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Circular Letter No.4283/Add.2
5 October 2020

To: All IMO Members
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **Communication from the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu**

The Government of the Republic of Vanuatu has sent the attached communication, dated 5 October 2020, with the request that it be circulated by the Organization.

GOVERNEMENT
DE LA
RÉPUBLIQUE DE
VANUATU



GOVERNMENT
OF THE
REPUBLIC OF
VANUATU

AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE
INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION

Monday 05th October 2020

His Excellency Kitack Lim
Secretary General
International Maritime Organization
4 Albert Embankment
SE1 7SR London
United Kingdom

Secretary General,

Subject: Vanuatu's measures in relation to COVID-19 – Seafarers Employment Agreement (SEA) / Extension of Merchant Mariner Credential Endorsements and Medical Certificates

Vanuatu Maritimes Services Ltd. (VMSL) as the Administrator of the Vanuatu International Ship Registry has issued the attached policies with regards Seafarers Employment Agreement (SEA) and Extension of Merchant Mariner Credential Endorsements and Medical Certificates to assist Vanuatu registered vessels and all seafarers serving thereon during the pandemic.

Vanuatu would respectfully request that the Secretariat issues a Circular Letter to all Member States, NGO's and IGO's, for circulation of the enclosed policies.

Copies of the latest versions are enclosed for your reference and parties can obtain the most updated guidance from VMSL website: <https://www.vanuatumaritimships.com>.

Please accept, Secretary General, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Laurent Parenté



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LETTER OF COMFORT

16 September 2020

Sub: Extension of Merchant Mariner Credential Endorsements and Medical Certificates

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This LETTER OF COMFORT provides guidance concerning a Seafarer's Certificate of Competency (CoC) ; Certificates of Proficiency (CoP) ; Medical Certificates and Drug Testing regarding the action being taken by Vanuatu Maritime Services, Ltd (VMSL) as the Administrator of the Vanuatu International Ship registry (VISR) due to the novel coronavirus and the disease it causes (COVID-19). VMSL is doing this in keeping with international guidance to meet the challenge of this disease and in response to a number of questions and concerns raised by the maritime industry and Seafarers.

VMSL has also reviewed statements by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and other administrations to ensure alignment with respect to the extension of endorsements issued in accordance with the Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW). VMSL is taking a pragmatic approach consistent with the IMO Secretary General's circular Letter No.4204/Add.5/Rev.1 dated 2 April 2020.

To mitigate the impact to the seafarers and the industry caused by the novel coronavirus disease COVID-19, VMSL is taking the following actions:

1. Vanuatu Endorsements and I.D. books issued based on a National CoC that have or will expire on or before 31 December 2020 will be extended pursuant to the extension granted by the National CoC letter of extension. Seafarers who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the expiration criteria must carry ALL expired credentials including the letter from the National Agency extending the National CoC with a copy of this notice.
2. STCW Endorsements: STCW Certificates requiring refresher courses that have or will expire on or before 31 December 2020 will be extended pursuant to the extension granted by the National CoC letter of extension. Seafarers who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the expiration criteria carry ALL expired credentials including the letter from the National Agency extending the National CoC with a copy of this notice.
3. STCW Medical Certificates: Normally STCW Medical Certificates and Drug testing are valid for 3 months from the expiration date in accordance with STCW Regulation I/9. Due to the Pandemic, Seafarers who are actively working on expired medical certificate are primarily extended to 31 March 2021 and must carry the expired certificates with a copy of this notice and are further extended until repatriated or allowed ashore to conduct medical and drug testing.

LETTER OF COMFORT
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16 September 2020

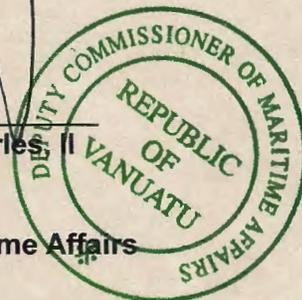
4. For Vanuatu National CoCs issued in the Oil and Gas industry such as but not limited to: OIM, Barge Supervisor, Ballast Officer, etc. that have or will expire on or before 31 December 2020 are extended until 31 March 2021. Seafarers who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the expiration criteria must carry the expired credential with a copy of this notice.
5. No application is required to be made for the aforesaid interim revalidation.
6. Notwithstanding the above, whenever the revalidation of the expired certificate is to be carried out, the normal fees will apply and the new validity date shall be for a period equal to the new National CoC expiration date or in the case of a Vanuatu National CoC five years from the original expiration date. In other words, no benefit shall accrue to the Seafarer due to the extension granted under this Letter of Comfort

VMSL may be issuing additional guidance on the above Seafarer Certificates and other administrative measures that will be posted on its website:
www.vanuatumaritimeships.com.

If you have any Questions, please visit the website or contact Captain P. Michael DeCharles at (973) 981 4643 to direct you to the correct department personnel.



Captain Patrick Michael DeCharles,
Executive Vice President
by direction of the
Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs





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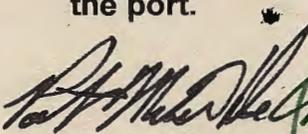
FLEET SAFETY LETTER 093020.GEN

30 September 2020

Applicable to: This FLEET SAFETY LETTER is to be brought to the attention of Masters, seafarers, ship-owners, ship managers, operators, manning agents, Recognized Organizations and Port State Control Officers or any official agency regarding Vanuatu registered vessels and seafarers serving thereon.

Coronavirus and Seafarers Employment Agreement (SEA)

1. This Fleet Safety Letter is issued to reiterate the points stated in the Fleet Safety Letters 031420.GEN issued on 14 March 2020 and 063020.GEN issued on 30 June 2020, extending the seafarer's period of service on board due to the Coronavirus Pandemic with all benefits established under Standards A2.4 (Entitlement to Leave) and A2.5.1. (Repatriation) of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006. (MLC).
2. Any seafarer on a Vanuatu flagged vessel that has been granted an extension either specifically or automatically under the previous Fleet safety Letters 031420.GEN or 063020.GEN, and the vessel's owner/manager/agent cannot relieve and repatriate any affected seafarer due to any travel restrictions caused by the pandemic it is hereby automatically extended up to and including 31 December 2020
3. All efforts should be made where practical to make the appropriate crew changes as the conditions allow. If and when a vessel calls on a port that requires an Approved Repatriation Plan, VMSL requests that the proposed plan be submitted at least 72 hours prior to the arrival to avoid issues in the port.


Captain Patrick Michael DeCharles,
by direction of the
Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs
The Republic of Vanuatu

