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EBOLA VIRUS

The situation in the various countries of West Africa regarding the Ebola virus is changing from day to day as new measures are being implemented by the various governments and authorities in order to restrict the spread of the disease.

Whilst the Ebola outbreak is still concentrated in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Monrovia (with three deaths reported in Nigeria) other countries in the region are taking their own initiatives, to a more or less extent, to protect and reassure the public and prevent Ebola from entering their country.

It should be remembered that Ebola is transmitted through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected symptomatic person or through exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated. The disease is not air-, water- or food-borne.

Below you can read the latest information we have received from the TCI network of offices in West Africa.

MAURITANIA

Presently, no trace of the Ebola virus has been declared by Mauritanian authorities.

Mauritania has no border with countries already affected by the Ebola virus. However, there is a general alert on all entry points (borders, airport, ports,...) to check any person coming from the suspected area where the virus has been discovered.

Please be advised that officially there is:

- ✓ No vessels being refused entry to ports
- ✓ No vessels having to undergo health / sanitary checks before being allowed to berth
- ✓ No changes / restrictions in port and commercial operations
- ✓ No restrictions on shore leave / crew changes

Special "non-official" restrictions were unfortunately recently observed by Nouadhibou local authorities whereby a sick crew member suffering from malaria was refused disembarkation for shore treatment and / or repatriation. Even though a doctor attended on board at anchor the authorities refused to allow him to return to the vessel a second time for follow-up treatment.

SENEGAL

As far as Senegal is concerned, there is, according to the Authorities, presently no trace of the virus in the country. However, as a preventive measure, the border with Guinea (Conakry) has been closed and the Authorities have decided to perform a thorough health control of passengers coming from countries at risk prior to allowing them to enter. Vessels coming from the affected countries are still allowed to enter Senegalese waters. However, prior to obtaining berthing authorisation they are quarantined at the outer roads for a strict health control.

THE GAMBIA

Entry of vessels coming from affected countries is forbidden.

GUINEA BISSAU

Entry of vessels coming from affected countries is forbidden.

GUINEA

As of 13/08/2014 a health State of Emergency has been declared by the President. However, this is not currently impacting on vessel berthing or commercial operations. There have been no reported changes in the procedures or restrictions for vessels arriving at Guinean ports, even for vessels coming from other affected countries.

LIBERIA

TCI Monrovia is embarrassed to have to tell us that their Government's response to date has been less than adequate as the nation struggles to contain the spread of the virus and the health system is overwhelmed. The government closed schools and instructed all non-essential government workers to stay at home for 30 days. On the 6th August the President declared a State of Emergency giving the government extraordinary powers for the protection of lives. Road block have reportedly been set up by the military in an attempt to prevent citizens travelling from the infected areas of the country into the capital Monrovia.

As for the maritime community there are currently no additional restrictions or health checks on vessels calling at Liberian ports, even on vessels coming from ports in affected countries. The usual arrival boarding party procedures are still in force. Cargo operations are being carried out normally, although in Monrovia port workers are being checked before entering the port.

IVORY COAST

No travel bans in Ivory Coast have yet been announced by the Ivory Coast Authorities. Furthermore, the Health Authorities who are monitoring the situation do not yet refer to affected people. There is increasing population awareness of the matter, for example, the consumption of bush meat (rabbit, doe, porcupine, etc.) is presently forbidden in Ivory Coast. However, to date there has not been any reported case of Ebola virus. Furthermore, handshakes / embraces are not recommended during greetings.

On 12.08.2014, Abidjan Port Authorities imposed certain restrictions regarding the entry into Abidjan by vessels having called at ports / countries affected by the Ebola virus within the previous 21 days. However, on 14.08.2014 these restrictions were lifted.

The latest formal notice from the Port of Abidjan stated:

"This is to advise the owners, shipping Agents and insurances (P&I clubs correspondents) that the previous decisions regarding the entry of vessels (into the port of Abidjan) coming from the countries affected by Ebola fever are lifted.

Accordingly, any ship which complies with the usual conditions can safely enter the port of Abidjan

Furthermore, statutory sanitary measures for access to ships coming from the above mentioned areas/countries will be communicated at a later date."

The usual health declarations and procedures should be followed, although the authorities will make rigorous checks upon the vessel's arrival prior to authorising any other person access to the vessel.

The above also applies to San Pedro.

GHANA

In Ghana, the Authorities are alerted and are doing their best to avoid the spread of the disease. So far no cases of Ebola have been detected in Ghana however the Health Authorities are closely monitoring the situation.

To date there is no new contingency measures such as a ban for vessels coming from affected countries to enter Tema/Takoradi ports, but the health controls have been reinforced.

Following extract is from the Port Health circular dated 06/08/2014:

QUOTE

As part of our contingency measures to guard against possible arrival of vessels to Tema that may escape the attention of Port Health, we are advising all shipping lines to deposit their pre-arrival documents with Port Health, particularly of those from the Ebola affected regions of Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Guinea and Nigeria at least 3 days before such vessels arrive.

These documents should include:

- 1) THE MARITIME DECLARATION OF HEALTH
- 2) THE PORTS OF CALL LIST
- 3) THE CREW LIST
- 4) ETA OF VESSEL

This would enable Port Health to prepare adequately to meet any eventuality.

