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THE FIRST CONSULAR REUNION ORGANIZED BY THE GENERAL CONSULAR DEPARTMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ALONG WITH THE ROMANIAN EMBASSIES IN THE UNITED STATES, CANADA AND MEXICO

On June 22nd and 23rd, the first regional consular reunion organized by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs took place in New York, being attended by all the Romanian consuls from the diplomatic missions in the US, Canada and Mexico.



Heads of important departments in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs (Consular Department, Passport Department, Foreigner Authority, Border Police) took part in the event.

The purpose of the reunion was the common interest in enhancing and standardizing the consular services provided by the Romanian diplomatic and consular offices in North

America to the Romanian citizens, based on the consular activity experience, which has increased significantly during the past years, as well as on the specific requests and petitions addressed by the Romanian community to the embassies and consular offices. The diverse and complex topics of the consular procedures in the US, Canada and Mexico were discussed and practical solutions for the simplification of some of the consular services were explored.

Some of these practical simplification solutions are presented in the Annex which is attached to this press release.

The participants stressed the need to reduce the bureaucratic component of some of the consular services and insisted on finding a simpler solution that would assure at the same time compliance with the regulations.

Attendants also brought up the high degree of workload that the Romanian consular staff has to face while working at a North-American mission. The workload has practically doubled its amount in the past years, while the staff kept the same number of employees, due to financial reasons. In these conditions, the participants emphasized the need to use more efficiently and on a larger scale the modern means of communication which are so common for the American environment of work, such as the websites of the embassies and consular offices, offering references through an automatic telephone answering machine, etc. The constant concern of the diplomatic missions of up-dating their websites in order to assure the fast access to information, was also discussed.

The participants also highlighted the need of promoting some of the positive aspects of these means of communication, which are extensively used in the public relations American environment.

The most important projects of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the consular field, such as enabling the temporary passports by the end of this year, were presented during the reunion. The temporary passports will be valid for one year and they will be issued by the Romanian embassies and consular offices for the people who will prove the need of an emergency trip or of regulating their residency in a certain state where they are located at the time. The consular offices will thus assist and support the Romanian citizens who don't have valid identification cards or travel permits and who can not wait until an individual passport is issued.

At the same time, it was presented the perspective of introducing, by the end of decade, the biometrical passports – one of the European Union requirements and an important criteria for Romania to qualify for the Visa Waiver program (which makes the US visa not needed). The qualification for the Visa Waiver program will need a consistent preparation period, as well as a strong lobbying campaign at the level of the US administration and Congress.

The consular reunion offered a good opportunity for the representatives of the authorities in Bucharest to get aware first hand of the concerns and the difficulties which the embassies are facing in the consular field in providing quality services to the Romanian citizens.

The reunion was a professional demarche organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the support of the embassies in Washington, Ottawa and Ciudad de Mexico and of the General Consular Offices in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Montreal and Toronto. It was a part of the efforts aiming at enhancing the consular assistance for the Romanian citizens in the United States, Canada and Mexico. The consular reunions will continue in the future, taking place also on other continents with important communities of Romanian citizens.

ANNEX

Regarding the Practical Solutions of Simplification and Modification of Some Consular Procedures Established during the Consular Reunion in New York

- > changing the name in the Romanian civil status documents for the Romanian citizens who currently live in the US and who changed their name through naturalization process can be accomplished by submitting an official request to the embassy or the consular office in charge; previously, the application being possible only in Romania through power of attorney.

- > the 1 (one) year deadline for demanding the registration of the civil status of American birth certificates belonging to the children which were born on the US territory, was dismissed. In this way, Romanian birth certificates can be released as a consequence of the registration of American certificates, independent on the age of the child who is a Romanian citizen.

- > the issuance of the very first identity document (temporary identity card) for underage children which are 14 years old or older and are located on American territory, will be possible through the embassy or consular office in charge, such that the child will not have to leave the Romanian territory.

- > it will be possible to submit requests for the release of temporary identity cards through the consular offices, which were previously solved in Romania through the person designated through the power of attorney.

- > for the holders of American passports who wish to travel to Romania and have a stay longer than 90 days, is not necessary to obtain a long-term visa (type D) through the embassy or Romanian consular office in the US; on demand, the extension of the right to stay of the possessors of American passports will be made by the Authority for Aliens from Bucharest or its branches in territory, given in the bindings of the law.

- > aspects regarding the regulation of the travel of underage children:
 - the entrance in / the exit from / Romania of underage children, who are traveling along with a parent or alone, is allowed only on the basis of an authenticated declaration of the parents or parent who is not able to accompany the child; the declaration has to be made in two copies and has to be certified, in Romania by the notary public, and in the U.S. by Romania's diplomatic missions; in case that the declaration is stated in front of the American authorities, the declaration must bear the apostille, stamped by the Bureau of the U.S. Secretary of State in charge, according to the requirements imposed by the Hague Convention in 1961/Convention de La Haye du October 5, 1961, and has to be accompanied by an official legalized translation;
 - when the child is traveling along with another adult person, the person in cause has to present the authenticated declaration, following the above described sample, from both parents, from the parent who has the child's custody by a court sentence which is permanent and can not support re-appeal, of the parent alive or of his legal guardian. The declaration has to include the state/states where the child is going to, the period of the journey and the identification dates of the person accompanying the child. The person who is enforced by the parents to accompany the child will also present to the border control officer the criminal record.
 - when the minor travels unaccompanied, the authenticated declaration will be accepted by the border control police when the letter will state the name of the airline company that the child used, without being necessary to state the name of the person in charge with the specific transportation company.

- > in order to present them or to use them during legal or administrative procedures for the embassy or consular office or other public authorities from Romania, all the official documents released by the American authorities or legalized by the American public clerk have to have

apostille according to the Convention regarding the elimination of the over-legalization of official documents, adopted in the Hague at 5.10.1961;

> the Romanian citizens currently living in the United States, who do not have their civil status documents anymore or who have only certified copies of these Romanian documents, can request the release of duplicates through the embassy or the consular office in charge. The new format of the Romanian civil status documents is presented in three languages: Romanian, English and French.