Mauritius

Source: IMPACCT / UN OCHA

07.08.2020

Mauritius- Oil Spill in the context of COVID-19

The government of Mauritius has closed the country's air space to prevent and fight spread ofthe imported Covid-19 infection in Mauritius. The Mauritius Police Force has been mandated to ensure compliance with the conditions of the Sanitary Curfew. (Mauritius Revenue Authority, 16April 2020) On 6 August 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade alerted the international community to an imminent risk of oil spill of Tier 3 following the running aground of a bulk carrier vessel, MV Wakashio, on the reef of Pointe d'Esny in Mauritius.

Bulletin on Customs, Immigration and Quarantine Procedures Nr 1 (7 August 2020)

IMPORTATION and CUSTOMS PROCEDURES

Temporary elimination of VAT on imports of protective masks, breathing appliances and hand sanitizers (HS 6307.90.30;

9020.00.00; 3808.94.10); and goods (except furniture) to be used for the construction of purpose building for a residential

care home, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Permanent Delegation of Mauritius to the WTO, 16 April 2020)

1. Activation of the Relief Consignment Mechanism MRA

Customs is giving expedited release to relief consignments

arriving by special chartered air flights. Goods cleared in this

category include Covid-19 Test Kits, medicaments and

pharmaceuticals, face masks, sanitizers, reagents and other

goods of prime necessity. Moreover, clearance for essential

goods such as basic necessities is being prioritised. In line with

WCO recommended Best Practices, our national legislation

makes provision for the treatment of Relief Consignments.

2. Removal of duties and Taxes on PPEs VAT has been removed

on hand sanitizers, protective masks, gloves, test kits, and other

related medical equipment (taken effect since 24 March 2020)

3. Waiver of penalties and interest for late payments:

Given the lockdown prevailing in Mauritius, stakeholders who

are unable to effect payment on or before the prescribed

deadline under the Deferred Payment Scheme (DPS), were

waived from payment of penalty or interest for late payment of

Customs duty, excise duty and taxes. Storage charges have been

waived for those stakeholders who have not been able to take

Remarks from the International Road Transport Union

Forthcoming

delivery of their consignments during Sanitary Curfew and lock

down.

4. A communiqué has been published on MRA website and a

communication line between Customs and external

stakeholders has been established for the smooth running of operations.

Economic operators have been provided a common email address and a dedicated phone number to contact Customs at any time for any urgent issues: telephone number 5
259 6950, email address headoffice@mra.mu.

5. Web-based submission of Customs declarations MRA

Customs negotiated with the Service Provider to allow, free of

charge, web-based access to the CMS by ALL economic

operators transacting business with Customs. This initiative

enables brokers/freight forwarders and other declarants to work

from home. The Facilities for the electronic submission of

Customs Declarations, including electronic payment of duties

and taxes, are available on the CMS. (WCO, 16 April 2020)

Sea ports: Prior to starting bunkering operations or provisions

loading, harbor radio should contact master of vessel regarding

health status of all crew members and inform health authority

so that permission from health authority can be granted.

(Wilhelmsen, 16 July 2020)

The core services of Mauritius Revenue Authority Customs are

operational at Custom House, Mer Rouge, PATS, Plaine

Magnien and at the SSR International Airport, with a skeleton

staff, in view of enabling the clearance of goods and outgoing

passengers.

MRA Customs at Plaine Corail in Rodrigues is also operational

with a skeleton staff in view of providing the core services.

Facilities for the electronic submission of Customs Declarations,

including electronic payment of duties and taxes, are available

on the Customs Management System. (Mauritius Chamber of

Commerce and Industry, 21 March 2020)

IMMIGRATION and QUARANTINE

All passengers are required to undergo a PCR test within 5 days

of travel and to present same at check-in and on arrival.

In Mauritius another PCR test is carried out and the result are

obtained in less than 24 hours.

Normally, passengers stay on a 14 days quarantine and further

PCR test carried out on the 7th and 13th day if the quarantine

period.

Considering the threat of the oil spill, the authorities may waive

the 14 day quarantine if the PCR test on arrival is negative. (Civil

Aviation of Mauritius, 6 August 2020)

Holders of Laissez-passer issued by the United Nations, SADC

or from other internationally recognized organizations are

exempted from needing a visa. (Republic of Mauritius website

visa portal, undated).

Lockdown restrictions were lifted on 30 May. (WFP, 28 July

2020)

Source: https://vosocc.unocha.org.....

