

**RESOLUTION OF THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL ON THE ROLE
OF CUSTOMS IN FACILITATING THE CROSS-BORDER MOVEMENT
OF SITUATIONALLY CRITICAL MEDICINES AND VACCINES**

(December 2020)

THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL¹,

NOTING that since the World Health Organization (WHO) categorized the outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) as a pandemic on 11 March 2020, the WHO has been working in collaboration with scientists, business and global health organizations to speed up the pandemic response;

ACKNOWLEDGING that there are currently more than 100 COVID-19 vaccine candidates under development, and that it is expected that the COVID-19 vaccine distribution effort will be the world's largest and fastest vaccine distribution operation ever;

NOTING that when safe and effective vaccines are available, COVAX, which is led by the WHO, Gavi and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), intends to facilitate the global access to and distribution of these vaccines to protect people in all countries;

NOTING that the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) will be leading the COVID-19 vaccine procurement and supply effort on behalf of the COVAX Facility;

ACKNOWLEDGING the WCO's ongoing engagement with partner intergovernmental organizations through relevant bilateral and multilateral platforms;

UNDERSTANDING that certain potential COVID-19 vaccines may require temperature-specific cold chain storage involving the use of dry ice for their shipment, and taking into consideration the fact that dry ice falls within the dangerous goods category and requires exceptionally specialized handling and management procedures;

BEARING IN MIND the challenges associated with the handling of any time- and temperature-sensitive vaccines in large quantities;

UNDERSTANDING the important role that pharmaceutical companies and manufacturers have in supporting the movement of situationally critical medicines and vaccines through the supply chain;

RECOGNIZING the need to ensure full preparedness of all distribution supply chain stakeholders when COVID-19 vaccines are approved and available, for safe and seamless distribution;

ACKNOWLEDGING the role of Customs as a key actor in the vaccine distribution chain, particularly in terms of ensuring supply chain facilitation and security;

BELIEVING in the need for Customs administrations to implement standards for simplified and harmonized Customs procedures, and in the need for co-operation between Customs administrations and supply chain stakeholders;

¹ Customs Co-operation Council is the official name of the World Customs Organization (WCO).

HAVING REGARD to the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation (WTO TFA), the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards (SAFE FoS), Annexes 9 and 17 to the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Chicago Convention, and other relevant international standards; and

RECOGNIZING that similar challenges may also arise in the future;

RESOLVES :

To invite Members to :

- (1) Carry out the clearance of situationally critical medicines and vaccines for export, transit and import as a matter of priority in appropriate facilities in order to prevent possible detrimental product temperature variations due to delays.
- (2) Provide mechanisms for identifying such medicine and vaccine shipments during import or export, such as on import or export documentation.
- (3) Provide for special procedures for authorized/recognized supply chain actors, including producers of COVID-19 vaccines.
- (4) Apply risk-based control and perform examinations on shipments declared as such medicines and vaccines only in exceptional circumstances, and only at the appropriate moment and place.
- (5) When an examination is deemed necessary, perform non-intrusive inspections to the extent possible.
- (6) Ensure that inspections by other government agencies and inspections by Customs are coordinated and, if possible, carried out at the same time.
- (7) Implement measures such as those contained in the Customs Convention on Containers, 1972, with regard to the Customs treatment of containers (including specialized containers) used for the transportation of situationally critical medicines and vaccines.
- (8) Implement measures such as those contained in the Recommendation of the Customs Co-operation Council of June 2013 concerning Customs Formalities in Connection with the Temporary Admission of Container Security Devices, with regard to the Customs treatment of devices (data loggers) affixed to containers used for the shipping of vaccines for the purpose of monitoring the status of the vaccines and/or for tracking purposes.
- (9) Commit to working together to facilitate international trade and coordinate responses in ways that avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade as it relates to COVID-19 medicines. Emergency measures aimed at protecting health should be targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary.
- (10) Cooperate and coordinate with relevant government agencies, in particular health authorities, and supply chain stakeholders, so that facilities, security arrangements and border processes are ready for the large-scale and complex task ahead.
- (11) Ensure that Customs staff are prepared to handle specialized temperature-sensitive items, including those involving the use of dangerous goods (dry ice) for their transportation.

- (12) Take appropriate measures to prevent organized criminal organizations from exploiting the situation, and to address the threat posed by illegal products in the cases of dangerous, sub-standard or counterfeit medicines and vaccines.

To instruct the Secretariat to :

- (13) Within the framework of the WCO's work in the areas of trade facilitation, enforcement and disaster relief, take all necessary steps and actions required to develop and implement a COVID-19 Action Plan, and any other called for measures to enable Members to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in an agile and effective manner.
- (14) Continue to co-operate with the WHO, ICAO, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and other relevant intergovernmental organizations and supply chain stakeholders to ensure that timely and adequate information and guidance is made available to WCO Members with regard to complex vaccine-related supply chains and the Customs treatment of situationally critical medicines and vaccines, and goods and devices used for their shipment and transportation.
- (15) Work with relevant international organizations and WCO Members to develop guidance materials to facilitate the cross-border movement of situationally critical medicines and vaccines, including but not limited to highlighting existing HS classifications for situationally critical medicines and vaccines and, if required, associated medical supplies necessary for their manufacture, distribution and use; guidance to assist in the detection of counterfeit and substandard vaccines; and a repository of relevant practices and information shared by Members.
- (16) Make the relevant guidance material available to Members and to supply chain stakeholders, to support capacity building and awareness raising efforts.

To task the Permanent Technical Committee and the Enforcement Committee to :

- (17) Monitor the implementation of this Resolution subsequent to the December 2020 Council Session.

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