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Press Release

First of its kind Visa Application Centre for Five Countries Conference (5CC) launched in Singapore

In a collaborative effort to address immigration and border security of common interest, the Governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and United States of America have formed a Five Country Conference (5CC). The 5CC nations of Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States work together to enhance the integrity, Security and efficiency of their immigration and border services to improve client services and reduce costs.

The border control agencies of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have appointed VFS Global, the world's largest outsourcing and technology services specialist for diplomatic missions and governments, to offer a cohesive visa application facility in Singapore.

As part of their on-going efforts to improve processes, rationalise resources and achieve better value for money, the 5CC have agreed an initiative to share visa support services, including the enrolment of biometrics. The first initiative of the 5CC was launched today with the commencement of operations for Australia, New Zealand and UK visas in Singapore.

The cooperation is aimed not only at providing a convenient and seamless visa application process for these countries, but also jointly tackling visa and identity frauds that has plagued the immigration systems from time to time. By working together under the aegis of the 5CC, the border control agencies will collectively aim to counter some of the common challenges around global migration by sharing best practice and coordinating their response to these challenges. With the maximising of joint efforts to facilitate legal immigration flows, the conference is confident of providing protection to those in genuine need, and to guard against those who would otherwise take advantage of or abuse their immigration systems.

Over the past decade, the border control agencies of the five countries, namely – Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) - Australia, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Immigration New Zealand (INZ), UK Border Agency (UKBA) and US Department of State, have conjointly worked on the following areas of co-operation:

- Identity Management, including the use of biometrics and other technology to tackle identity fraud
- Information sharing
- Intelligence and overseas liaison
- Returns and repatriation
- Intergovernmental migration and refugees
- Business development

Australia, New Zealand, and the UK immigration departments today announced details of the first Five Country Conference (FCC) shared Visa Application Centre (VAC) at Singapore.

The spokesperson's for Australia and New Zealand said, *"Shared visa application facilities would lead to improved services for clients of each country and would also achieve greater efficiencies through shared infrastructure and staffing. These services will include extended operating hours with phones open until 5pm weekdays, and internet kiosks with an online application tracking facility so clients can view the status of their applications. Savings achieved this way are ultimately able to be passed on to our clients. All applications will continue to be assessed and decided by immigration staff at both the Australian and New Zealand high commissions. VAC staff will not be involved in decisions or have any knowledge of application outcomes."*

The British High Commissioner, **Antony Phillipson** and UK Border Agency Regional Director: Asia Pacific, **Simon Peachey**, joined their Australian and New Zealand counterparts to officially open a new shared visa application centre. High Commissioner, **Antony Phillipson** said: *"The use of shared visa application facilities will save us costs through shared infrastructure and resources and allow us to maintain the very high levels of service we provide to our customers in Singapore and continue to develop new premium products to meet their needs."*

Upbeat about this new facility, **Ajit Alexander**, Chief Operating Officer - Australasia, VFS Global said, *"It is our privilege to partner the High Commissions of Australia and New Zealand, as well as the UK Border Agency, to provide a convenient and hassle-free visa application process for the residents of Singapore. We are committed to providing highly efficient and convenient services to all visa applicants applying for Australia, New Zealand and UK visas in the city. Applicants in Singapore can now apply at VFS Global's convenient and comfortable Joint Visa Applications Centre and expect professional services at all times"*.

He further added, *"VFS Global is honoured to be associated with the Governments of Australia since 2004, New Zealand since 2011 and the UK since 2003, being their trusted partner in 22, 4 and 35 countries respectively. Infact, we have had the privilege to serve the Government of UK in Singapore since 2004! This extension of our association with the Department of Immigration And Citizenship – Australia (DIAC), Immigration New Zealand (INZ) and UK Border Agency (UKBA) reflects their faith in our abilities, and we are sure to reinforce a longstanding partnership with our esteemed clients. We invite applicants wishing to travel to Australia, New Zealand and the UK to visit our new state-of-the-art and better equipped Joint VAC and benefit from the renewed and additional services offered by VFS Global."*

The Joint Visa Application Centre (JVAC) commenced visa application services for Australia, New Zealand and the UK. Travellers aspiring for visas to these countries can now do so at a convenient and common facility of the VFS Global operated 5CC Visa Application Centre (VAC), located at 20, Cecil Street, #11-02 to 05, Equity Plaza, Singapore 049705.

VFS Global will be responsible for accepting visa applications for Australia, New Zealand and UK visas from applicants residing in Singapore. All applications will continue to be assessed and processed by the DIAC, INZ and UKBA offices respectively.

The key features of the 5CC VAC will be:

- Conveniently located state-of-the art Visa Application Centre
- Longer operating hours
- Dedicated counters for applicants and travel agents
- Easy and standard documentation
- Quick and safe biometric enrolments (For UK currently)
- Professional and responsive staff dedicated to handle visa queries
- Dedicated call centre to answer queries and status of application
- Online appointment system and tracking of application status
- Dedicated websites to provide information on visa categories, fees, application forms, etc.
- 100% secure handling of documents and personal information
- SMS alert for visa status update on mobile phones
- Door step delivery of passports

The VAC will remain open from 08:00 hrs to 16:00 hrs from Monday-Friday, keeping in mind the convenience of the applicants. The services of the 5CC VAC would attract a nominal service fee, payable at the time of application.

For further information on visa application procedures, applicants may visit www.vfsglobal.com

About VFS Global

VFS Global is the world's largest outsourcing and technology services specialist for diplomatic missions and governments worldwide. With **820** Visa Application Centres (VACs) located in **87** countries across five continents. As at 28 February 2013, VFS Global serves the interests of the diplomatic missions of **43** sovereign governments. VFS Global's worldwide operations are certified **ISO 9001:2008** for Quality Management System and **ISO 27001:2005** for Information Security Management System by TÜV SÜD, one of the world's leading external and independent certification bodies. The company has successfully processed **57.85** million applications since its inception in 2001. For more information, please visit www.vfsglobal.com

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