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Circular Letter No.4338
12 November 2020

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

Subject: **Communication from the Government of Antigua and Barbuda**

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has sent the attached communication, dated 10 November 2020, with the request that it be circulated by the Organization.

THE OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE
INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION (IMO)
GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA & BARBUDA



10th November, 2020

H.E. Mr. Kitack Lim
Secretary General
International Maritime Organization
4 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7SR

Dear Secretary General,

Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCov) Contingency Measures

As a result of the exceptional situation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, please be informed that Antigua and Barbuda Department of Marine Services and Merchant Shipping (ADOMS), has adopted the measures cited in the attached Circulars.

Circular 2020-001 (rev.1) in relation to survey, audit and certification

Circular 2020-003 (rev. 1) in relation to maximum period of crew shipboard service

These measures are also published on our official website www.abregistry.ag

The Antigua and Barbuda Department of Marine Services and Merchant Shipping would appreciate if this document could be circulated to IMO Member States and Inter-governmental and Non-governmental organizations, through IMO DOCS, as a Circular Letter.


Please accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dwight C. R. Gardiner".

H.E. Dwight C. R. Gardiner

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the IMO

	CIRCULAR 2020-001 (Rev.1)	
	DEPARTMENT OF MARINE SERVICES AND MERCHANT SHIPPING (ADOMS)	
	Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)	Ref

Addressees(s):

- **All ADOMS Recognized Organizations and Recognized Security Organizations**
- **Owners, Operators and Managers of Vessels under the Flag of Antigua and Barbuda**
- **All Vessels registered under the Flag of Antigua and Barbuda**

1. Scope

This Circular is to provide all ADOMS Clients and relevant Stakeholders with information and binding direction on the application of procedures due to port restrictions resulting from the outbreak of the COVID -19 virus.

2. Legal Basis

- Antigua and Barbuda Merchant Shipping Act (MSA) 2006 and adhering Regulations
- Individual Agreements on the Delegation of Authority by ADOMS to relevant Organizations

3. Summary / Excerpt

ADOMS will have to assist seafarers, shipowners, managers and crewing companies considering the difficulties in conducting crew changes, Certificates, surveys and internal/external audits due to port restrictions resulting from the outbreak of the COVID- 19 virus.

4. ADOMS Policy

Based on the above the following policies will now apply under these exceptional circumstances:

I. Crew change procedures

- a. Seafarers are permitted to continue being engaged under their particular employment agreement beyond 11 months, if arrangements are being made by the shipowner to repatriate the affected seafarer at the next port, which is suitable for a crew change; and
- b. Seafarers are permitted to continue to sail in their current capacity until the next port, which is suitable for a crew change even if the Antigua and Barbuda flag State endorsement has expired, provided that the issuing Authority of the seafarer's national CoC has been contacted and all efforts have been made to achieve an extension of the national CoC.
- c. With respect to I (b.) above, documentary evidence thereto (e.g. in form of e-mail conversation with the Authority in question) must be submitted via the online application system (IASS). Thereupon a provisional CRA can be issued that is valid for one month, and can be extended on a case-to-case basis

II. Expired Medical Certificates

- a. The Antigua and Barbuda medical certificate can be extended for up to 3 months or until new certificate can be issued, whichever comes first and can be extended on a case by case basis.
- b. For other cases seafarers can trade with an expired Medical Certificate for up to three months

III. Internal Audits

- a. In General for any Internal Audit, also an Initial or Annual ISM Audit, a three month time frame applies. For COVID-19 related cases no NCs need to be raised within this time frame, provided documentation within the vessel's ISM is made

- IV. **Interim Certification**
- a. In General, both the ISM as well as the ISPS Code allow either the extension of an Interim Certificate or the issuance of a consecutive Interim Certificate for further six months beyond an existing expiry date.
 - b. The MLC Convention does not apply such regulations.
- V. **Renewal Audits/Surveys**
- a. The SOLAS Convention as well as the adjacent Codes thereto allows the extension of a renewal survey for either a period of grace of 1 month or a three months extension in order to reach a port in which the vessel is to be surveyed. Any COVID-19 related restriction will be treated as a case where the ship is in a port where she cannot be surveyed and extension can be applied accordingly.
 - b. The MLC Convention does not apply such regulations.
- VI. **External Audits other than the above**
- a. Annual or Intermediate Audits and Verifications have a time frame of *6 to 12 months* and cannot be extended.
 - b. This Maritime Administration's current policy on the extension of dry docking remains unaltered.
- VII. **Remote Audits**
- a. ADOMS encourages the use of technical solutions that avoid certificates becoming invalid due to audits that cannot be conducted and a lack of convention references that allow a regular extension of e.g. company audits.
 - b. ADOMS will accept requests for remote audits which are confirmed by any of our Recognised Organisations

5. Further Information

a. How to proceed

If a ship is due for any of the above-mentioned external surveys, the survey request will be placed with the ship's respective Class, RO or RSO. These Organizations will endeavor to conduct the surveys or propose remote surveys for specific items. In case all efforts to conduct a survey fail, this Maritime Administration will be contacted by either the company or the organization and for ship's legible for any of the above-mentioned regulations, these will be applied.

Where none of these regulations apply this Maritime Administration may authorize the ship to sail to the next available port where the audit, or inspection can take place. Such authorization will be issued when requested and if port restrictions related to COVID-19 create unexpected and extraordinary circumstances beyond the control of the company of a vessel.

To receive a ship specific authorization letter from this Maritime Administration, the company will have to file an application supported by adequate documentation.


b. Safety Inspections by the Flag State

Owners / Companies are requested to remain in close contact with ADOMS IID to coordinate ASI / SSI / ISI. ADOMS IID will endeavor to conduct these and apply the necessary flexibility in both the choice for port of attendance and extension of time frames where required.

