



SADC Guidelines on Harmonisation and Facilitation of Cross Border Transport Operations across the Region During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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1. Background

Domestic, interstate and international travel have proven to be one of the main ways the COVID-19 virus is spreading among communities, nations and globally.

However, since indications are that until a vaccine or treatment for COVID-19 is found, which might take a few years, the Region has to allow safe trade and transport facilitation for economic growth while containing the spread of the Corona virus.

2. Objectives

The objectives of these revised Guidelines are to:

- (i) Limit the spread of COVID-19 through transport across borders;
- (ii) Facilitate the implementation of transport related national COVID-19 measures in cross border transportation;
- (iii) Facilitate interstate flow of goods and services;
- (iv) Institute safe measures to allow movement of passengers across borders;
- (v) Balance, align, harmonise and coordinate COVID-19 response measures with the requirements for trade and transport facilitation;

- (vi) Promote safe trade and transport facilitation for economic growth and poverty alleviation in the SADC region; and
- (vii) Facilitate the adoption and implementation of harmonised Standard Operating Procedures for Management and Monitoring of Cross Border Road Transport at Designated Points of Entry and Covid-19 Checkpoints.

3. Guidelines

The revised Guidelines facilitate and support Member States in implementing the policies and measures to combat COVID-19 recommended by World Health Organization (WHO), World Customs Organization (WCO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Maritime Organization (IMO) and SADC.

The Standard Operating Procedures for Management and Monitoring of Cross Border Road Transport at Designated Points of Entry and Covid-19 Checkpoints are annexed to these Guidelines

3.1 Cross Border Road Freight Transport Operations

3.1.1 Regulation of trade and transport

All goods, cargo and services shall be allowed to flow between Member States while observing public health measures on safe trade. Priority shall be given to:

- (i) Food;
- (ii) Medical equipment and medicines, including medical supplies and Personal Protection Equipment;
- (iii) Fuel, including coal;
- (iv) Agricultural inputs and supplies;
- (v) Chemicals, packaging, equipment, spares, maintenance materials and ancillary products used in the production and processing of food products
- (vi) Security, emergency and humanitarian relief services; and
- (vii) Other goods and products as may be agreed among and between Member States and notified to the Secretariat, who should upload the information on the SADC Website.

3.1.2 Simplification and automation of trade and transport facilitation processes and documents.

To reduce face to face interaction and delays at ports and border crossings, Member States are encouraged to:

- (i) simplify and automate trade and transport facilitation processes whilst ensuring that all legal documents are in place and customs and other regulatory requirements are complied with;

- (ii) introduce or enhance pre-clearance of goods and single window processing;
- (iii) accelerate the creation of online applications and platforms for the processing, clearances of imports and exports, application, issuance and renewals of licences and permits, registration of drivers, operators, vehicles and loads, payment of fees and for information dissemination and sharing; and
- (iv) implementing the SMART Corridor building blocks that monitor through ICT, the physical movement of drivers, vehicles and loads and documentation flows through ports, borders, weighbridges and COVID-19 testing and quarantine facilities.

3.1.3 Information Sharing

To facilitate the implementation of these Guidelines, it is recommended that Member States should submit the following information to Secretariat so that Secretariat can upload such information on the SADC website in order to facilitate information sharing and dissemination:

- (i) National measures taken (including copies of declarations, policies, statutory instruments and guidelines issued) to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by all modes of transport and to protect the health of travellers, crews, personnel and citizens;
- (ii) Lists of additional products; and
- (iii) Recommended route maps which cross border trucks should follow including the location of the following facilities- check points, quarantine / isolation centres, designated safe and secure parking facilities and designated re-fuelling stations.

3.2 Cross Border Road Passenger Transport

3.2.1 To resume Inter-State movement of persons by buses/minibuses or other vehicles and allow for provision of Special Cross Border Permits mutually agreed and recognised between the country of origin, country of destination and country/ies of transit:

- (i) Citizens and residents returning to home countries / places of residence will be subject to local regulations on screening and testing and may be subjected to isolation and quarantine if deemed necessary;
- (ii) The following will be subjected to local regulations on screening only according to local regulations unless in the screening they show symptoms of COVID-19 then they shall be subjected to isolation and quarantine if deemed necessary:
 - (a) Security, emergency and humanitarian relief services as may be agreed between Member States;

- (b) Engineering and maintenance support services (including engineers and support staff) supporting the production of goods mentioned in 3.1; and
- (c) Transportation of work crews and teams under special arrangements between Member States (e.g. teams working on cross border transport projects such as Kazungula Bridge and One Stop Border Post).

3.2.2 However, inter-state mass movement of persons through all modes of transport shall be allowed subject to bilateral and corridor agreements between and among Member States.

