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Circular Letter No.4285/Add.1
3 July 2020

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

Subject: **Communication from the Government of the Republic of South Africa**

The Government of the Republic of South Africa has sent the attached communication, dated 2 July 2020, with the request that it be circulated by the Organization.



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H.E Kitak Lim
Secretary-General
International Maritime Organisation
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United Kingdom

Dear Secretary-General

VALIDITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN CERTIFICATES DURING COVID-19 PERIOD

The effect of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is causing uncertainties around the world, and South Africa and the Maritime Industry have not been spared.

Consequently, South Africa has put measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, the measures affect the services required by ships and other service providers. The measures seek to ensure that ships continue to carry goods to, and from South Africa.

The annexed Guideline below, in accordance to IMO's Circular Letter No.4204/Add.5, serves to notify the IMO and Member States of the steps taken by South Africa to ensure continuity of services by the Maritime Industry.

South Africa would appreciate if the IMO could bring the Guideline below to the attention of all Member States.

Regards

Mr Sobantu Tilayi
Chief Executive Officer (Acting)
South African Maritime Safety Authority

BOARD MEMBERS

M. Msimang (Chairperson), Ms N.M Cele (Deputy Chairperson), Mr M.R Burton, Ms A.S Molemane



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Date : 02 July 2020

COVID-19 Pandemic – Guidelines for Seafarers and Vessel Certification

Background

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has affected the maritime value chain, including the ability of Maritime Administrations and the Recognised Organisations to deliver services necessary for statutory certification of seafarers and vessels.

Furthermore, the issues about manning of ships, crew changes and search and rescue services are receiving necessary attention.

Due to measures put in place by the President of the Republic of South Africa and many Governments around the world, the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSMA) has issued a number of [Marine Notices](#) with guidance regarding expiry of Certificates for Seafarers and Vessels as well as the process to be followed to obtain necessary documentation.

Purpose

To provide guidance and direction to shipping regarding the measures put in place by SAMSMA to secure the continuity of shipping services by the maritime industry.

Scope

The actions described in these guidelines applies to all South African Seafarers including non-nationals holding a South African Certificates of Competence (CoC) and South African ships in accordance with the appropriate national laws and applicable International Conventions.

Seafarers' certification

The following arrangements have been made regarding Seafarer Certification and related documentation

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Validity of Seafarer Certificates

SAMSA has considered the predicament many seafarers and their employers are finding themselves in and have granted an extension until 31 December 2020 to any certificate that expires during the national lockdown and/or shortly thereafter. The masters, seafarers and employers must produce a letter for extension of their Certificates - <http://www.samsa.org.za/Pages/Marine-Notices.aspx>

Where appropriate, seafarers and/or employers may apply to SAMSA for the issuance with a specific letter to each seafarers in accordance with the applicable Marine Notice.

Medical & Eyesight Certificates

Medical Certificates for seafarers shall remain valid as issued. Under the measurers in place to combat COVID-19, medical practitioners will still be operating and seafarers will be allowed to visit the medical practitioner (doctor) for medical examination.

Seafarers whose medical certificates expires whilst onboard a ship may continue to serve on that ship for three (3) months from the expiration date in accordance with STCW Regulation I/9.

Safe Manning of Ships

Ship operators must inform SAMSA regarding any challenges with seafarers holding foreign CoC with regards to revalidation and obtaining an endorsement to their CoC. SAMSA will not issue an endorsement to a foreign COC unless such certificate is still valid, except where there is a policy from that administration regarding the same.

Vessel Certificates and Surveys

Vessels which are subject to International Conventions whose statutory certification are due for renewal and there is difficulty with the attendance by a surveyor may apply for extension of certificates by up to three (3) months. Such application shall be made within reasonable time to ensure continued compliance with all statutory requirements.

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