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Circular Letter No.4204/Add.1  
19 February 2020

To: All IMO Member States  
United Nations and specialized agencies  
Intergovernmental organizations  
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with IMO

Subject: **COVID-19 – Implementation and enforcement of relevant IMO instruments**

The Secretary-General informs that he has received reports regarding the impacts on the shipping industry resulting from the sudden and rapid outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus. In response to this situation, the Secretary-General has issued guidance through Circular Letter No.4204.

Flag State authorities, port State authorities and control regimes, companies and shipmasters should cooperate, in the current context of the outbreak, to ensure that, where appropriate, passengers can be embarked and disembarked, cargo operations can occur, ships can enter and depart shipyards for repair and survey, stores and supplies can be loaded, certificates can be issued and crews can be exchanged.

The principles of avoiding unnecessary restrictions or delay on port entry to ships, persons and property on board are also embodied in articles I and V and section 6 of the annex of the FAL Convention.

Several IMO instruments contain provisions that may be relevant to the impact on shipping caused by the outbreak of COVID-19. These include, but are not limited to:

- the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974;
- the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973;
- the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004;
- the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978; and
- resolution A.1119(30), *Procedures for port State control*, 2017.

In addition, the Secretariat has received the following communication from the International Labour Organization (ILO):

"In the context of the evolving coronavirus outbreak, the effective protection of the health and safety of seafarers should be a priority. Under the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, flag States must ensure that all seafarers on ships flying their flag are covered by adequate measures for the protection of their health and that they have access to prompt and adequate medical care whilst working on board. The Convention also requires port States to ensure that seafarers on board ships in their territory who are in need of immediate medical care are given access to medical facilities on shore."

COVID-19 is a severe public health challenge that requires understanding and close cooperation among all Member States to overcome challenges related to the implementation and enforcement of the relevant IMO instruments.

The Organization will continue to closely monitor the situation and the Secretary-General will provide additional information as appropriate and will bring these matters to the attention of the relevant organs of the Organization, in particular the Maritime Safety Committee, the Marine Environment Protection Committee, the Facilitation Committee and the Legal Committee.

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