

Household Goods Import Checklist – Foreign Diplomats – Sterdts

About this checklist

This checklist is for **foreign diplomatic staff and their households** importing used household goods and personal effects into South Africa with Sterdts, where the shipment is associated with an accredited **embassy, high commission, consulate or international organisation**. Tick off items as you complete them. This is a **planning tool**, not a legal document, and does **not** replace your mission's own internal procedures, our [Standard Trading Conditions \(STCs\)](#) or [customs regulations](#). Requirements can change; Sterdts will advise based on the latest available information, but final requirements and decisions rest with the relevant authorities.

1. Confirm this checklist applies to you

This checklist is intended for:

- **Accredited diplomatic staff** (or recognised dependants) posted to South Africa
- Shipments of **used household goods and personal effects** linked to a diplomatic posting
- Consignments imported **under diplomatic arrangements / privileges**, as guided by your mission

It is **not** intended for:

- Private imports unrelated to a diplomatic posting
- Commercial or resale goods
- Non-diplomatic shipments (use the [Non-Diplomats HHG Import Checklist](#) instead)

If in any doubt check with your **mission/administration/protocol office** whether this is being treated as a diplomatic shipment.

2. Coordinate with your mission and protocol office

Diplomatic shipments usually require coordination with your **embassy/high commission/consulate or organisation** and, in many cases, the South African **Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO)** and SARS.

Make sure you:

- Have contacted your **mission's admin or protocol officer** about your planned shipment
- Understand which **internal forms** your mission requires (if any)
- Understand whether your mission must submit any **note verbale, list of effects or clearance request** to South African authorities
- Know who within your mission will be the **official contact** for Sterdts on customs matters
- Have received any **instructions from your mission** about what can and cannot be shipped, and which documents are required

Where your mission has its own checklist or procedure, use this Sterdts checklist **together with** that guidance.

3. Documents you must prepare (before shipment/arrival)

Your mission may assist you with some of these documents, but you should plan around the following categories. Sterdts will confirm what applies in your specific situation.

Identity & diplomatic status

- Passport(s) for the principal diplomat and, where applicable, dependants
- Any diplomatic ID card or accreditation documents, once issued
- Appointment/assignment letter confirming your posting to South Africa
- Any status confirmation letter required by your mission or DIRCO

Residence & addresses

- Details of your **official residence** or mission-approved accommodation in South Africa (even if provisional at first)
- Proof of address where required (lease, letter from mission, etc.)
- If applicable, proof of previous residence abroad for your household goods

Shipment details

- Copy of your Sterdts quotation and booking confirmation
- Draft or final **packing list / inventory** (Sterdts can help structure this)
- List of **high-value and sensitive items** (art, antiques, collections, sensitive equipment)

Mission and protocol paperwork (where required)

- Any **internal forms** required by your mission for diplomatic shipments
- Any **itemised list** of effects your mission needs to attach to a note verbale or request to South African authorities
- Any **authorisation letters** your mission issues relating to your shipment

If you are unsure which documents are needed, ask your **mission/protocol office** and **Sterdts** to confirm the exact document list.

4. Shipment contents – what you plan to bring

Even under diplomatic arrangements, certain restrictions and good practices apply. Use this checklist to review your planned contents.

Household goods & personal effects

- Primarily **used household goods and personal effects** (normal home contents)
- Only limited quantities of **new items**, if any, as guided by your mission and Sterdts
- No commercial stock or goods intended for resale

Alcohol, tobacco & food

- I have checked with my mission and Sterdts what is acceptable in terms of alcohol and tobacco in the shipment
- I have considered whether it is better to purchase such items locally rather than ship them
- Any foodstuffs included have been discussed with Sterdts for customs advice

Restricted / sensitive items

- I have identified any items that may be **restricted or controlled** (firearms/ammunition/explosives — prohibited; certain electronics, chemicals, animal/plant products, etc.)
- I have discussed these with my mission and Sterdts before packing
- I accept that some items may need to be **excluded** from the shipment

High-value or fragile items

- High-value items (art, antiques, important collections) have been listed separately
- Fragile items that may need special packing/crating have been identified and discussed with Sterdts

5. Packing, labelling & documentation**Packing and inventory**

- I have agreed with Sterdts what **packing service** will be provided (full/partial)
- I understand that a **clear inventory/packing list** is important for customs and for my own records
- I will make sure that any **mission-required descriptions** for the shipment are compatible with the Sterdts inventory

Labelling and separation

- Items that **must not** be shipped (passports, diplomatic documents, critical work material) are clearly separated and will not be packed
- Any items that the mission wants handled separately or recorded distinctly are clearly identified for the packing team

Document control

- I will keep copies of inventories, lists and any mission paperwork in a **safe, accessible place** (both digital and paper where possible)

6. Customs clearance, inspections and timing

While diplomatic shipments may receive special treatment, they are still subject to controls and procedures:

- I understand that South African authorities may require specific **clearance steps** for diplomatic shipments, often via DIRCO and SARS
- I have discussed with my mission whether any **prior approval or notification** is required before the container arrives
- I am aware that:
 - Even diplomatic shipments may be subject to **inspection** or additional questions
 - Processing times may vary and can depend on paperwork completeness and authority workloads

Storage & demurrage

- I understand that if clearance takes longer than the free time allowed by shipping lines/terminals, **storage or demurrage charges** may arise
- I will work with Sterdts and my mission to provide documents promptly to reduce this risk

7. Practical steps to avoid delays or issues

You can help keep the process smooth by:

- Engaging **both** Sterdts and your **mission/protocol office** early in the planning
- Providing a **complete and accurate** list of what is in your shipment
- Avoiding inclusion of obvious commercial stock or items your mission has warned against
- Responding quickly to requests for additional documents or clarifications
- Keeping all emails and documents related to the shipment well organised
- Where something unusual is involved (e.g. artwork of national importance, sensitive equipment, multiple vehicles):
- I have highlighted these items to Sterdts and my mission **before** packing.

This checklist is for guidance and planning only. It does **not** replace our formal [Standard Trading Conditions \(STCs\)](#), carrier conditions, SARS rules or customs regulations. Where there is any uncertainty or something unusual in your circumstances, please contact Sterdts so we can advise you specifically.

Contact details

If you are a foreign diplomat or dependant planning a household goods shipment to South Africa:

- First speak to your **mission/protocol office** about internal and host-country requirements
- Then contact Sterdts so we can coordinate with your mission accordingly:

Information Officer:

Gert Mostert

Contact details:

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Email: info@sterdts.co.za

Postal/physical address:

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