Source: WCO/Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA)

20.04.2020

Communiqué: COVID-19 Measures taken by MRA due to lockdown in Mauritius

102405_Commun..._COVID-19.pdf

16.04.2020

Measures taken by MRA Customs

1. **Activation of the Relief Consignment Mechanism**

MRA Customs is giving expedited release to relief consignments arriving by special chartered air flights. Goods cleared in this category include Covid-19 Test Kits, medicaments and pharmaceuticals, face masks, sanitizers, reagents and other goods of prime necessity. Moreover, clearance for essential goods such as basic necessities is being prioritised.

In line with WCO recommended Best Practices, our national legislation makes provision for the treatment of Relief Consignments (an extract of the relative legislation is provided at Annex 1).

2. Removal of duties and Taxes on PPEs

VAT has been removed on hand sanitizers, protective masks, gloves, test kits, and other related medical equipment (taken effect since 24 March 2020).

3. Assisting economic operators with cashflow problems

(i) Deferred Payment Scheme

Customs is encouraging more businesses especially SMEs to join the Scheme. Under this scheme Customs allows release of goods, including excisable goods, without payment of duties and taxes at time of delivery; operators pay by the 7th of next month.

(ii) Duty and taxes suspended regime

Customs has eased the conditions for the approval of bonded warehouses/entities/places. Under this Customs procedure, economic operators can warehouse goods for a maximum period of 24 months; duties and taxes become payable as and when goods are ex- warehoused.

(iii) Waiver of penalties and interest for late payments

Given the lockdown prevailing in Mauritius, stakeholders who are unable to effect payment on or before the prescribed deadline under the Deferred Payment Scheme (DPS), were waived from payment of penalty or interest for late payment of Customs duty, excise duty and taxes. Storage charges have been waived for those stakeholders who have not been able to take delivery of their consignments during Sanitary Curfew and lock down (Annex 2).

4. Establishment of dedicated communication channel

A communiqué has been published on MRA website and a communication line between Customs and external stakeholders has been established for the smooth running of operations. Economic operators have been provided a common email address and a dedicated phone number to contact Customs at any time for any urgent issues (Copy of communiqué is at Annex 3).

5. Working from Home

All necessary arrangements have been made to enable a team of Customs Officers to work from home so as to ensure a smooth running of the core and essential services such as monitoring and clearance of consignments through the Customs Management System (CMS), risk management and excise operations. Customs Officers involved in post-clerance audit have also been provided with this facility.

6. Protection of officers working at front-lines

All frontline Customs Officers have been provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- face masks, gloves and hand sanitizers - to be used during the performance of their duties at the Port and Airport. The front-liners have been issued with Work Access Permit under the signature of the Commissioner of Police for movement from and to their residence during the Sanitary Curfew.

It is to be noted that officers aged 50 years and above and those having health issues have been excluded from the team of core staff working at the borders. They have, instead, been hooked on the online platform to enable them to perform their duties safely and securely from their home.

7. Web-based submission of Customs declarations

MRA Customs negotiated with the Service Provider to allow, free of charge, web-based access to the CMS by ALL economic operators transacting business with Customs. This initiative enables brokers/freight forwarders and other declarants to work from home.

The Facilities for the electronic submission of Customs Declarations, including electronic payment of duties and taxes, are available on the CMS.

8. Optimizing use of scanners

The optimum use of non-intrusive x-ray scanning is being done so as to minimise physical examinations by customs officers.

9. Ensuring business continuity

- MRA Customs is using IT technology to conduct on-line meetings among Management Team and other high level officers in order to resolve any operational issues and discuss strategic measures in this current period of crisis

- All stakeholders of the supply chain including Other Governmental Agencies are hooked on an online platform in order to facilitate trade and quickly resolve any trade related issues.

Some main measures taken by the Government of Mauritius

1. Government has closed the air space to prevent and fight spread of the imported Covid-19 infection in Mauritius.
2. A Sanitary Curfew has been put in force in Mauritius to prevent spread of the Covid-19 infection. The Mauritius Police Force has been mandated to ensure compliance with the conditions of the Sanitary Curfew.
3. There is a vast sensitization campaign launched by Government with the support of the media and other key stakeholders to encourage population to stay at home to prevent spread of the Covid-19.
4. Daily information is broadcasted to public via all local media on the evolution in number of cases detected, number of deaths, and number of contact tracings among others by a special Committee set up by Government for that purpose namely the National Communication Committee on Covid-19.
5. There is a dedicated website set up (https://besafemoris.mu/) for information sharing on Covid-19 evolution in Mauritius.
6. Government has also set up three schemes as follows:
i) National Solidarity Fund to provide assistance to the poor and needy;
ii) Self-Employed Assistance Scheme (SEAS) to assist self-employed persons who have suffered a loss of revenue as a consequence of the lockdown in the fight against Covid- 19; and
iii) Wage Assistance Scheme to ensure that all employees in the private sector are duly paid their salary for the month of March 2020 and MRA has been tasked with this responsibility.