



EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES SINGAPORE

Guidelines on the Taking of Voluntary Evidence via Videoconference in a Civil Proceeding

A. PROCEDURE FOR REQUEST

1. **Official Request from Requesting Counsel** - The requesting counsel shall submit a letter to the Office of Treaties and Legal Affairs of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA-OTLA) (otla@dfa.gov.ph) and the Philippine Embassy in Singapore (singapore.pe@dfa.gov.ph) requesting the taking of voluntary evidence via videoconference from a Singapore-based petitioner, respondent or witness. The request should indicate the following:
 - a. The case name and identifying number of the civil case;
 - b. The names and addresses of the parties and their representatives;
 - c. The nature of the proceedings;
 - d. A summary of the claims and defence;
 - e. Regarding the witness in Singapore from whom the evidence is to be taken via the videoconference hearing:
 - i. The name, nationality and address of the witness;
 - ii. Confirmation that the witness is giving evidence voluntarily
 - iii. The relevance of the witness to the case, including whether the witness is a witness of fact or an expert witness;
 - iv. Whether the witness is represented by counsel; and
 - v. The reason/s why the witness is providing evidence remotely, from Singapore.
 - f. The proposed dates and time for the conduct of videoconferencing, which should not be less than two (2) months from receipt by the DFA-OTLA and/or the Philippine Embassy in Singapore of the letter-request.

So as not to prejudice the timely delivery of consular and Assistance-to-Nationals services, the conduct of videoconference may be done on **Tuesdays and Thursdays only**, (except during Philippine public and local holidays), between **9:00 AM until 4:00 PM**.

2. **Consent of the Singapore Government** - The Philippine Embassy in Singapore shall request the consent of the Singapore government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), for the taking of voluntary evidence via videoconference.
3. **Approval of Request for Videoconference Hearing** - Once the consent of the Singapore government is received, the Philippine Embassy in Singapore shall immediately inform the requesting counsel (copy furnished DFA-OTLA), through email, on the acceptability of the proposed schedule of the videoconferencing hearing and indicate the name of the consular officer who will assist in the hearing.
4. **Court Order for Videoconference Hearing** - The requesting counsel may only proceed with the filing of the necessary Motion in Court to issue the Order for the videoconferencing after the consent of the Singapore Government has been received by the Philippine Embassy in Singapore and that acceptability of the time and date of the videoconference hearing has been confirmed. A copy of the Court Order shall be submitted to the Philippine Embassy in Singapore as soon as possible or at least

one (1) day prior to the scheduled date of videoconference hearing. The conduct of the videoconference hearing shall not proceed without the appropriate Court Order being received by the Philippine Embassy in Singapore.

5. ***Coordination between the Requesting Counsel and the Person/s Appearing Before the Videoconference Hearing*** - The requesting counsel shall coordinate directly with the person/s appearing before the videoconference hearing to ensure his/her attendance on the scheduled date and time. It shall also be the sole responsibility of the requesting counsel to contact the person/s appearing before the videoconference hearing and ensure his/her presence during the hearing.
6. ***Documentary/Technical Requirements on the day of the Videoconference Hearing*** - The requesting counsel shall advise his/her witness to bring his/her original passport and/or valid government-issued identification card. The witness shall also provide the following for the videoconference hearing:
 - a. Personal laptop or smartphone;
 - b. Portable internet connection;
 - c. Camera equipment (if necessary);
 - d. Audio equipment (if necessary).
7. ***Payment of Consular Fees*** - It shall be the responsibility of the requesting counsel and/or the person/s appearing before the videoconference hearing to settle consular fees as enumerated under Section D hereof, before the start of the video conference hearing.
8. ***Security and Health Protocols*** - Due to limited space and prevailing health and security protocols inside the Embassy, public access to video conference hearings inside Embassy premises shall be limited only to the person/s appearing before the videoconference hearing.

B. DUTY OF THE PERSON/S APPEARING BEFORE THE VIDEOCONFERENCE HEARING

The person/s appearing before the video conference shall:

- a. Arrive at the Embassy at least one (1) hour before the scheduled time;
- b. Dress appropriately;
- c. Conduct himself/herself in an appropriate manner; and
- d. Abide by the prevailing health and security protocols of the Embassy.

The Embassy reserves its right to exercise full jurisdiction over the person/s appearing before the videoconference hearing for the purpose of maintaining peace and order inside the premises.

C. DUTY OF THE CONSULAR OFFICER

If requested by the Presiding Judge, the duty of the Consular Officer shall be limited only to verifying the identity of the person/s appearing before the videoconference hearing through his/her valid passport and/or other valid government-issued identification card.

The Consular Officer may not perform any other act unless prior written consent from the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Treaties and Legal Affairs is obtained.

D. CONSULAR FEES

Pursuant to DFA Department Order No. 2021-018 dated 26 November 2021, the schedule of consular fees are as follows:

SERVICE/DOCUMENT	RATE (SGD)
a. Venue (lighting and access only) and Administrative Fee	SGD 300.00
b. Certification Expedited Certification	SGD 68.00 per copy Additional SGD 17.00 per copy

- E. For further clarification on this matter, the requesting counsel may contact the Assistance-to-Nationals Section by phone at (+65) 9072 2797 or via email at sgpeatn@gmail.com or singapore.pe@dfa.gov.ph.