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Circular Letter No.4204/Add.9
16 April 2020

To: All IMO Member States
United Nations and specialized agencies
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with IMO

Subject: **Joint Statement IMO-WCO on the integrity of the global supply chain during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The Secretary-General of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) have jointly issued the attached statement to assist States in ensuring that health measures are implemented in ways that minimize unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade.

Member States and international organizations are invited to bring the contents of this circular letter to the attention of all concerned, especially customs administrations and port State authorities, at both national and local levels.

ANNEX



JOINT STATEMENT ON THE INTEGRITY OF THE GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC 15 April 2020

In late 2019, the first outbreak of what has now become known globally as the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was reported. On 11 March 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was categorized by the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) as a pandemic. The spread of the COVID-19 has placed the entire world in an unprecedented situation. To slow the spread of the disease and mitigate its impacts, travel is being curtailed and borders are being closed. Transport hubs are being affected. Ports are being closed and ships denied entry.

At the same time, the demand for and the movement of relief goods (such as supplies, medicines and medical equipment) across borders is increasing dramatically. As pointed out by the WHO, restrictions may interrupt needed aid and technical support, as well as businesses, and may have negative social and economic effects for the countries concerned. It is critical that Customs administrations and Port State Authorities continue to facilitate the cross-border movement of not only relief goods, but goods in general, to help minimize the overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economies and societies.

Therefore, Customs administrations and Port State Authorities are strongly urged to establish a coordinated and proactive approach, together with all concerned agencies, to ensure the integrity and continued facilitation of the global supply chain so that the flow of goods by sea is not unnecessarily disrupted.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has issued the following Circular Letters series addressing global issues relevant to seafarers and the shipping industry in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak¹:

- Circular Letter No.4204 of 31 January 2020, providing information and guidance on the precautions to be taken to minimize risks to seafarers, passengers and others on board ships from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19);
- Circular Letter No.4204/Add.1 of 19 February 2020, COVID-19 – Implementation and enforcement of relevant IMO instruments;
- Circular Letter No.4204/Add.2 of 21 February 2020, Joint Statement IMO-WHO on the Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak;
- Circular Letter No.4204/Add.3 of 2 March 2020, Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships prepared by WHO;
- Circular Letter No.4204/Add.4 of 5 March 2020, ICS Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for ship operators for the protection of the health of seafarers;
- Circular Letter No.4204/Add.5/Rev.1 of 2 April 2020, Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Guidance relating to the certification of seafarers and fishing vessel personnel;
- Circular Letter No.4204/Add.6 of 27 March 2020, Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Preliminary list of recommendations for Governments and relevant national authorities on the facilitation of maritime trade during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Circular Letter No.4204/Add.7 of 3 April 2020, Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Guidance concerning unforeseen delays in the delivery of ships.

¹ <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

The World Customs Organization (WCO) has created a dedicated section in its website and included the following existing and newly developed instruments and tools relevant to the integrity and facilitation of the supply chain in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic²:

- Resolution of the Customs Cooperation Council on the Role of Customs in Natural Disaster Relief;
- Guidelines to Chapter 5 of Specific Annex J to the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures, as amended (Revised Kyoto Convention);
- Annex B.9 to the Convention on Temporary Admission (Istanbul Convention);
- Istanbul Convention Handbook;
- Harmonized System (HS) Classification reference for COVID-19 medical supplies;
- List of national legislation of countries that have adopted temporary export restrictions on certain categories of critical medical supplies in response to COVID-19; and
- List of WCO Members' practices in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Communication, coordination and cooperation at both national and local levels, between ships, port facilities, Customs administrations and other competent authorities are of the utmost importance to ensure the safe and easy flow of vital medical supplies and equipment, critical agricultural products, and other goods and services across borders and to work to resolve disruptions to the global supply chains, to support the health and well-being of all people.

	
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² <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/coronavirus.aspx>