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Circular Letter No.4283/Add.5  
27 January 2022

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

Subject: **Communication from the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu**

The Government of the Republic of Vanuatu has sent the attached communication, dated 26 January 2022, with the request that it be circulated by the Organization.

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GOVERNEMENT  
DE LA  
RÉPUBLIQUE DE  
VANUATU



GOVERNMENT  
OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF  
VANUATU

AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE  
INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION

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Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022

His Excellency Kitack Lim  
Secretary General  
International Maritime Organization  
4 Albert Embankment  
SE1 7SR London  
United Kingdom

Secretary General,

**Subject: Vanuatu's measures in relation to COVID-19**

Vanuatu Maritimes Services Ltd. (VMSL) as the Administrator of the Vanuatu International Ship Registry has issued the COVID 19 (REV4) attached policies with regards:

1. Seafarers Employment Agreement (SEA)
2. Seafarers Documentation
3. ISM/ISPS/MLC Verifications
4. Copies of Certificates and Documents in Electronic Format
5. Surveys

Vanuatu would respectfully request that the Secretariat issues a Circular Letter to all Member States, NGO's and IGO's, for circulation of the enclosed policies.

Copies of the latest versions are enclosed for your reference and parties can obtain the most updated guidance from VMSL website: <https://www.vanuatumaritimships.com>.

Please accept, Secretary General, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Laurent Parenté



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## 31 December 2021 COVID-19 (Rev. 4)

### 1. General

Vanuatu Maritimes Services Ltd. (VMSL) as the Administrator of the Vanuatu International Ship Registry has prepared the following policies to assist Shipowners during the pandemic.

### 2. Seafarer Employment Agreement (SEA)

Policy has been published as Fleet Safety Letter 031420.GEN which has been modified by FSL 123121.GEN

### 3. Seafarers Documentation

Letter of Comfort, dated 31 December 2021, has been issued to provide further extensions addressing **Expired Medical Certificates, Expired STCW Certificates and Seaman's Record Books.**

### 4. ISM/ISPS/MLC Verifications

Letter of Comfort has been revised to provide guidance with regard to internal audits only. Extensions related to **ISM, ISPS and MLC verifications** are authorized on the case by case basis. The request is to be submitted by the RO/RSO.

### 5. Copies of Certificates and Documents in Electronic Format

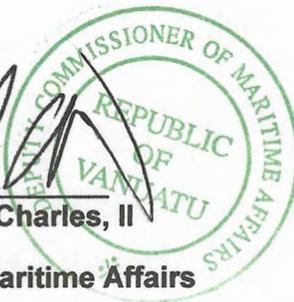
Policy has been published as Fleet Safety Letter 121718.GEN.

### 6. Surveys

Requests to extend statutory surveys due to the pandemic situation are to be submitted by the Recognized Organization with the procedures/survey requirements to be applied to grant the extension. The Administration accepts remote surveys provided that the procedures are submitted for review prior to the survey.

Respectfully,

**Captain Patrick Michael DeCharles, II**  
by the direction of the  
**Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs**  
The Republic of Vanuatu



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**FLEET SAFETY LETTER 123121.GEN**

**31 December 2021**

**Applicable to: This FLEET SAFETY LETTER is to be brought to the attention of Masters, seafarers, ship-owners, ship managers, operators, manning agents, Recognized Organizations and Port State Control Officers or any official agency regarding Vanuatu registered vessels and seafarers serving thereon.**

**Coronavirus and Seafarers Employment Agreement (SEA)**

- 1. This Fleet Safety Letter is issued to reiterate the points stated in the Fleet Safety Letters 031420.GEN issued on 14 March 2020; 063020.GEN issued on 30 June 2020; 093020.GEN issued on 30 September 2020; 123120.GEN issued on 31 December 2020 and 063021 issued 30 June 2021 extending the seafarer's period of service on board due to the Coronavirus Pandemic with all benefits established under Standards A2.4 (Entitlement to Leave) and A2.5.1. (Repatriation) of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006. (MLC).**
- 2. Any seafarer on a Vanuatu flagged vessel that has been granted an extension either specifically or automatically under the previous Fleet safety Letters 031420.GEN; 063020.GEN; 093020.GEN or 063021.GEN issued on 30 June 2021 and the vessel's owner/manager/agent cannot relieve and repatriate any affected seafarer due to any travel restrictions caused by the pandemic it is hereby automatically extended up to and including 30 June 2022.**
- 3. All efforts should be made where practical to make the appropriate crew changes as the conditions allow. If and when a vessel calls on a port that requires an Approved Repatriation Plan, VMSL requests that the proposed plan be submitted at least 72 hours prior to the arrival to avoid issues in the port.**

