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

Subject: Communications from the Governments of:
   i the Kingdom of Bahrain; and
   ii the Republic of South Africa

The Governments of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Republic of South Africa have sent the attached communications, dated 29 April 2020, with the request that they are circulated by the Organization.

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Ref: 223/2020
Date: 29th April 2020

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

Your Excellency,

The Maritime Administration in the Kingdom of Bahrain represented by Ports and Maritime Affairs (PMA) at the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications expresses its gratitude and appreciation to your excellency and to IMO staff for your sincere efforts, especially during these difficult times. This is demonstrated in the various circulars and guidance issued by IMO to assist the shipping industry minimize the effects of the outbreak of Corona Virus (COVID-19).

As a response to the pandemic, and in light of IMO circulars and guidance to adopt practical and pragmatic measures due to the current exceptional circumstances, the PMA has issued two marine notices with regard to the extension of seafarers certificates validity and the extension of the surveys, audits and inspection windows.

The marine notices were logged on the ministry’s webpage and can be referred to at:
http://www.mtt.gov.bh/sites/default/files/marine_notice_no. 1 2020.pdf and

Copies of the marine notices are also enclosed with this letter. We would appreciate if your excellency may arrange for this information to be circulated to member states and to non-governmental organizations.

Appreciating your support and wishing you to remain safe.

Yours sincerely,

Kamal Ahmed Mohammed
Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications
Kingdom of Bahrain
Concerning Corona Virus (COVID-19)
Guidance Relating to Extension
Certificates of Seafarers

To: — Shipping companies with ships
registered under the Bahraini flag;
— Recognized Organizations;
— Whom it may concern.

In light of the precautionary measures taken to
prevent an outbreak of the Corona Virus
(COVID-19), and in accordance to the
International Convention on Standards of
Training, Certification and Watch keeping for
seafarers 1978, as amended (STCW)
Convention, and in order to comply with the
relevant international procedures on
facilitating maritime trade during this period,
and in reference to the IMO Circular Letter
No.4204/Add.5 on the encouragement of
member states to extend the validity of
seafarers certificates for crews of its flag ships
associated with the STCW Convention, as well
as their acceptance of extensions to these
certificates issued by other countries in
accordance with the measures taken
worldwide.

Accordingly, Ports and Maritime Affairs (PMA)
decided to consider that all expired certificates
issued in accordance with the STCW
Convention 1978 including certificates of
competency, certificate of proficiency,
certificates of basic training, medical fitness
certificates, and endorsements attesting
recognition of certificates, for seafarers

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International Convention on Standards of
Training, Certification and Watch keeping for
seafarers 1978, as amended (STCW)
Convention, and in order to comply with the
relevant international procedures on
facilitating maritime trade during this period,
working onboard Bahraini flagged vessels and onboard foreign vessels working in Bahraini waters valid for a period of 3 months, starting from 26/03/2020.

Furthermore, PMA, within the flag State and port State control, will take pragmatic and practical approach regarding inspection of all seafarer’s certificates on ships to which the STCW Convention applies, and will consider all extensions on these certificates and its endorsements acceptable when exercising control procedures in accordance with Article X (and Regulation 1/4) (Control Procedures) of the STCW of 1978, and Ministerial Resolution (20) for year 2016 with regard to implementation of maritime international conventions, and Ministerial Resolution (6) for year 2001 with regard to implementation of the STCW Convention.

For further information and clarifications please contact:
Ship_registry@mtt.gov.bh

الوكيل المساعد لشؤون الملاحة البحرية
Assistant Undersecretary for Maritime Affairs

Issued on: 20th April 2020

Marine Notice: PMA/D5RSA/1/2020
Special Measures Concerning the extension of certificates, inspections and audits for Bahraini Flagged Ships Due to the Outbreak of Corona Virus (COVID-19)

To:  
- Shipping companies with ships registered under the Bahraini flag;  
- Recognized Organizations;  
- Whom it may concern.

