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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) – Protocols to mitigate the risks of cases on board ships**

The Secretary-General has received the attached Coronavirus (COVID-19) Protocols to mitigate the risks of cases on board ships, prepared by the following non-governmental associations in consultative status with the Organization: ICS, INTERTANKO and IMHA. Member States and international organizations are invited to make use of the Protocols, as they see fit, and circulate it to all interested parties, as deemed appropriate.

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ANNEX



## Coronavirus (COVID-19)

### Protocols to Mitigate the Risks of Cases On Board Ships



Version 1.0 - 26 August 2020

**Coronavirus (COVID-19)**  
Protocols to Mitigate the Risks of Cases On Board Ships

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The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) is the global trade association representing national shipowners' associations from Asia, the Americas and Europe and more than 80% of the world merchant fleet. Established in 1921, ICS is concerned with all aspects of maritime affairs particularly maritime safety, environmental protection, maritime law and employment affairs. ICS enjoys consultative status with the UN International Maritime Organization (IMO).

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## 1. Introduction

As we progress through the COVID-19 pandemic, it is vital to keep trade moving. To do that, we must ensure that crew can embark and disembark safely and efficiently.

ICS, IMHA and INTERTANKO have created two tools to help ship operators manage cases on board: a flowchart to help identify the process to follow when managing a larger number of suspect cases of COVID-19 on board; and a PCR testing procedures matrix to help identify what to do and when prior to boarding and if a suspect case is identified on the ship.

## 2. Decision Making for On Board Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

A flowchart attached at Annex A identifies the process to follow when managing a larger number of potential cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on board. If COVID-19 cannot be satisfactorily excluded, seafarers must be treated as positive cases until further assessment shoreside or complete resolution of symptoms and isolation for 14 days. Isolation is critical in attempting to control the spread of disease on board. During the isolation period the seafarers should not work and should be disembarked at the nearest appropriate port. In deciding on the nearest appropriate port, medical facility capabilities ashore should be considered.

Affected seafarers should not be allowed to work and a risk assessment should be undertaken to ensure that the ship can safely undertake operations. Due regard should be taken of the safe manning certification and close liaison with the flag State must be maintained.

Isolate all patients in the sickbay, or in their own cabins, and ensure they wear medical face masks when mixing with other people. Patients should have access to bathrooms not used by others.

## 3. PCR Testing Procedures Matrix

A PCR testing procedures matrix attached at Annex B identifies what to do and when prior to boarding and also if COVID-19 is identified on board a ship.

Evidence suggests that asymptomatic persons still carry COVID-19 and transmit it to others. Testing:

- Can identify persons not identified by other screening measures;
- Should ideally be conducted on embarkation in ports or terminals, where tests are available by port health authority representatives; and
- Should currently be conducted using polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, which involve a swab of the nose or throat. This recommendation may change once new tests are available.

Any seafarers testing positive should not board the ship and should receive further medical assessment or tests.

A negative PCR test does not guarantee seafarers are not infected with COVID-19 and could still potentially carry it on board the ship.

Any seafarers about to join the ship developing any symptoms should not be boarded and should receive further medical advice.

The ability to test seafarers before embarkation depends on many factors including testing availability in ports and terminals.



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Seafarers may become infected while travelling to a ship, so the best time to test for COVID-19 to reduce infection risks on board ship is in the port or terminal before embarkation, by isolating the seafarer ashore while awaiting the test result.

