Global- the global leader in trusted technology services, empowering secure mobility for governments and citizens. Visa application volumes processed by VFS Global in South Africa increased by 34% in 2025 compared to 2024, while application volumes processed so far in 2026 have already reached 70% of total 2025 volumes.

Popular destinations including the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada continue to record strong demand from South African travellers, while Schengen destinations such as the Netherlands and Denmark are also witnessing positive application trends. Increased forward planning by travellers, sustained business travel activity and growing interest in overseas education continue to contribute to higher visa application volumes.

Mr. Hariprasad Viswanathan, Chief Operating Officer, Sub-Saharan Africa, VFS Global, said *"South Africans continue to demonstrate a strong appetite for international travel, whether for business, education, tourism or visiting family and friends. As demand grows, it is essential that applicants rely only on official information sources and plan their applications well in advance, particularly during peak travel periods."*

Growing demand for group travel and mobility solutions

As organisations increasingly coordinate international travel for employees, project teams, students, conference delegates and sports groups, VFS Global is witnessing rising demand for services designed to simplify group application management.

Group Booking Services enable eligible organisations and travel groups to coordinate visa application submissions more efficiently, while solutions such as Visa At Your Doorstep (VAYD) and On Demand Mobile Visa (ODMV) allow applicants to complete application submission and biometric enrolment at a location of their choice, subject to the requirements of the respective client government.

We are also seeing growing interest in flexible mobility solutions such as Visa At Your Doorstep, On Demand Mobile Visa and other group booking services, which help make the visa application process more accessible and convenient while maintaining the robust security and compliance standards required by our client governments. Our continued focus remains on supporting governments and applicants through trusted, transparent and secure services that facilitate seamless global mobility.", Mr. Viswanathan added.

Reflecting this trend, VAYD volumes in South Africa increased by 65% in 2025 compared to 2024 and have already surpassed total 2025 volumes during 2026. ODMV volumes for UK visa operations have also grown significantly, currently more than twice the application volumes recorded during 2025.

These solutions help reduce travel requirements for applicants, support large-scale application processing and improve convenience for eligible groups while maintaining the same security and compliance standards as traditional application channels.

Expanding visa services accessibility across South Africa

VFS Global continues to enhance accessibility to visa services through a growing network of service offerings across South Africa.

Earlier this year, VFS Global and Discovery launched South Africa's first dedicated UK Visa Application Centre, located within the Discovery Store in Sandton, Johannesburg. The initiative offers eligible applicants a seamless and premium visa application experience while bringing services closer to customers through a trusted partnership model.

In addition, VFS Global operates UK Premium Application Centres in Bloemfontein and Nelspruit, providing applicants in the Free State and Mpumalanga with more convenient access to visa services closer to where they live, reducing travel time and associated costs. On Demand Mobile Visa services are also available within Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town city limits, providing additional flexibility for eligible UK applicants.

Since commencing operations in South Africa in 2005, VFS Global has continued to support outbound travel and citizen services through a network of 26 Application Centres across 9 cities, serving 24 client governments. South Africa remains one of VFS Global's most significant operations in Sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for nearly 30% of the region's workforce. Approximately 75% of the company's South African workforce, including senior leadership positions, are women, reflecting a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. Beyond its operational footprint, VFS Global supports community development initiatives across the country, including AI and robotics training programmes and sports-based youth development partnerships aimed at creating sustainable social impact.

NOTES TO THE EDITOR:

Optional services remain transparent and applicant-led

Subject to approval by client governments, VFS Global offers a range of optional services designed to provide additional convenience during the application process. These may include assisted form-filling services, courier return of passports, SMS notifications, Premium Lounge access, Group Booking Services, Visa At Your Doorstep and On Demand Mobile Visa services, depending on availability and the country of application.

These services are entirely optional, transparently priced and do not influence the outcome of a visa application, appointment availability or processing timelines. Applicants may complete the standard visa application process without purchasing any optional service.

VFS Global maintains a zero-tolerance approach towards fraud, coercion, misrepresentation and unethical conduct. Any allegation of misconduct is reviewed through the company's established governance, compliance and risk management processes.

Strengthening applicant protection and anti-fraud awareness

VFS Global continues to invest in applicant-awareness initiatives to help travellers identify and avoid fraudulent practices. Applicants are reminded that visa appointments can only be booked through official channels and that no third party, agent or individual can guarantee an earlier appointment, a faster processing timeline or a positive visa decision. Fraudsters often misuse company branding, logos, websites, social media pages and unofficial contact details to mislead applicants. VFS Global urges residents to verify all information exclusively through the official VFS Global website, www.vfsglobal.com, and to report suspected fraudulent activity through official channels.

As part of its anti-fraud measures, VFS Global employs appointment verification controls, validation of application and appointment references, anti-fraud messaging across applicant touchpoints and controlled access procedures at Visa Application Centres for applicants with valid appointments. Applicants are also encouraged to review official document checklists carefully, ensure that all required documentation is complete before submission and arrive on time for their appointments to help avoid unnecessary delays

About VFS Global

As the global leader in trusted technology services, empowering secure mobility for governments and citizens, VFS Global embraces technological innovation, including Generative AI, to support governments and diplomatic missions worldwide. The company manages non-judgmental and administrative tasks related to applications for visa, passport, and consular services for its client governments, increasing productivity and enabling them to focus entirely on the critical task of assessment.

With a responsible approach to technology development, adoption and integration, the company prioritises ethical practices and sustainability while serving as the trusted partner to 71 client governments. Operating over 4,300 Application Centres in 170 countries, VFS Global has efficiently processed more than 567 million transactions* since 2001.

Headquartered in Zurich and Dubai, VFS Global is majority owned by Blackstone, the world’s largest alternative asset manager, along with minority shareholders including Swiss-based Kuoni and Hugentobler Foundation, Singapore based Temasek and UAE based Dubai Holdings.

** Comprising 349.06 million transactions by VFS Global and 218.52 million transactions by CiX Citizen Experience*

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