



**REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS**

Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Ken Lee Building  
20 Edith Cavell Street  
Port-Louis

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**MERCHANT SHIPPING NOTICE Ref: 1 of 2022**

**Title: Issuance of e-certificates by Recognised Organisations**  
Notice to: **Ship Owners/Managers/ Masters/Designated Persons Ashore, (DPAs)**  
**and Recognised Organisations**

***The objective of this Merchant Shipping Notice is to clarify with Recognised Organisations (ROs) the issuance of digitally signed Electronic Certificates to vessels under the Mauritius Flag.***

**1. Background**

**1.1** Following requests made by Recognised Organisations to obtain permission for the issuance of statutory certificates in electronic format to vessels under the Mauritius Flag, the Director of Shipping has considered the various advantages over paper certificates of this mode of issuing certificates, namely;

- a.** Electronic certificates can be delivered faster with less risk of loss and damages;
- b.** Those types of certificates also prevent falsification of certificates as opposed to signed paper certificates since on-line verification of their authenticity is possible; and
- c.** With the Covid-19 Pandemic and the conduct of some surveys by remote means, issue of e-certificates becomes very practical and less risky.

**2. The Guidelines from the International Maritime Organization. (IMO)**

**2.1** To facilitate the use and acceptance of electronic certificates, the IMO has issued “Guidelines for the use of Electronic Certificates” by way of **FAL.5/Circ.39/Rev.2** dated **20 April 2016 (With Corr.1 on 17 January 2017)**. This Merchant Shipping Notice explains the security features which are to be incorporated in the electronic certificates and the procedures for the verification of the authenticity of electronic certificates.

Therefore, to be in line with international practices and to improve service delivery between RO's and ship owners and the Flag State, (Mauritius) while at the same time minimising the risks of falsification of statutory certificates, the Director of Shipping hereby authorises issuance of electronic statutory certificates by RO's to vessels under the Mauritius Flag subject to conditions laid down in this Merchant Shipping Notice.

### **3. Applicability**

**3.1** This Merchant Shipping Notice is applicable only to Statutory Certificates issued by Recognised Organisations with whom the Republic of Mauritius has an Agreement governing the delegation of statutory certifications and verification services for vessels under the Mauritius Flag.

### **4. Requirements**

**4.1** The electronic certificate shall include the required security features as detailed in the IMO "*Guidelines for the use of Electronic Certificates*" (**FAL.5/Circ.39/Rev.2 and Corr.1**). In addition, the following shall be taken into consideration, namely:

- a.** the validity, consistency, format and contents shall comply with the requirements of the relevant international conventions or instruments, as applicable
- b.** certificates shall be protected from being edited, modified or revised except by those authorized by the issuer or the Administration;
- c.** there shall be a unique tracking number (UTN) or Quick Response (QR) code used for verification.
- d.** Certificates shall contain a printable and visible symbol that confirms the source of issuance.

**4.2** Recognised Organisations that use websites for online viewing or verifying electronic certificates shall ensure that these sites are constructed and managed in accordance with established information security standards for access control, fraud prevention, resistance to cyberattacks and resilience to man-made and natural disasters.

**4.3** Electronic signatures applied to electronic certificates shall meet authentication standards equivalent to the ***Electronic Transactions Act 2000*** of Mauritius.

**4.4** Recognised Organisations issuing electronic certificates and Owners or Manager of the ship shall put in place detailed procedures/instructions for verifying the information contained in the electronic certificate, including confirmation of periodic endorsements, when necessary, on board the vessel. In this case verifying means a reliable, secure and continuously available process to confirm the authenticity and validity of an electronic certificate using the unique tracking number and other data contained on or embedded in the electronic certificate.

**4.5** Each Recognised Organisation intending to issue electronic certificate shall inform the Director of Shipping as soon as possible the categories of certificates that they intend to issue in electronic form. This information will then be communicated to the IMO through the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS) as per **Section 6** of (**FAL.5/Circ.39/Rev.2 and Corr.1**) for information and circulation among member states.

**5. Instructions to Flag State Surveyors:**

**a.** Flag State surveyors from the Shipping Division shall accept electronic certificates containing the features detailed above.

**b.** In case of any doubts, Flag State surveyors may verify the authenticity of the certificates using the procedures issued by Recognised Organisations and available on board vessels carrying electronic certificates.

**6. Issuance of Short Term Statutory e-certificates:**

**a.** There may be situations such as Port State detentions, Dry-Docking or Covid-19 issues necessitating issuance of short term certificate by an RO after consultation with the Director of Shipping. Under such situations, the RO concerned may issue short term statutory certificates (STCs) and the necessary attachments to the certificate in electronic format and ensure that the details of same is available on its website.

**7. Instructions to Ship Owners, Operators and DPAs:**

a. Shipowners, Operators and DPAs with vessels under the Mauritius flag who intend to carry and use electronic certificates shall ensure that these certificates are controlled through the Safety Management System, (SMS) as described in **Section 11** of the International Safety Management (ISM) Code.

8. All those concerned are required to take note of the contents of this Merchant Shipping Notice and to apply them accordingly.

**Director of Shipping**  
**Shipping Division**  
**Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Ken Lee Building**  
**20, Edith Cavell Street**  
**Port-Louis**  
**Republic of Mauritius**  
**18 May 2022**  
**Phone :** +230 2600024-27  
**Fax :** +230 2137013  
**Email:** [shippingdivision@govmu.org](mailto:shippingdivision@govmu.org)