

## THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA INTRODUCES A NEW LEGAL INSTRUMENT: BROWN CARD FOR PERMANENT RESIDENCY FOR ELIGIBLE FOREIGN NATIONALS

### Introduction

On **May 27th, 2023**, the Minister of Interior, Rauf Aregbesola, announced the introduction of a new legal instrument, Nigeria's Brown Card for permanent residency permit holders. The announcement is sequel to the approval of President Muhammadu Buhari and the Federal Executive Council.

Prior to the announcement, the permanent residency option was not fully effective in Nigeria as applicants were issued the Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Aliens Card ("**CERPAC**" or "**Green CERPAC card**") with a validity of five (5) years and will require renewal upon expiration of the term granted.

The recently introduced Brown CERPAC card will grant permanent residency holders a perpetual residency, eliminating the requirement for renewal every five (5) years, allowing non-Nigerians to live and work in Nigeria indefinitely under the permanent residency option. The brown card is an Implementation of the Permanent residency category which was introduced by the Nigeria visa policy 2020.

The "**CERPAC**" or "**Green CERPAC Card**" which was established in 2010, for foreign nationals required to reside and work in Nigeria on a long-term basis for a period of one year and above. The CERPAC green card when issued enables foreign nationals to reside and work in Nigeria for an initial limited duration, requiring renewal within one (1) – five (5) years of issuance, based on the specific type of permit obtained which also included the permanent residency permit category.

However, with the introduction of the CERPAC Brown card, eligible persons for the permanent residency option will be issued a perpetual residency which will not require renewal as required for CERPAC Green card permit holders.

### Need-to-know Information!

1. The Minister of Interior has been vested with the authority to grant Permanent Residency status to non-Nigerians, allowing them to reside and work in Nigeria indefinitely.
2. The Brown card, once obtained, will remain valid perpetually and will not require renewal.
3. The eligibility criteria for this new Permanent Residency status are as follows:
  - Foreign nationals of African descent seeking to establish Nigeria as their homeland through the 'Privilege of Return' program.
  - Foreign nationals wishing to invest in Nigeria in accordance with established guidelines.
  - Foreign nationals with exceptional talents, knowledge, and skills in rare fields such as Science, Technology, Medicine, Engineering, the Arts, Sports, and other specified areas.
  - Male foreign nationals who have been married to Nigerian women for at least one year.
4. The Green card will continue to serve as a viable legal instrument for individuals seeking to reside and work in Nigeria for a limited duration, requiring periodic renewal. This option remains accessible, particularly for those who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the Brown card or opt not to pursue it.
5. The Brown Card does not bestow citizenship status upon its holders. The eligibility criteria for obtaining citizenship vary from those for acquiring the Brown Card, and as a result, the rights and privileges associated with each may also differ.
6. The specific application details and procedures for acquiring the Brown card have yet to be announced. The Ministry of Interior and the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) will provide further information on a later/unspecified date.

## Conclusion

The introduction of Nigeria's Brown Card for permanent residency is a significant milestone in the country's immigration landscape. Eligible non-Nigerians can now reside and work in Nigeria indefinitely, without the need for regular renewal.

This exemplifies the Federal Government's commitment to positioning Nigeria as a hub for investment and peaceful coexistence. The eligibility criteria for the Brown Card also reinforces Nigeria's dedication to fostering diversity, family unity, talent retention, and acquisition.

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