



31 March 2020

Guidance note on the importation of Medicines and Medical Equipment in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19)

“Survive together or sink together”

I. General background

In light of the current novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) global pandemic (COVID-19), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Customs Organization (WCO) have compiled a list of measures relating to the importation and Customs clearance of medicines and medical equipment.

This document has been written **for Customs administrations and cross border agencies** to guide them as to how to better communicate on Customs facilitation measures for the importation of medicines and medical equipment. It addresses what information is needed, ensuring that international recommendations are met in the current circumstances.

II. List of measures facilitating the importation and Customs clearance of Medicines and Medical Equipment during the response to the COVID-19 outbreak for Customs administrations and cross-border agencies.

Importation of medicines and medical equipment related to the COVID-19 pandemic response

1. Has the government declared a **national essential list of COVID-19 priority items**?
2. Have national extended **HS codes** (based on the WCO suggested list) been defined by your Customs administration for these items?
3. Has this list been **exempted from pre-clearance restrictions** from all government regulatory authorities?
4. Which medicines and medical equipment are **prohibited**? Which are restricted?
5. What are the **expedited/quick release Customs processes** for temperature-sensitive medicines and medical equipment?
6. Is there a need for a specific **certification** from the Ministry of Health or the national drug regulatory authority?
 - 6.1. If so, what is the fast-track procedure for obtaining this?



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7. Are there any provisions in **national guidelines** for the importation of medicines and medical equipment that should be **highlighted** to assist humanitarian actors in the delivery of goods (e.g.: guidelines for the **expiry date** of the goods from the arrival date, appropriate languages for the instructions for use, packaging restrictions, etc.)?
8. Have the **focal points** within your administration to whom the shipping documents can be sent in advance been identified and shared?
9. Is there a procedure to formalise/regularise **expedited importations**?
10. What are the **risks** related to fast-track Customs clearance for future Customs audits?
11. What are the **consequences/penalties** for failure to account for or regularise importation requirements for essential COVID-19 items?
12. Have these official procedures/**Standard Operating Procedures** been published and/or shared with the relevant actors?

General questions related to entry points

13. What is the current situation at the country's international **airports, sea ports and land ports** (flight/ship/truck restrictions/exemptions, etc.)?
14. Which **specific Customs entry points** can medicines and medical equipment be imported through (air, land or maritime borders)?
15. Are there **temperature regulated storage spaces** at each of these crossing points (at the airport (cold room) or seaport (reefer container plug in facilities))?
16. Are there **functional private Customs bonded warehouses** near airports and sea ports?
 - 16.1. Do these Customs bonded warehouses offer temperature regulated facilities for the storage of medicines and medical equipment?
17. If your country is **landlocked**, which borders must be crossed to import medicines and medical equipment (indicate countries and related specific Customs entry/exit points)?

National coordination

18. If there is an **inter-ministerial taskforce** or coordination body (including Customs administration) to facilitate quick release of relief cargo, who is the focal point?
19. Has a **one-stop-shop** been established?
20. What other **agencies and actors** do you have to interact with in the end-to-end importation process?
21. If your country has an **authorized economic operators (AEOs)** programme, where is the list of AEOs?



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III. Useful links

- World Customs Organization, [webpage on COVID-19](#)
- United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, [webpage on COVID-19](#)
- World Customs Organization, [HS classification reference for COVID-19 medical supplies](#)
- World Customs Organisation, [Resolution on the role of Customs in natural disaster relief operations](#)
- World Customs Organisation, [List of national legislation of countries that adopted temporary export restrictions on certain categories of critical medical supplies in response to COVID-19](#)
- World Health Organisation, [webpage on COVID-19](#)

CONTACTS

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This guidance note was produced by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in collaboration with Save the Children, MSF-Belgium and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IFRC) as members of the IMPACCT (Importation and Customs Clearance Together!) working group.