



## **SADC Guidelines on Harmonisation and Facilitation of Cross Border Transport Operations across the Region During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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### **1. Background**

Domestic, interstate and international travel have proven to be one of the main ways the COVID-19 virus is spreading among communities, nations and globally. There is therefore a need to limit travelling and freight movements to the absolutely essential only.

### **2. Objectives**

The objectives of these guidelines are to:

- (i) Limit the spread of COVID-19 through transport across borders;
- (ii) Facilitate the implementation of transport related national COVID-19 measures in cross border transportation;
- (iii) Facilitate interstate flow of essential goods such as fuel, food, medicines and agricultural inputs;
- (iv) Limit unnecessary and mass movement of passengers across borders; and
- (v) Balance, align, harmonise and coordinate COVID-19 response measures with the requirements for trade and transport facilitation

### **3. Guidelines**

These Guidelines assume that Member States are implementing the policies and measures to combat COVID-19 recommended by World Health Organization (WHO), World Customs Organization (WCO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and SADC

### **3.1 Cross Border Freight Transport Operations**

#### **3.1.1 Regulation of trade and transport**

Only trucks/vehicles with the following cargo, goods and services will be allowed to operate in interstate operations in order to ensure continuity of supply chains:

- (i) Food;
- (ii) Medical equipment and medicines, including medical supplies and Personal Protection Equipment;
- (iii) Fuel, including coal;
- (iv) Agricultural inputs and supplies;
- (v) Chemicals, packaging, equipment, spares, maintenance materials and ancillary products used in the production and processing of food products
- (vi) Security, emergency and humanitarian relief services; and
- (vii) Other goods and products as may be agreed among and between Member States.

#### **3.1.2 Simplification and automation of trade and transport facilitation processes and documents.**

To reduce face to face interaction and delays at ports and border crossings, Member States are encouraged to:

- (i) simplify and automate trade and transport facilitation processes whilst ensuring that all legal documents are in place and customs and other regulatory requirements are complied;
- (ii) introduce or enhance pre-clearance of goods and single window processing; and
- (iii) accelerate the creation of online applications and platforms for the processing, clearances of imports and exports, application, issuance and renewals of licences and permits, registration of drivers, operators, vehicles and loads, payment of fees and for information dissemination and sharing.

#### **3.1.3 Information Sharing**

To facilitate the implementation of these Guidelines, it is recommended that Member States should:

- (i) Provide Secretariat with information on the actions taken (including copies of policies, statutory instruments and guidelines issued) to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by all modes of transport and to protect the health of travellers, crews, personnel and citizens;

- (ii) Continually share with other Member States and Secretariat the lists of additional products that they consider essential in order for the sending countries and/or countries of transit to handle such products as emergency or essential goods;
- (iii) Recognize that there may be goods not classified as essential but very critical to the economy of another member state and in such case, countries of transit or origin must be encouraged to accept authentic correspondence that may be produced to facilitate transportation of that critical good to final destination; and
- (iv) Copy Secretariat in communications related to additional products as contemplated in item 3.1.1 (vii) above.

## **3.2 Cross Border Road Passenger Transport**

3.2.1 Inter-State mass movement of persons by buses/minibuses or other vehicles to be suspended for defined periods except for the following exemptions to be granted against Special Cross Border Permits mutually agreed and recognised between the country of origin, country of destination and country/ies of transit:

- (i) Citizens and residents returning to home countries / places of residence will be subject to local regulations on screening and testing and may be subjected to isolation and quarantine if deemed necessary;
- (ii) The following will be subjected to local regulations on screening only according to local regulations unless in the screening they show symptoms of COVID-19 then they shall be subjected to isolation and quarantine if deemed necessary:
  - (a) Security, emergency and humanitarian relief services as may be agreed between Member States;
  - (b) Engineering and maintenance support services (including engineers and support staff) supporting the production of goods mentioned in 3.1; and
  - (c) Transportation of work crews and teams under special arrangements between Member States (e.g. teams working on cross border transport projects such as Kazungula Bridge and One Stop Border Post).

