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30 March 2020

**Vital role of humanitarian supply chain providers - the need for continued operations during COVID-19 response and the importance of avoiding undue restrictions to ensure timely export and safe arrival of humanitarian supplies of life-saving medicines and health products**

WHO recognizes the critical role of supply chains in delivering medical supplies to countries affected by COVID-19 and to more than 100 low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) with chronic unmet needs. Demands for medicines, vaccines, emergency kits<sup>1</sup>, diagnostics, personal protective equipment and other health products provided by WHO, PAHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, the Global Fund, World Food Programme, other UN partners, bi-lateral agencies and major NGOs, such as MSF and ICRC, have increased dramatically. Export and import restrictions, staffing at procurement and distribution agencies, and the interruption of passenger flights are having a disproportionate impact on these humanitarian supplies moving to LMICs.

**All agencies are currently reporting wide-spread disruptions to deliveries and delays of humanitarian medical supplies at ports of export, transit and entry, including but not limited to:**

- Vaccine shipments are not reaching countries, increasing risks for other health emergencies;
- Emergency kits and supplies are being held at ports under non-emergency processes for restricted products (e.g., anesthetics) and flight number discrepancies on rerouted shipments;
- Treatments for HIV, TB, Malaria and Reproductive Health are blocked, including diagnostics, increasing risks for high risk populations;
- Health products are rapidly moving on and off lists of various restriction lists, and major consignments are being rejected.

**To ensure the timely export and safe arrival of life-saving products, your support is greatly appreciated to allow exceptions for humanitarian supplies:**

- Contingency plans for use of alternate airports and surface transport must be coordinated to reduce disruption to humanitarian deliveries;

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<sup>1</sup> WHO Emergency health kits <https://www.who.int/emergencies/supplies>

- Exemptions on allowing for flights for humanitarian shipments consistent with the letter from the International Civil Aviation Organization 20 March 2020;
- Inclusion of procurement, distribution and logistics personnel on lists of critical staff, including sufficient protections, to ensure sufficient staffing to continue operations;
- Waiving import, export restrictions for humanitarian products, including accommodating rerouted shipments in customs procedures so that these goods arrive in good condition and in time to help.

Your support in providing the above exemptions to the humanitarian deliveries will be appreciated and urgent to avoid undue disruptions to medical supplies. A list of UN agencies is attached, including key suppliers. UN agencies may also wish to designate additional agencies in writing, with a copy of this document in attachment.



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