6. Guidelines for COVID-19 Control Onboard Ships

- a. Shipowners should advise Masters to be vigilant and monitor their crew for the signs and symptoms of the coronavirus and ensure the protective measures against COVID-19 for seafarers are followed. Refer to link below regarding Information Notice 2020-002 rev.1 on the safety measures that should be taken.
- b. If a suspected case is identified, then the ship should start an outbreak management plan onboard, even before lab results confirm an infection.
- c. The suspected seafarer should wear a mask and be isolated and the Master must inform the health authorities at next port.
- d. If coronavirus test is positive, then anyone who has had close contact with the infected person is high risk and should remain onboard in cabins, under quarantine.
- e. Steps should be taken to disinfect areas, where patient has been and all laundry, food utensils and waste should be considered infectious and handled accordingly.
- f. It should be noted that Port States can, in consultation with shipowner, then impose a 14 day quarantine period on the ship at port anchorage.

Kindly also refer to [information-notice-2020-002 \(Rev 1\) novel-coronavirus guidance](#) on our website

	CIRCULAR 2020-003 (rev 1)		
	DEPARTMENT OF MARINE SERVICES AND MERCHANT SHIPPING (ADOMS)		
	Maximum period of shipboard service for seafarers during Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic	Ref	Circular 2020-001 (Rev.1)

Addressees(s):

- **MLC Shipowners, Operators and Managers of Vessels under the Flag of Antigua and Barbuda**
- **All Vessels registered under the Flag of Antigua and Barbuda**

1. Scope

[Circular 2020-001 \(Rev.1\)](#) refers to crew change procedures during COVID-19 pandemic. Under section 4.1.a, seafarers are permitted to continue to be engaged under their particular employment agreements beyond 11 months, if arrangements are being made by the MLC Shipowner to repatriate the affected seafarer at the next port. If crew change is not possible due to restrictions outside the control of the vessels managers, this needs to be communicated as per below procedure including an alternative repatriation solution.

This Circular now outlines the process, whereby MLC Shipowners can request an extension beyond a period of 11 months up to a time that permits repatriation, under the submitted company Repatriation Plan, for affected crew members, on their Antigua and Barbuda flag ships.

2. Legal Basis

- Antigua and Barbuda Merchant Shipping Act (MSA) 2006 and adhering Regulations

3. Summary / Excerpt

ADOMS will have to assist seafarers, MLC Shipowners, managers, and crewing companies considering the difficulties in conducting crew changes, due to port restrictions resulting from the outbreak of the pandemic.

4. ADOMS Policy

Shipping companies should complete and submit full details to technical@abregistry.ag in the form of a Repatriation Plan which is stamped, signed, and dated by the company (see example in Annex 1 of this Circular), which should include:

- Copies of valid Seafarer Employment Agreements (SEAs) and confirmation that all rights are maintained. Any new SEAs should be flexible and allow for repatriation issues and/or delays. New SEAs should be considered for a period that allows a reasonable margin, such that the 11 months onboard is not exceeded.
- Details of affected crew members with their sign on dates and date when 11 months onboard completed
- Signed and dated statement from the affected crew members accepting the extension
- Risk assessment, considering ship's trading pattern, rest hours, fatigue of the seafarers and other identified hazards
- Evidence of all efforts made for crew repatriation without success, including communications with port authorities
- Copy of minimum safe manning document
- Arrangements for repatriation at next available port

ADOMS has taken a pragmatic approach and introduced the above process, which must be fully complied with by MLC Shipowners, before making application. Upon satisfactory review of the above details, ADOMS will issue a Flag Statement, approving the repatriation plan.

Any request for a Flag Statement must be submitted well in advance, to allow time for a full review of submitted information and assessment of the Repatriation Plan.

Kindly also refer to [information-notice-2020-002 \(Rev 1\) novel-coronavirus guidance](#) on our website

ANNEX 1

Sample Repatriation Plan

COMPANY <i>(Name or logo)</i>	PLAN FOR THE SEAFARERS' REPATRIATION	
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Ship' Particulars:

Name of Ship	
IMO Number	
Call Sign	
Gross Tonnage	

DOC Holder, Manning Information:

DOC Holder	
Person in Charge (DPA)	
E-mail	
Phone	

Manning/Crewing Agent	
Person in Charge	
E-mail	
Phone	

Last Port of Call and Restrictions (Submit evidence of communication e.g. with authority)

Name of Port	ETA	ETD	Restrictions

Next Port(s) of Call and Restrictions (Submit evidence of communication e.g. with authority)

Name of Port	ETA	ETD	Restrictions

Repatriation Plan for crew more than 11 months on board:

	Name	Rank	Sign on	11 months completed on	End of contract	ETA of Sign off	Port of disembarkation
1							
2							
3							
Remarks:							

Alternatively:

	Name	Rank	Sign on	11 months completed on	End of contract	ETA of Sign off	Port of disembarkation
1							
2							
3							
Remarks:							

Shipping agency information at the port of disembarkation:

Name of Agency	
Person in Charge	
E-mail	
Phone	

Alternatively:

Name of Agency	
Person in Charge	
E-mail	
Phone	

Additional requirements

1. Evidence for travel arrangements to be attached/should be provided in due course (e.g. flight itinerary, copy of tickets)
2. Considering operation of ship, there should be early planning for crew repatriation before end of SEA
3. There should be willingness to deviate the vessel from its trading pattern to permit repatriation, involving all stakeholders in ship operations to address crew repatriation

Risk assessment attached, considering:

- Ship's trading pattern
- Rest hours
- Fatigue
- Other identified hazards

Name, Signature, Date, Stamp