3.2.2 The following conditions must be met by operators and stakeholders who may wish to apply for the above exemptions:

- (i) Reduction in number of passengers in a bus, mini-bus or other vehicle to allow for social distancing;

- (ii) Provision of WHO recommended hygiene facilities on the vehicle, at the bus terminuses, borders and other places the cross-border buses may stop;
- (iii) Information dissemination by operators to passengers on COVID-19 preventative measures in the languages of the travellers (where possible); and
- (iv) Completion of travel history questionnaires by passengers/travellers and ensuring that completed travel history forms are submitted to Port Health Officials

### **3.3 Regulation of Other Modes of Cross Border Transport**

For air, rail, inland waterways and maritime modes of transport, the following will apply:

- (i) Member States to consult and agree on the suspension of interstate transport services and the conditions for services that will be allowed to continue;
- (ii) Interstate travelling of persons should be discouraged and where it takes place it should be according to travel advisories, rules and procedures put in place by country of origin, transit and destination. Social distancing must be applied;
- (iii) hygienic facilities recommended by the WHO be provided on the vehicle and at terminal areas and during travel<sup>1</sup>; and
- (iv) Information dissemination by the driver, pilot, crew and operators to passengers on COVID-19 preventative measures must be conducted in the languages of the travellers (where possible).

### **3.4 Services and facilities to be provided**

#### **3.4.1 Governments**

It is recommended that the following services and facilities, to facilitate the implementation of the foregoing, be provided by Governments:

- (i) Categorise Cross Border Truck Drivers, Pilots and Crews as workers undertaking essential and exempted services and facilitate their movement;
- (ii) For inbound traffic (passengers, crew and freight) at the borders, immigration and customs officials shall carry out their enhanced and thorough functions as per prescribed standards; and public

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<sup>1</sup> WHO Guidelines on Management of ill Travellers at Points of Entry – international airports, seaports, ground crossings – in the context of COVID-19 outbreak. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/points-of-entry-and-mass-gatherings>

health officials shall conduct through screening of all passengers and crew.

- (iii) Put in place policies and procedures at the ports of entry to identify and accord priority to the clearance and transportation of essential goods and services (fuel including coal, food, medical equipment and medicines, Personal Protection Equipment and agricultural cargo and inputs);
- (iv) In order to ensure continued movement of essential goods in the region while observing the WHO recommended measures, Member States are urged to screen all drivers and their crew at arrival at border crossings. In stances where such people exhibit symptoms, they should be immediately isolated and referred to designated treatment and quarantine facilities;
- (v) In cases where drivers and their crew do not show any symptoms after screening, they should be allowed to proceed to deliver the goods and should be subjected to entry screening into the next country or on their return trip to their country of domicile or next loading point.
- (vi) Conduct, Exit and Entry screening of drivers and crews at Ports of Exit and Entry;
- (vii) Implement expedited protocols for Entry and Exit screening of drivers, pilots and crews of airplanes, vessels and vehicles carrying essential cargo and services;
- (viii) Provide hygiene facilities at each transport node, such as air and sea ports, Internal Container Depots, Container Freight Services, Road Side Stations/ Truck Stops, border posts and inland terminals as recommended by WHO and the National Government;
- (ix) Facilities to disinfect airplanes, vessels and vehicles and cargo at the point of loading and discharge;
- (x) Designate safe and secure parking facilities for cross border road transport Vehicles in transit and performing deliveries/pick-ups, and
- (xi) Scale up border patrols in order to deter and to arrest people who might attempt to cross borders at unauthorised or ungazetted crossings.

### **3.4.2 Transport Operators and Transport Operators Associations**

It is recommended that the following services and facilities to facilitate the implementation of the foregoing be provided by Transport Operators and Transportation Associations:

- (i) Collaborate with Health Officials to design and implement a sensitization program for transit operators and their employees;
- (ii) Instruct drivers of cross border trucks/vehicles to fill Trip Sheets /Logbooks which show their stops, destination and times during the trip. The Trip Sheet / Logbooks must be kept in the custody of the driver during the trip and shown to Law Enforcement and Health Officials on demand. Trip Sheets and Logbooks must be stored at the offices of the Operator and should be made available to Law Enforcement and Health Officials when required to facilitate contact tracing and investigations;
- (iii) Operators to collaborate with governments in exploring how vehicle tracking data can be used for tracing and investigations.
- (iv) Ensure that cross border drivers carry sufficient water and soap for the WHO recommended hygiene purposes;
- (v) Instruct drivers not to carry an unauthorised person such as hitchhikers.;
- (vi) Instruct cross border drivers to maintain 1-metre social distance between persons at all times throughout the trip; and
- (vii) Provide isolation facilities for high risk crews and employees.

