



**Statement by Hon. Andisiwe Kumbaca, MP on Proposal on
imposing visa entry requirements on Western State that equally
impose such requirements on South African Citizens**

Mini-Plenary Debate

28 November 2025

Honourable Chairperson,

Our engagements with communities and stakeholders continually remind us that questions of mobility and reciprocity are ultimately questions about how South Africa is positioned and respected in the world. These concerns speak to the heart of our foreign policy, a policy rooted in fairness, mutual respect and the pursuit of balanced partnerships. **As a nation that recently demonstrated global leadership through the successful hosting of the G20**, we must ensure that our interactions with international partners reflect the same principles of equality and dignity that we advance on global platforms.

South Africa's foreign policy has long been anchored in the principles of sovereignty, equality among nations and a rules based international order.

These principles guide the way the country manages its diplomatic relations, engages global partners and approaches issues of mobility and migration. The question of visa reciprocity must therefore be located squarely within this broader foreign policy framework, because the movement of people is a central component of how states relate, cooperate and define the balance of obligations between them.

In the global diplomatic environment, visa regimes are not merely administrative tools, they are expressions of the political relationship between states. They reflect levels of trust, historical patterns of engagement and assessments of mutual benefit. When South Africa evaluates the visa conditions imposed on its citizens by Western states, it is engaging in a foreign policy assessment, one that weighs fairness, national dignity and reciprocity while ensuring that strategic partnerships are preserved and strengthened.

Honourable Members, the experiences shared by many South Africans, whether students, academics, entrepreneurs, artists or ordinary travellers, remind us that mobility is not just a policy matter but a real part of people's hopes and plans. When our citizens engage with certain Western visa systems, they often tell us how smoother processes, clearer

communication and lighter paperwork would make a meaningful difference in their journeys. These everyday stories give us a clear mandate to work towards a future where our people are welcomed with the same openness, trust and courtesy that we extend to visitors here at home.

We must therefore ask ourselves: **How do we advance a system of mobility that supports the aspirations of our people, while continuing to nurture the strong bilateral partnerships that remain vital to our national interests?**

In raising this, it must be acknowledged that South Africa cannot remain indifferent to global patterns where powerful states increasingly use visa regimes as instruments of geopolitical influence. Reciprocity, in many jurisdictions, becomes a practical tool to rebalance dynamics, encourage dialogue and signal that mobility must be a two way street. We must consider whether adopting certain reciprocal principles may in fact strengthen our diplomatic hand rather than weaken it.

But it is equally important to emphasise that any policy shift must be rooted in evidence, proportionality and constructive engagement, not in populism or emotional reaction. We must guard against approaches that place South Africa's developmental and diplomatic interests at risk.

Chairperson, it is crucial to position this issue within our broader foreign policy orientation. South Africa remains committed to multilateralism, progressive internationalism and partnerships across the Global South, BRICS and the African continent. These partnerships are grounded in principles of mutual benefit and solidarity. By contrast, some Western partners have historically engaged with African countries from a position of asymmetry. Visa regimes remain one of the spaces where this asymmetry expresses itself most visibly.

Yet the response to such asymmetry must continue to be characterised by respectful dialogue. The current discussion offers an opportunity to say: Let us reexamine the balance. Let us strive for fairness. And let us use diplomacy to advance equitable mobility for our citizens.

Honourable Members,

Part of contextualising this matter is recognising that Western nations remain important partners in trade, development assistance, tourism, education and scientific cooperation. The conversation before us must therefore unfold in a way that defends national dignity while preserving constructive diplomatic engagement. South Africa's strength has always been its ability to balance principle with pragmatism.

This is why, when considering reciprocity, it must be emphasised that the intention is not to escalate tensions or undermine longstanding partnerships. The intention is to ensure that South Africans enjoy the same respect and treatment that visitors from those states receive here. If South Africa offers visa waivers or simplified entry to certain partners, it is reasonable to expect parity or at minimum meaningful dialogue toward fairness.

Honourable Members,

International trends are shifting. After COVID 19, many countries reassessed their visa regimes in line with public health, security concerns and changing migration patterns. Unfortunately, in some cases, these reassessments hardened the mobility barriers faced by citizens of developing countries. It is therefore appropriate for South Africa to evaluate where its citizens stand within this evolving landscape.

Any such evaluation must involve structured engagement with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, the Department of Home Affairs, relevant economic sectors and key diplomatic missions. Collaboration ensures that potential policy decisions are both well informed and aligned with national interests.

Administrative capacity must also be considered. Home Affairs has been modernising its visa systems, improving digital infrastructure and enhancing processing efficiency. Any reciprocal framework would need to integrate with these improvements to ensure practicality and security.

Honourable Members,

The dignity of South African citizens is non-negotiable. When individuals feel that their movement is unjustifiably restricted or that they are treated unfairly in foreign visa systems, it affects the country's broader sense of global respect and belonging. Addressing these concerns is therefore essential, not only for individuals but for the nation as a whole.

However, it must be done with an appreciation of the diplomatic landscape. South Africa's credibility in global affairs is rooted in its ability to advance fairness while maintaining openness to dialogue. The country has consistently championed cooperation, multilateralism and equality among nations. This matter offers another opportunity to reaffirm those values.

Honourable Members, this debate is not about confrontation but about balance. It is not about shutting doors but ensuring that doors open both ways. It is not about rejecting partnership but strengthening it on terms that honour the dignity of our people.

The path forward must be grounded in diplomacy. South Africa has strong channels for bilateral engagement with Western partners, and these should be fully utilised to raise concerns about visa asymmetry. Platforms such as the African Union, BRICS and the United Nations can also support efforts to promote equitable global mobility.

In closing, Honourable Members, this matter calls for sober reflection, strategic thinking and a commitment to fairness. Any approach must protect the rights of South Africans while sustaining the partnerships that contribute to the country's development and international standing.

I thank you.