  
Captain Patrick Michael DeCharles, II  
by direction of the  
Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs  
The Republic of Vanuatu



# **VANUATU MARITIME SERVICES, LIMITED**

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## **LETTER OF COMFORT**

**31 December 2021**

**Sub: Extension of Merchant Mariner Credential Endorsements and Medical Certificates**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

**This LETTER OF COMFORT provides guidance concerning a Seafarer's Certificate of Competency (CoC) ; Certificates of Proficiency (CoP) ; Medical Certificates and Drug Testing regarding the action being taken by Vanuatu Maritime Services, Ltd (VMSL) as the Administrator of the Vanuatu International Ship registry (VISR) due to the novel coronavirus and the disease it causes (COVID-19). VMSL is doing this in keeping with international guidance to meet the challenge of this disease and in response to a number of questions and concerns raised by the maritime industry and Seafarers.**

**VMSL has also reviewed statements by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and other administrations to ensure alignment with respect to the extension of endorsements issued in accordance with the Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW). VMSL is taking a pragmatic approach consistent with the IMO Secretary General's circular Letter No.4204/Add.5 dated 17 March, 2020.**

**To mitigate the impact to the seafarers and the industry caused by the novel coronavirus disease COVID-19, VMSL is taking the following actions:**

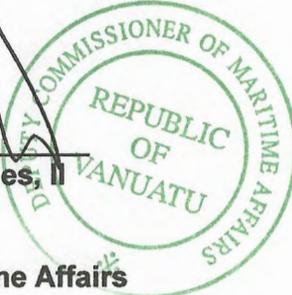
- 1. Vanuatu Endorsements and I.D. issued under SCTW Regulation I/10, STCW endorsements, and I.D. books issued by VMSL based on National CoCs that have or will expired on or before 31 December 2021 or thereafter up to 31 December 2022 will be extended pursuant to the extension granted by the National CoC letter of extension. Seafarers who are actively working on expired Vanuatu issued documents that meet the expiration criteria must carry ALL the expired credentials including the letter from the national Agency extending the National CoC with a copy of this letter.**
- 2. STCW Endorsements: STCW Certificates requiring refresher courses that have or that have or will expired on or before 31 December 2021 or thereafter up to 31 December 2022 will be extended pursuant to the extension granted by the National CoC/STCW letter of extension. Seafarers who are actively working on expired issued documents that meet the expiration criteria must carry ALL the expired credentials including the letter from the national Agency extending the National CoC with a copy of this letter.**

3. **STCW Medical Certificates:** STCW Medical Certificates and Drug testing are valid for 3 months from the expiration date in accordance with STCW Regulation I/9. Due to the pandemic, seafarers who are actively working on expired medical certificates are primarily extended to 31 March 2022 and must carry the expired certificates with a copy of this notice and are further extended until repatriated or allowed ashore to obtain medical and drug testing. The vessel owner must be due diligent in its duty to either repatriate or obtain medical and drug testing for the extended seafarer. Seafarers who are actively working on expired medical certificate that meet the above expiration criteria must carry the expired certificate with a copy of this notice.
4. For Vanuatu CoCs issued in the Oil and Gas industry such as but not limited to: OIM, Barge Supervisor, Ballast Officer, etc. that expired before 31 December 2021 are extended until 30 June 2022. Seafarers who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the expiration criteria must carry the expired credential with a copy of this notice. (See paragraph 3 for medical and drug certificates.)
5. No application is required to be made for the aforesaid interim revaluation.
6. Notwithstanding the above, whenever the revalidation of the expired corticated is to be carried out, the normal fees will apply and the new validity date shall be from a period equal to the new National CoC expiration date or the case of a Vanuatu National CoC five years from the original date, In other words, no benefit shall accrue to the Seafarer due to the extension granted under the latter of Comfort.

VMSL maybe issuing additional guidance on the above Seafarer Certificates and other administrative measures that will be posted on its website:  
[www.vanuatumaritimeships.com](http://www.vanuatumaritimeships.com).

If you have any Questions, please visit the website or contact Captain P. Michael DeCharles at (973) 981 4643 to direct you to the correct department personnel.