### **3.5 Regulating and controlling Trucks/Vehicles carrying essential goods and services**

Member States shall ensure the issuance of national policies, regulations and guidelines and establish institutions that provide for or ensure that:

- (i) Law Enforcement Officers and Regulators, treat with leniency and recognise extension of validity of short-term cross border permits /licences, which have expired en route due to different administrative procedures in force following the COVID-19 measures, until the vehicles are able to complete the journey.
- (ii) The crew for trucks, planes and vessels will be determined by the specifications of the aircraft or vessel as set by international guidelines but it is recommended that vehicles only have 2-3 crew

members per vehicle to facilitate smooth border crossing in the region;

- (iii) There is a system and procedure for monitoring that drivers, pilots and crew members are in good health, and if crew are screened and found to be at high risk, the driver or crew member must be quarantined for 14 days according to the set national guidelines;
- (iv) If a driver or crew member is showing signs for COVID-19, the truck will be decontaminated before it is allowed to continue to its final destination and the driver or crew Member must be referred to a treatment centre at operator's cost. The driver or crew will be quarantined at the government designated facilities for the period of their stay at the operator's cost;
- (v) In the event that crews are quarantined while in transit, truck owners/operators shall make necessary arrangements for a backup crew to ensure that the goods are delivered to the intended destination. Member States shall expedite the movement of backup crews after they have been cleared by Health Officials;
- (vi) Truck drivers are required to declare their final destination and are urged to stop only at designated points along the transport corridors;
- (vii) Vessels from high risk countries and or with high risk crew or passengers must be quarantined at outer anchorage at own cost for 14 days before being allowed to discharge at berths;
- (viii) Vessels with infected crews and or passengers on board will not be allowed to berth;
- (ix) Airlines operating on all routes step up the frequency of cleaning, disinfect as a preventative measure and ensure full disinfection of any aircraft which has carried a passenger who was suspected or confirmed as being infected with COVID-19.
- (x) Airport operators should similarly disinfect terminals at least twice a day;
- (xi) They establish a surveillance system to monitor the driver, pilot and crew health and enable contact tracing;
- (xii) No operational restrictions will be imposed on foreign registered transporters entering a Member State as long as they operate within the essential services spectrum as per paragraph 3.1.1 and within local surveillance policies and regulations;
- (xiii) Nationally registered cross border transporters must quarantine their drivers/crew after they have off-loaded their load, either at an official quarantine premises or their own premises in an accommodation befitting an overnight lodge under the auspices of

the Ministry responsible for Health, for the period required to commence the next cross border trip of this driver/crew. At no time may the driver/crew be allowed to leave his/her quarantine premises. Should a driver/crew return from a foreign trip without being assigned another foreign trip during a declared lockdown period, the driver/crew must enter a 14-day quarantine period;

- (xiv) Public Health Officials at the border of the country of destination must communicate details of the inbound trucks to their counterparts in the region / district of final destination to facilitate enforcement of isolation measures of the crew during the time of offloading or loading the trucks;
- (xv) Expand the mandate of National Transport and Trade Facilitation Committee (TTFC) or establish a similar body comprising officials from the Ministries responsible for Transport, Health, Police/Army, and Trade. This body should coordinate the implementation of these guidelines and resolve operational issues at borders or road blocks arising from lack of consistent communication of policies during the COVID-19 period and/or interpretation of these policies. Telephone numbers and emails of these TTFC should be displayed at borders/road blocks and shared with all SADC States and Road Transport Associations, Road Transport Regulators etc. This is for speedy resolution of issues at borders and roadblocks in case of misinterpretation of current policies
- (xvi) Protection of Officers and staff undertaking regulatory, control, law enforcement, screening, testing and treatment of travellers and crews and.
- (xvii) Existing wellness committees are expanded to include psychosocial support to drivers affected by COVID-19, and where they do not exist, to introduce such Wellness Committees.