Port Health Superintendent
UNQUOTE

The Health Officer informed TCI Ghana that, especially for vessels coming from affected countries, officers will first board vessels at the anchorage to verify that everything is OK. In case of any suspicion, the vessel will be kept in quarantine for 21 days.

TOGO

Togo's health ministry declared last Tuesday that the country has not recorded any case of the deadly Ebola fever.

'To date, there has been no case of Ebola fever in Togo,' said the secretary general of the Health ministry, Gado Napo-Koura, after a meeting with the Prime minister, Kwesi Arthème Séléagodji Ahoomey-Zunu in Lomé, to take stock of preventive measures put in place against the disease.

The Health ministry official said that Togo had taken preventive measures against Ebola fever since March after the cases reported in the sub-region.

The various entry points into the country, particularly airport, sea port and land borders, as well as the health centres, are being monitored by health officials.

There is no change regarding movement at or the commercial operation in our port (Lomé).

BENIN

Other than the preventive information passing through the radio and TV advising the population on how to behave with regard to the actual situation, such as cleaning hands before eating, avoiding eating bush meat etc., no other action so far has been announced by local government.

No restriction is noted at the borders, airport and port although these areas are under the control of the Ministry in charge of health. On berthing and before other parties are allowed to board vessels the crew members are controlled by health officials. There is no change regarding movement / commercial operation in the port of Cotonou. According to TCI Cotonou who has discussed the matter with the Harbour Master and some pilots, the only complain received from the latter is that, being the first persons in contact with crew members during vessel berthing, they are not equipped with appropriate / hermetic combination and gloves in order to avoid direct contact with an eventual seaman suffering from Ebola.

NIGERIA

The word Ebola is very much in the air/news in Nigeria at the moment with three people confirmed dead, about seven confirmed positive and nearly 200 people under observation. The reported cases are in Lagos and Enugu where, in the latter, case the nurse that treated the first reported case (Mr. Patrick Sawyer) "fled" to.

So far the only travel bans are on flights coming in from Liberia and Sierra Leone and ban on Air Gambia.

The Government is doing much to contain the spread of the virus.

There are currently no restrictions relating to vessels' berthing or their operations or activities at the Nigerian sea ports (at least none that has been announced to the general public).

It was stated unofficially that vessels coming Guinea, Sierra Leone or Liberia would not be allowed to enter Nigerian ports. However, there has been no official announcement or notice regarding this.

Indeed the Lagos port authorities issued a Notice to Mariners on 14th August, 2014 stating that the port is unaffected by Ebola and, at the time of issue, remains open as usual.

It is likely, however, that vessels arriving from countries affected by the Ebola virus will face an increased chance of delay while the Port Health Authorities consider how to proceed with any given vessel. More stringent inspections, delays and possible detentions for quarantine cannot be ruled out. (Crew will be checked for signs of Ebola before arrival formalities / cargo operations can commence.)

CAMEROON

Cameroon is not at rest since the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease. Multiple public meetings have been held to inform the population and increase public awareness. Medical staff are being trained to fight against this current Ebola epidemic. A false alert following the death of one Chinese person last weekend at the Douala Laquintinie hospital increased fear amongst the population, but sanitary officials duly announced that to date in no case of Ebola disease has been confirmed in Cameroon.

Regarding Douala port, no restrictions have yet been imposed other than the reinforcement of medical teams with staff specially trained for Ebola. Usual medical inspections are conducted prior to allowing the public on the vessel. Emphasis is being placed on the vessel's list of ports of call prior to Douala as well as the crew list and health status/declaration.

An increase of police control however has been noted in the port for some days now - not only ashore, but especially on board vessels with stowaway matters and crew changes. A meeting has been scheduled this week by the harbour authorities in this respect.

At the airport however flights schedules for Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria have been adjusted whilst the border with Equatorial Guinea has simply been closed by the Malabo government.

CONGO

No official notification has been issued by the authorities regarding the Ebola virus. However, for the time being the port authorities do not accept to disembark any sick seaman (showing symptoms similar to Ebola virus) from vessel calling at Pointe-Noire, in particular vessels which are coming from other West Africa ports.

GABON

Even though there have been no reported cases of the Ebola virus in Gbon the ministry for health announced on the 14th August the following preventative measures regarding vessels calling at their ports in order to to minimize the risk of propagation of this epidemic in their country.

- All vessels wishing to stop over in the ports of Gabon must inform the Harbour Master three days before arrival giving a list of all ports visited for the last thirty days before their estimated arrival
- All vessels coming from or stopping over in at least one of the countries where the epidemic is found and who has not a Gabonese national on board is forbidden to berth in the ports of Gabon

- Gloves must systematically be worn by all persons who are to be in contact with all vessels and all the members of their crew. Any person who is not wearing gloves will be refused access on board
- Health Inspectors from the National Institute of Public Hygiene and Sanitation will board the berthing vessels at the same time as the pilots
- Access on board the vessels is forbidden to any person before the disembarkation of the Inspectors of the National Institute of Public Hygiene and Sanitation
- No crew member is allowed to go out of the port until further notice
- No crew change is authorized until further notice

As health is an issue which concerns all, all administrations and operators working in the ports of Gabon are charged as far as they are concerned with the implementation of the provisions of the present note.

KENYA

We are not aware of any specific measures having been implemented. However the WHO has indicated Kenya as a high risk country due to it being a major north/south – east/west crossroads in Africa.

ELTVEDT & O'SULLIVAN
19th August 2014