Testing before deployment to travel to a ship:

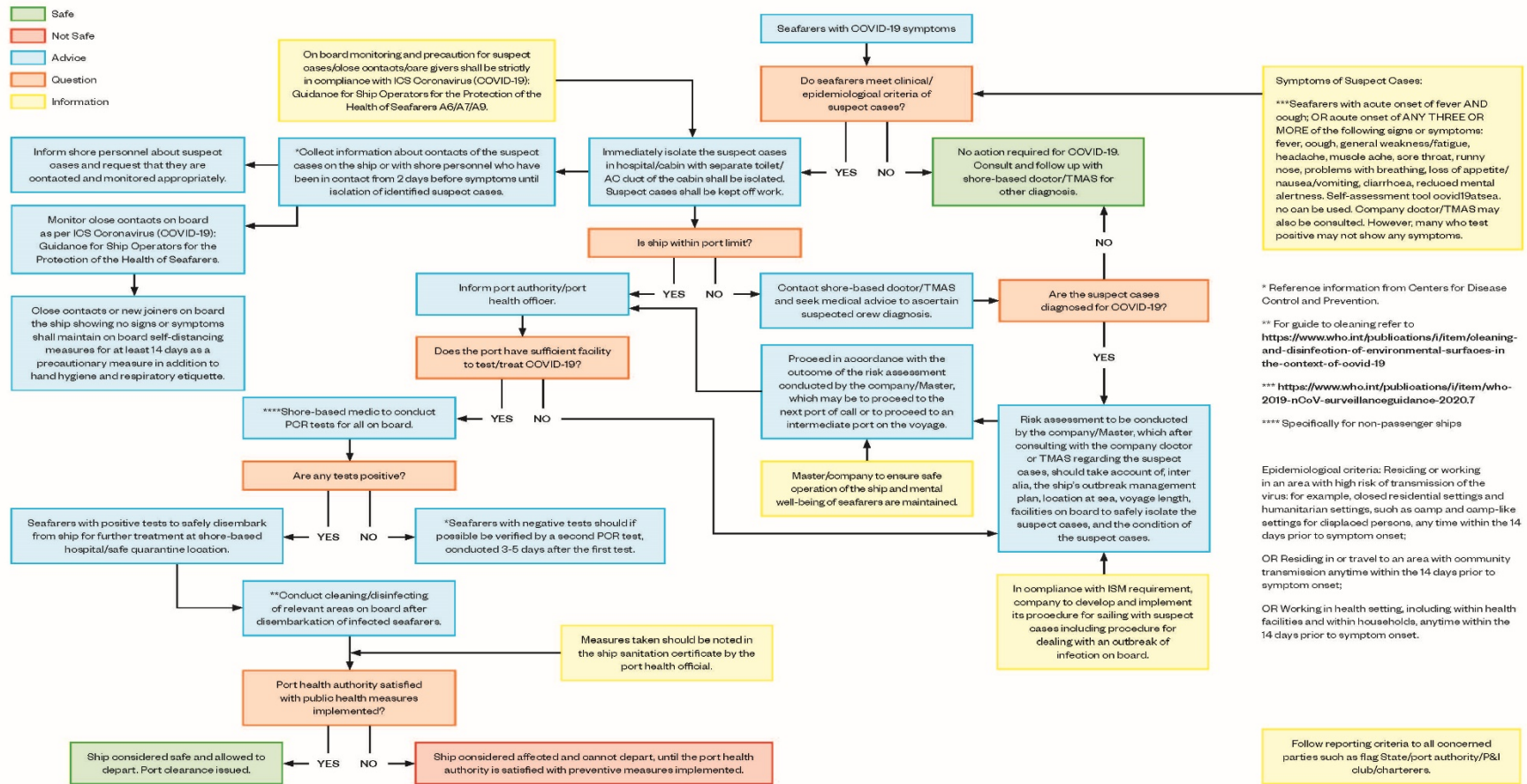
- Can reduce risks associated with COVID-19;
- May be a pre-requisite for travel by relevant authorities; and
- Avoids seafarers travelling to the ship who might not be allowed to board due to a positive test or screening upon embarkation and transmission to others during travel.

Early testing of seafarers suspected of having COVID-19 can help to mitigate spread to others on board ship and identify who else needs to be tested.