### **3.6 Monitoring, review and sharing of best practices**

The Secretariat in consultation with Member States and other key stakeholders and partners should:

- (i) review national transport related policies, regulations and response measures and identify inconsistencies;
- (ii) based on the review, select best practices and propose to the Member States harmonized policies, regulations and measures;
- (iii) put in place a mechanism to enable member States to share information on COVID-19 response policies, regulations and guidelines, best practices and experiences in the implementations of the various measures;

- (iv) urgently establish from its staff a Regional Transport and Trade Facilitation Cell (RTTFC) comprising Experts experienced in Transport and Trade Facilitation and Logistics, Customs, Public Health and Security to assist and coordinate Member States and Corridor Groups in implementing the provisions of these guidelines during COVID-19;
- (v) mobilize resources to facilitate the effective and efficient operation of the RTTFC to address the challenges of the current situation and coordinate the implementation of the guidelines; and
- (vii) based on lessons learnt, propose recommendations on revisions and updates to the Protocol on Trade and the Protocol on Transport, Communications and Meteorology in order to ensure that they both have adequate and comprehensive provisions for the region to coordinate responses to future emergencies that might arise from epidemics and natural disasters.

**Special Note:** The definition of high-risk geographical areas in these guidelines is based on World Health Organisation (WHO) situation report assessments and guidance

## References

### WHO Technical Guidance:

- (i) Management of ill travelers at Points of Entry – international airports, seaports and ground crossings – in the context of COVID-19 outbreak.
- (ii) Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships. Reference numbers. WHO Reference Number: WHO/2019-nCoV/Ships/2020.2
- (iii) Handbook for the inspection of ships and issuance of ship sanitation certificates. WHO Reference Number: WHO/HSE/IHR/LYO/2011.3
- (iv) Handbook for the Management of Public Health Events in Air Transport. Reference numbers. ISBN: 978 92 4 151016 5

### European Union <https://www.healthygateways.eu/Novel-coronavirus#Interim>

- (i) Interim advice for preparedness and response to cases of COVID-19 at points of entry in the European Union (EU)/EEA Member States (MS)
- (ii) Interim advice for preparedness and response to cases of COVID-19 at points of entry in the European Union (EU)/EEA Member States (MS)
- (iii) [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/coronavirus-response\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/coronavirus-response_en)

### International Civil Aviation Organisation

<https://www.icao.int/Security/COVID-19/Pages/Statements.aspx>

<https://www.icao.int/safety/Pages/COVID-19-Airport-Status.aspx>

<https://www.icao.int/sustainability/Pages/Economic-Impacts-of-COVID-19.aspx>

### International Association of Public Transport

Management of Covid-19 Guidelines for Public Transport Operators February | 2020

**International Road Transport Union <https://www.iru.org/>**

- (i) Recommendations for freight drivers during COVID-19
- (ii) Recommendations for bus and coach drivers during COVID-19
- (iii) IRU open letter - Coronavirus and its impact on supply chains and mobility networks

**Coronavirus Aircraft Disinfectants- The Aviation Industry Role in helping present the spread of Wuhan Coronavirus**

<https://www.callingtonhaven.com/coronavirus-aircraft-disinfectant.php>

**International Maritime Organisation**

[www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/PublishingImages/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204%20-%20Novel%20Coronavirus%202019-Ncov%20Secretariat.pdf](http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/PublishingImages/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204%20-%20Novel%20Coronavirus%202019-Ncov%20Secretariat.pdf)

[www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204-Add.2%20-%20Joint%20Statement%20Imo-Who%20On%20The%20Response%20To%20The%20Covid-19%20Outbreak%20\(Secretariat\).pdf](http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204-Add.2%20-%20Joint%20Statement%20Imo-Who%20On%20The%20Response%20To%20The%20Covid-19%20Outbreak%20(Secretariat).pdf)