

4 ALBERT EMBANKMENT
LONDON SE1 7SR
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7735 7611 Fax: +44 (0)20 7587 3210

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

Subject: **Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Guidance relating to the certification of seafarers and fishing vessel personnel**

1 The Secretary-General has been made aware of a number of concerns regarding seafarers and fishing vessel personnel's training and certification as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

2 The actions taken worldwide as a result of the outbreak pose a serious challenge for Administrations to allow the continued training of seafarers and fishing vessel personnel, revalidate certificates, including medical certificates, and endorsements, in accordance with the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978, as amended, and the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F), 1995.

3 In light of the foregoing, the Secretary-General has decided to provide guidance relating to the certification of seafarers and fishing vessel personnel, as set out in annexes 1 and 2, respectively.

4 Member States and other stakeholders are invited to bring the contents of this circular letter to the attention of all concerned, especially issuing Administrations and port and coastal State authorities.

ANNEX 1

GUIDANCE RELATING TO THE CERTIFICATION OF SEAFARERS

1 Issuing Administrations are encouraged to take a pragmatic and practical approach with regard to the extension of certificates, including medical certificates, and endorsements, as strictly necessary, in accordance with the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978, as amended; and to notify ships, seafarers and relevant Administrations accordingly.

2 Port State control authorities are also encouraged to take a pragmatic and practical approach in relation to these certificate and endorsement extensions, and their acceptance in the exercise of control procedures in accordance with article X (Control) and regulation I/4 (Control procedures) of the 1978 STCW Convention, as amended.

3 Member States are invited to communicate to the Organization general information on the practices adopted by the issuing Administrations and port State control authorities. The Organization will circulate this information.

ANNEX 2

GUIDANCE RELATING TO THE CERTIFICATION OF FISHING VESSEL PERSONNEL

1 Issuing Administrations are encouraged to take a pragmatic and practical approach with regard to the extension of certificates and endorsements, as strictly necessary, in accordance with the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW F), 1995; and to notify vessels, fishing vessel personnel and relevant Administrations accordingly.

2 Port and coastal States are also encouraged to take a pragmatic and practical approach in relation to these certificate and endorsement extensions, and their acceptance in the exercise of their respective responsibilities.