  
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Captain Patrick Michael DeCharles, II  
Executive Vice President  
by direction of the  
Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs  
[mdecharles@vanuatuships.com](mailto:mdecharles@vanuatuships.com)



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## LETTER OF COMFORT

31 December 2021

**Sub: COVID-19: ISM internal/ RO audits, ISM/ISPS/MLC/ and other required Audits/Surveys**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

This LETTER OF COMFORT provides guidance to accommodate any possible disruptions with regard to ISM/ISPS/MLC verifications:

1. This Administration considers COVID-19 an exceptional situation.

2. With respect to internal audits, we accept the alternatives below:

2a. Masters may audit the Engine Department and Chief Engineers may audit the Bridge Department under the remote supervision from a qualified internal auditor/DPA of the company.

2b. A fully remote audit performed by a qualified internal auditor/DPA of the company is also acceptable.

2c. In the alternatives described under 2a and 2b above, all requirements of the ISM Code must be met.

2d. The due date of any internal audit due by 31 December 2021 is extended by this policy for 90 days from its due date. The extension shall be communicated to the Administration with the alternative to be utilized.

3. Recognized Organizations are authorized to postpone any ISM/ISPS/MLC audit due by 31 December 2021 for a period of not more than 90 days from the due date without prior authorization provided that the Administration is informed about the extension. For renewal/initial audits, the due date is the expiration date of the relevant certificate. In the case of annual/intermediate audits, the due date is the last day of the permissible window. This authorization is only valid for COVID-19 reasons.

**Letter of Comfort/Audits**

**Page 2**

**31 December 2021**

**3a. All other cases must be submitted to the Administration for approval. When informing the Administration, please include:**

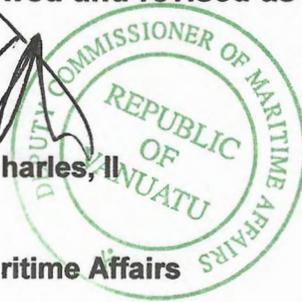
- i. Due date of the audit**
- ii. Copy of the relevant certificate**

**4. In the case of interim certificates expiring by 31 December 2021, the Administration will authorize an extension of the Interim certificate for the period necessary to complete the initial audit/verification/inspection.**

**5. Remote RO audits are permissible after consulting with the Administration's Safety and Compliance Department. Please contact Mr. Samuel Dratch at: [sdratch@vanuatuships.com](mailto:sdratch@vanuatuships.com)**

**6. This policy will be reviewed and revised as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve.**

  
**Captain Patrick Michael DeCharles, II**  
**Executive Vice President**  
**by direction of the**  
**Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs**



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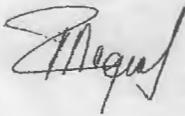
FLEET / SAFETY LETTER 121718.GEN

17 December 2018

Applicable to: This FLEET / SAFETY LETTER supersedes FLEET / SAFETY LETTERS 120914.GEN dated 9 December 2014 and 031717.GEN dated 22 March 2017 and should be brought to the attention of ship-owners, ship managers, operators and Masters of Vanuatu-registered ships.

**Acceptance of Copies of Certificates and Documents in Electronic Format**

1. Copies of certificates and documents in electronic format issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs and electronically communicated by any of the Vanuatu Maritime Services Limited Offices or Special Agents are acceptable in lieu of the originals until such time as the originals may be placed on board at a convenient port provided that the issue date of any copy does not exceed 90 days.
2. It is understood that *electronic format* means having your data accessible by a computer - either on a hard or flash drive, burned to a cd or accessible online. If scanned/typed documents can be viewed on a computer, they are considered in an electronic format.
3. *Electronic communication* is, but not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic or photo-optical system.
4. The electronic format definition includes a paper document that has been scanned and/or converted to a computer file. Accordingly, a copy in electronic format is acceptable in either an electronic form (soft copy) or as printed output (hard copy).
5. Acceptable copies in electronic format include scanned copies, soft or hard, of the certificates and documents.
6. Verification can be obtained by contacting this office at the email noted above.



Roderick A. Acquie  
by the direction of the  
Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs  
The Republic of Vanuatu

Page 1 of 1

FLEET SAFETY LETTER 121718.GEN

17 December 2018

INSPECTED & APPROVED  
INT. PMAD DATE: 31 Dec 21  
as per Covid 19 Policies  
and general use.