3.2.3 The following conditions must be met by operators and stakeholders who may wish to apply for the above exemptions:

- (i) Reduction in number of passengers in a bus, mini-bus or other vehicle and enforcement of public health measures,
- (ii) Provision of WHO recommended hygiene facilities on the vehicle, at the bus terminuses, borders and other places the cross-border buses may stop;
- (iii) Information dissemination by operators to passengers on COVID-19 preventative measures in the languages of the travellers (where possible); and
- (iv) Completion of travel history questionnaires by passengers/travellers and ensuring that completed travel history forms are submitted to Port Health Officials.

3.3 Regulation of Other Modes of Cross Border Transport

For air, rail, inland waterways and maritime modes of transport, the following will apply:

- (i) Member States to consult on the suspension of interstate transport services and the conditions for services that will be allowed to continue;
- (ii) Interstate travelling of persons should be allowed according to travel advisories, rules and procedures put in place by country of origin, transit and destination. Social distancing must be applied;
- (iii) hygienic facilities recommended by the WHO be provided on the vehicle and at terminal areas and during travel¹;
- (iv) Information dissemination by the driver, pilot, crew and operators to passengers on COVID-19 preventative measures must be conducted in the languages of the travellers (where possible); and
- (v) Once provisions for safe trade and transport facilitation are in place, which include greater use of ICT, electronic documents and more

¹ WHO Guidelines on Management of ill Travellers at Points of Entry – international airports, seaports, ground crossings – in the context of COVID-19 outbreak. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/points-of-entry-and-mass-gatherings>

paperless operations then interstate travelling of persons shall be encouraged for economic growth and poverty alleviation while containing the spread of COVID19 guided by WHO compliant and harmonised regional guidelines.

3.3.1 Governments

It is recommended that the following services and facilities, to facilitate the implementation of the foregoing, be provided by Governments:

- (i) PPE and other medical supplies and equipment for frontline personnel at border crossings and check points such as Public Health, Immigration, Customs, Law Enforcement and other Borders Agencies;
- (ii) Categorise Cross Border Truck Drivers, Pilots and Crews as workers undertaking essential and exempted services and facilitate their movement;
- (iii) Consider and implement systems, as may be agreed by Member States, for management of the registration of cross border trips, recording, monitoring and surveillance of driver wellness including medical test results for specified communicable diseases such as COVID-19, tracking of vehicles, loads and drivers, contact tracing, queue management at ports, border posts and other facilities and statistical analysis and reporting;
- (iv) For inbound traffic (passengers, crew and freight) at the borders, immigration and customs officials shall carry out their enhanced and thorough functions as per prescribed standards; and public health officials shall conduct thorough screening and testing of all passengers and crew;
- (v) Put in place policies and procedures at the ports of entry to identify and accord priority to the clearance and transportation of all goods and services;
- (vi) In order to ensure continued movement of goods in the region while observing the WHO recommended measures, Member States are urged to screen and test all drivers and their crew before departure at designated testing facilities;
- (vii) In instances where such people exhibit symptoms or test positive, they should immediately be isolated in line with set national Guidelines;
- (viii) In cases where drivers and their crew hold a valid negative COVID 19 clearance certificate issued by the country of departure, they should be allowed to proceed to deliver or collect the goods;

- (ix) Implement expedited protocols for Entry and Exit screening and testing of drivers, pilots and crews of airplanes, vessels and vehicles carrying cargo and services;
- (x) Provide hygiene facilities at each transport node, such as air and sea ports, Internal Container Depots, Container Freight Stations, Road Side Stations/Truck Stops, border posts and inland terminals as recommended by WHO and the National Government;
- (xi) Facilities to disinfect airplanes, vessels and vehicles and cargo at the point of loading and discharge;
- (xii) Designate safe and secure parking facilities for cross border road transport Vehicles in transit and performing deliveries and pick-ups. Foreign drivers and crews should be permitted to use such facilities; and
- (xiii) Scale up border patrols in order to deter and to arrest people who might attempt to cross borders at unauthorised or ungazetted crossings.

3.3.2 Transport Operators and Transport Operators Associations

It is recommended that the following services and facilities to facilitate the implementation of the foregoing be provided by Transport Operators and Transportation Associations:

- (i) Collaborate with Health Officials to design and implement a sensitization program for cross border operators and their employees;
- (ii) Register all cross-border trips through an approved regional platform and system;
- (iii) Test drivers/crews/pilots prior to commencement of their cross-border trip and only personnel that have tested negative for the virus will be allowed to proceed with the trip;
- (iv) Instruct drivers of cross border trucks/vehicles to fill Trip Sheets /Logbooks which show their stops, destination and times during the trip. The Trip Sheet / Logbooks must be kept in the custody of the driver during the trip and shown to Law Enforcement and Health Officials on demand. Trip Sheets and Logbooks must be stored at the offices of the Operator and should be made available to Law Enforcement and Health Officials when required to facilitate contact tracing and investigations;
- (v) Operators to collaborate with governments in exploring how vehicle tracking data can be used for tracing and investigations;
- (vi) Ensure that cross border drivers carry sufficient hand sanitizers, water, soap, face masks and shields for the WHO recommended hygiene purposes;
- (vii) Instruct drivers not to carry an unauthorised person such as hitchhikers;

- (viii) Instruct cross border drivers to maintain at least 1-metre physical distance between persons at all times throughout the trip; and
- (ix) Contribute towards the costs of isolation services provided by Government for drivers/crews/pilots who test positive.