In light of the precautionary measures taken to prevent an outbreak of the Corona Virus (COVID-19), and in order to ensure full implementation Legislative Decree (14) for year 1978 with regard to promulgation of registration of ships and determination of its safety, and Ministerial Decree (2) for year 2016 with regard to the implementation of maritime conventions, the Ports and Maritime Affairs (PMA) decided to accept the extension of the certificates, inspections and audits for Bahraini flagged ships from the date of this Marine Notice till 30th June 2020 without the prior approval of PMA, which includes:

1. Statutory certificates issued by Recognized Organizations, and it will not be required to replace with new certificates onboard.
2. Certificates issued by service providers for servicing of life saving equipment, fire-fighting equipment or radio equipment.

3. Bottom inspections which are due before 30th June 2020.

4. Annual internal Audits as described in paragraph 12.1 of the ISM Code.

5. Periodical ISM & ISPS verifications.

6. All cases of extensions and postponement shall be reported afterwards by the ROs to the PMA through email (ship_registry@mtt.gov.bh).

7. The extensions mentioned in this marine notice do not include certificates issued directly by the PMA which are the Navigation License, Safe Manning Document, Exemption Certificates and Bunker Certificates.

For further information and clarifications please contact:
Ship_registry@mtt.gov.bh

الوكيل المساعد لشؤون الملاحة البحرية
Assistant Undersecretary for Maritime Affairs

Issued on: 26th April 2020

Marine Notice: PMA/2/2020

Page 2 of 2
Dear Secretary General

VALIDITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN CERTIFICATES DURING COVID-19 PERIOD

As we are well aware of the effect of coronavirus (COVID-19) wreaking havoc around the world, South Africa and the entire maritime industry have not been spared.

South Africa has put measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These measures are will affect the services required by ships from the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA), an agency of the Department of Transport, as well as from other service providers.

The measures which are put in place seek to ensure that the maritime industry continues to ship goods to, and from, South Africa.

The annex Guideline below, in accordance to IMO’s Circular Letter No.4204/Add.5, serves to notify all the relevant stakeholders including the IMO Member States and the industry of the steps taken by South Africa to ensure continuity of maritime related services.

It would be appreciated if the IMO could bring the Guideline to the attention of all Member States.

Yours sincerely

MR SOBANTU TILAYI
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (ACTING)
SOUTH AFRICAN MARITIME SAFETY AUTHORITY
DATE: 29 April 2020

GUIDELINES FOR SEAFARERS AND VESSEL CERTIFICATION DURING COVID-19 PERIOD

1. Background

The outbreak of the Coronavirus disease (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, issues have been raised regarding manning of ships, crew changes and search and rescue services.

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 (SAMSA) 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.

2. Purpose

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

3. Scope

The actions described in this memorandum applies to all South African Seafarers (including non-nationals holding South African Certificates) and South African ships in accordance with the appropriate national laws and International Conventions.

4. Seafarer’s certification

The following arrangements have been made regarding Seafarer Certification and related documentation
4.1 Validity of Seafarer Certificates

SAMSA has considered the predicament many seafarers and their employers are finding themselves in and have granted an extension until 30 September 2020 to any certificate that may expire during the national lockdown and/or shortly thereafter. Masters, Seafarers and Employers must produce the appropriate Marine Notice to show extension of their Certificates - http://www.samsa.org.za/Pages/Marine-Notices.aspx

Where appropriate, seafarers and/or employers may apply to be issued a specific letter to each seafarer in accordance with the Marine Notice

4.2 Medical and Eyesight Certificates

Medical Certificates for seafarers shall remain valid as issued. Under the measures in place to combat the COVID-19 disease, medical practitioners will still be operating and persons will be allowed to visit the doctors for any reason.

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

4.3 Safe Manning of Ships

Ship operators shall inform SAMSA regarding any challenges with seafarers holding foreign certificates of competency with regards to revalidation and obtaining an endorsement to their Certificate of Competency. SAMSA will not issue an endorsement to a foreign COC unless such certificate is still valid, except where there is a clear policy form that administration regarding the same. The issue of the endorsement applied for by employers is not affected by this Marine Notice.

5. Vessel Certificates and Surveys

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

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