



## **SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT**

**Dated 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

### **TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

#### **RE: ADVISORY ON CARGO VESSELS AND MARINE TANKERS TRAVELLING FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA PORTS TO SOLOMON ISLANDS**

This Advisory is issued by the Secretary to Cabinet and Chairman of Solomon Islands Government COVID-19 Oversight Committee on new requirements for all cargo vessels and marine tankers that travel to Solomon Islands from Papua New Guinea Ports.

The Advisory is prompted by the recent escalation of COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea which has increased the direct threat of COVID-19 to Solomon Islands.

By virtue of being a Pacific Island country, Papua New Guinea is a Tier 1 country under the Oversight Committee's classification of countries from which cargo vessels and marine tankers originate immediately prior to entering Solomon Islands.

The current minimum 'quarantine at sea' requirement for Tier 1 countries is 5 days.

The Exemption Committee established by the Oversight Committee can however grant exemptions for vessels originating from Tier 1 countries to be cleared earlier than the minimum 5-days requirement on request. It can do this following a thorough assessment of the potential risk, and the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission by the cargo vessels and marine tankers into Solomon Islands.

Up to now, the Exemption Committee has been able to respond favourably to all requests for exemption submitted by all shipping agents for their vessels travelling to Solomon Islands from Tier 1 countries.

The COVID-19 situation in Papua New Guinea has escalated over the past 3 weeks. Most of this escalation of cases is in the national capital – Port Moresby. It is established that community transmission is now occurring in Port Moresby.

From an epidemiological perspective this simply means that the risk of both exposure to, infection by, and transmission of COVID-19 is now extremely high within Port Moresby. This is evident from the fact that so far in August alone, PNG has registered an additional 347 cases of COVID-19, most of these in Port Moresby.

The Oversight Committee directed its Exemption Committee to review its assessment for all requests for exemptions for all vessels coming in from PNG ports generally and from Port Moresby in particular.

As a result, the Exemption Committee has agreed the following requirements, many of which are existing requirements.

1. Exemptions from the full 5-day quarantine at sea requirement for Tier 1 countries is still possible for PNG ports as per (2) below. Each request will be considered separately on a case-by-case basis following a thorough risk assessment.
2. **Effective Friday 28 August 2020:**
  - a. **All cargo vessels and marine tankers sailing directly to Honiara or Noro ports from Port Moresby must now do a minimum of 4 days quarantine at sea.** This means they are still entitled to a 1-day exemption if all the other requirements outlined in paragraph 3 below are satisfied.
  - b. Cargo Vessels coming to Honiara from other Ports including Lae, Madang, Alotau or LIHIR will be assessed based on the status of COVID-19 in those locations and whether they have also berthed in Port Moresby during current voyage. **The minimum quarantine period from these ports should they satisfy the requirements outline in paragraph 3 is 3 days quarantine at sea.**
3. The following information are mandatorily required from all Ship Masters / Captains to furnish the Comptroller of Customs prior to the vessel's departure from PNG to Solomon Islands or immediately after departure.
  - a. **Details of all the ports in PNG the vessel will be or has been** berthed and the dates the vessel is expected at the ports. Basically, the voyage memo must include details of all ports in PNG with appropriate dates.
  - b. **Statement of Confirmation of Decontamination** of all public places including but not limited to the Bridge, Cargo, Conference Room, Gangway and Crane Cabins.
  - c. **Temperature record for all crew** on board the vessel for the full 21 days including all the days the vessels has been in PNG ports. Where the application for exemption is sent in earlier, the temperature records for the period the vessel is in PNG can be sent through as soon as the vessel departs the PNG port. This is the most important information upon which any exemption for the vessel coming in from PNG ports will be based, so it is mandatory and must cover the full period the vessel was in PNG ports.
  - d. **Statement confirming good health (no illness)** of all crew on board

- e. **Crew Change information during the past 21 days** – this information is important for risk assessment. If crew change has occurred within 21 days of arrival, we require information about:
  - i. Where the crew(s) embarked the vessel
  - ii. Where the new crew(s) lived 21 days prior to embarking the vessel
  - iii. Health condition of the crew in the 21 days prior to embarking the vessel,
  - iv. If the crew was from a high-risk COVID-19 country such as Philippines, has the crew taken a COVID-19 test and if so, what is / are the result(s).
- f. **Crew Shore leave in ports prior to Honiara** – this information is important for risk assessment
- g. **Certificate of Pratique from the last Port**

- 4. Exemptions for ships coming from other Pacific ports remain in place on a case-by-case basis

The Solomon Islands' COVID-19 Oversight Committee appreciates the importance of having an arrangement that protects the people of Solomon Islands from COVID-19 while at the same time providing reasonable flexibility to shipping companies that bring in cargo and essential commodities to the country.

The main modification under this advisory is the imposition of a 4-day minimum quarantine period at sea for any vessel that is sailing directly from Port Moresby to Honiara, which is still an exemption of 1 day from the normal 5-day quarantine at sea requirement for all Tier 1 countries.

The Oversight Committee requests all shipping companies and agents to help us protect Solomon Islands from COVID-19 and seeks your understanding to partner with us in this endeavour.

Thank you for your understanding.

Issued by the Secretary to Cabinet and Chairman of the Solomon Islands COVID-19 Oversight Committee



**Mr. James Remobatu**  
**Secretary to Cabinet**