3.4 Regulating and controlling Trucks/Vehicles carrying goods and services

Member States shall ensure the issuance of national policies, regulations and guidelines and establish institutions that provide for or ensure that:

- (i) Law Enforcement Officers and Regulators, treat with leniency and recognise extension of validity of short-term cross border permits /licences, which have expired en route due to different administrative procedures in force following the COVID-19 measures, until the vehicles are able to complete the journey;
- (ii) The crew for trucks, planes and vessels will be determined by the specifications of the aircraft or vessel as set by international guidelines but it is recommended that vehicles only have 2-3 crew members per vehicle to facilitate smooth border crossing in the region;
- (iii) There is a system and procedure for monitoring that drivers, pilots and crew members are in good health, and if crew are screened and tested and found to be positive, the driver or crew member must be isolated according to the set national guidelines;
- (iv) If a driver or crew member is showing signs of COVID-19 and tested positive, the truck will be decontaminated before it is allowed to continue to its final destination and the driver or crew Member must be referred to a treatment centre at operator's cost. The driver or crew will be isolated at the government designated facilities at the operator's cost;
- (v) In the event that crews are quarantined while in transit, truck owners/operators shall make necessary arrangements for a backup crew to ensure that the goods are delivered to the intended destination. Member States shall expedite the movement of backup crews after they have been cleared by Health Officials;
- (vi) Truck drivers are required to declare their final destination and are urged to stop only at designated points along the transport corridors;
- (vii) Shipping lines and crew members should observe infection prevention controls measures;
- (viii) They establish an electronic surveillance system to monitor the driver, pilot and crew health and enable contact tracing;
- (ix) Airlines operating on all routes step up the frequency of cleaning, disinfect as a preventative measure and ensure full disinfection of any aircraft which has carried a passenger who was suspected or confirmed as being infected with COVID-19;
- (x) Airport operators should similarly disinfect terminals at least twice a day;

- (xi) Public Health Officials at the border of the country of destination must communicate details of the inbound trucks to their counterparts in the region / district of final destination to facilitate implementation of infection, prevention and control measures;
- (xii) Expand the mandate of National Transport and Trade Facilitation Committee (TTFC) or establish a similar body comprising officials from the Ministries responsible for Transport, Health, Police/Army, and Trade. This body should coordinate the implementation of these guidelines and resolve operational issues at borders or road blocks arising from lack of consistent communication of policies during the COVID-19 period and/or interpretation of these policies. Telephone numbers and emails of these TTFC should be displayed at borders/road blocks and shared with all SADC States and Road Transport Associations, Road Transport Regulators etc. This is for speedy resolution of issues at borders and roadblocks in case of misinterpretation of current policies;
- (xiii) Protection of Officers and staff undertaking regulatory, control, law enforcement, screening, testing and treatment of travellers and crews; and
- (xiv) Existing wellness committees are expanded to include psychosocial support to drivers affected by COVID-19, and where they do not exist, to introduce such Wellness Committees.

3.5 Need for prior consultations and restraint from unilateral actions

Member States shall avoid introducing unilateral measures and implementing decisions and actions which impact other Member States and disrupt the flow of cross border transport without prior consultations and notification.

3.6 Monitoring, review and sharing of best practices

The Secretariat in consultation with Member States and other key stakeholders and partners should:

- (i) review national transport related policies, regulations and response measures and identify inconsistencies;
- (ii) based on the review, select best practices and propose to the Member States harmonized policies, regulations and measures;
- (iii) put in place a mechanism to enable member States to share information on COVID-19 response policies, regulations and guidelines, best practices and experiences in the implementations of the various measures;
- (iv) urgently establish from its staff a Regional Transport and Trade Facilitation Cell (RTTFC) comprising Experts experienced in Transport and Trade Facilitation and Logistics, Customs, Public Health and Security to assist and coordinate Member States and Corridor Groups in implementing the provisions of these guidelines during COVID-19;

- (v) mobilize resources to facilitate the effective and efficient operation of the RTTFC to address the challenges of the current situation and coordinate the implementation of the Guidelines;
- (vi) based on lessons learnt, propose recommendations on revisions and updates to the Protocol on Trade and the Protocol on Transport, Communications and Meteorology in order to ensure that they both have adequate and comprehensive provisions for the region to coordinate responses to future emergencies that might arise from epidemics and natural disasters;
- (vii) Develop additional guidelines as may be required for combating COVID-19 and facilitating trade and transport; and
- (viii) Collaborate with COMESA and EAC and other continental and international bodies in order to ensure the development, adoption and implementation of harmonised public health, trade and transport facilitation policies, laws, regulations, systems and tools.