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**Annex A**  
Decision Making for On Board Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Cases



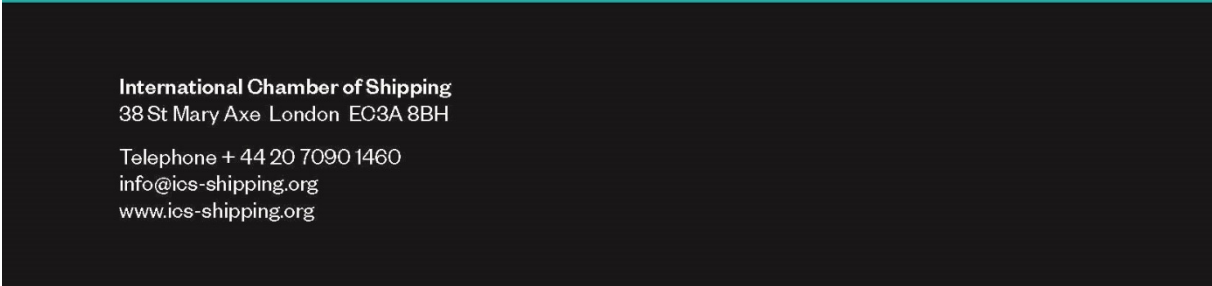
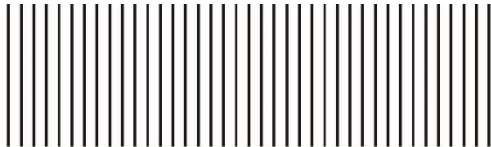
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**Annex B**  
PCR Testing Procedures Matrix

|                              | PCR Testing Requirements for Travel to and from the Ship  |  |  | Suspect Case PCR Testing Requirements as Directed by the Port Health Authority (PHA)   |  |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
|                              | Pre departure from home to ship location  | On arrival in country of embarkation of the ship   | On arrival in the country of disembarkation from the ship for repatriation   | Initial tests  | Repeated testing of crew/close contacts  |
| <b>Required</b>              | Test to be taken according to the rules of the country of arrival before leaving the seafarer's country of origin. *<br>Due diligence should be conducted by the company to ensure the certificate is valid and not fraudulent. | Verification by officials in the country of arrival of the seafarer's test certificate.<br>If the certificate is not valid retesting will need to be conducted whilst isolating the seafarer ashore.<br>When there is no testing by the State Authority, the company should use due diligence to ensure the certificate is valid and not fraudulent. | To avoid quarantine some countries of arrival require a negative PCR test result prior to arrival of a returning seafarer. Where required the test should be available to the seafarer in the port where they sign off the ship. | On arrival in port.  | Repeated tests are taken 3-5 days after the second test.   |
| <b>If negative</b>           | Seafarers may travel from the country of origin with the testing certificate to ship.   | Board ship after agreed quarantine if required and/ or repeat testing if required.   | Leave the ship with testing certificate.   | Remain in isolation for the period of time required by the PHA. Seek medical advice.*  | Remain in isolation for the period of time required.*  |
| <b>If positive</b>           | Seafarers should not leave country of origin.   | Seek medical assistance and do not board ship.   | Do not leave the ship and advise port health authorities.  | Seek medical assistance and disembark for quarantine or isolate onboard.   | Seek medical assistance and disembark for quarantine or isolate.   |
| <b>References / comments</b> | * E.g. 48 hours for Singapore   | Testing requirements for travel to and from the ship   |  | *Testing Strategy for Coronavirus (COVID-19) in High-Density Critical Infrastructure Workplaces after a COVID-19 Case is Identified<br><a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/worker-safety-support/hd-testing.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/worker-safety-support/hd-testing.html</a> | *Testing Strategy for Coronavirus (COVID-19) in High-Density Critical Infrastructure Workplaces after a COVID-19 Case is Identified<br><a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/worker-safety-support/hd-testing.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/worker-safety-support/hd-testing.html</a> |







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