



## **ECOWAS GUIDELINES**

**for the**

**HARMONIZATION AND FACILITATION OF CROSS BORDER TRADE &  
TRANSPORT AND MITIGATION OF HEALTH RISKS IN THE ECOWAS  
REGION ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND RELATED RECOVERY  
ACTIONS**

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**October, 2020**

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## INTRODUCTION:

1. The Heads of State and Government (HoSG) of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), during their extraordinary virtual Summit on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2020 on the situation and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, decided among others to coordinate measures across the Region in order to stop the spread of the pandemic and facilitate the free movement of goods and persons.
2. To ensure high-level coordination of all the regional efforts to contain the pandemic, the Summit appointed H. E. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as the ECOWAS Champion President of the COVID-19 response and eradication process;
3. The Heads of State and Government highlighted the need to ensure a well-coordinated regional response to open humanitarian transport corridors for medical and other personnel in the fight against the pandemic, to enable them transport required personnel, and equipment and materials. They also directed for the development of a joint response plan taking into account the fight against the spread of the pandemic and a post-pandemic economic recovery plan.
4. **In view of the above, ECOWAS and its Member States hereby adopt these guidelines to provide a framework for a harmonized approach to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and steer the re-opening of cross-border trading and transportation.**
5. The measures in these guidelines will be implemented hand-in-hand with sector specific and detailed guidelines issued by the West Africa Health Organization and other specialized international organizations and groupings such as World Health Organization (WHO), World Customs Organization (WCO), International Migration Organization, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Maritime Organisation (IMO), African Union Commission,



Africa Civil Aviation Council, International Air Transport Association (IATA), United Nations Conference On Trade And Development (UNCTAD), International Road Transport Organization (IRO), World Trade Organization (WTO) and other internationally recognized groupings.

## **1.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE GUIDELINES**

6. The objectives of the guidelines are to:
- (i) Define immediate measures to ensure a seamless process and to facilitate the movement of personnel as well as the supply of medical equipment, essential goods in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic among ECOWAS Member States ;
  - (ii) Facilitate the coordinated implementation of transport related national COVID-19 measures in cross border transportation ;
  - (iii) Ensure the harmonization of operational guidelines for the re-opening of Air, Land and Sea borders in line with international industry best practices in order to restore user confidence while preventing the spread of COVID-19 across borders.

## **2.0 PRINCIPLES FOR A SAFE AND GRADUAL RESTORATION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT**

### **2.1 General principles for restoring connectivity**

7. All modes of transport **should be gradually put back into service while taking into account, as a priority, the health of workers in the transport sector and of travellers.**

8. Based on health analysis and rationale documentation issued in June, 2020 by the West African Health Organization with consultations with Health Authorities from ECOWAS Member States, the following general principles should guide the gradual re-opening of cross-border intra-ECOWAS travels:

- i. Easing of cross-border lockdown should be **gradual and phased** as much as possible, with review every 2-4 weeks; and all social distancing measures should be observed by all passengers
- ii. Quarantine on arrival is considered impractical because of cost and facilities required for quarantining. Rather, efforts (technical and financial) should be focused on increasing the capacity for contact tracing and testing.
- iii. Member States should to a large extent engage in a process of sharing risk and responsibility in the re-opening of cross border movement within the Community.
- iv. It is therefore proposed for ECOWAS that:
  - a. the lifting of restrictions at borders in the first phase should be between regions or Member States with similar epidemiological situations.
  - b. the ability to apply containment measures (e.g. physical distancing, hygiene, etc.) throughout the whole journey must be emphasized and maintained, including during border crossings;
  - c. **the principle of non-discrimination must be respected, such that where a Member State decides to lift its restrictions on movement to and from another Member State, this should apply, without discrimination, to all citizens of the Community and to all residents of that Member State regardless of their nationality, and should apply to all parts of the Community.** Where however, a Member State has not lifted lockdown and travel to and from a particular province, hot spot or city, then that restriction should apply to all, whether resident in that Member State or a traveler to the country.

## 2.2 Exemptions

9. Exemptions should be considered for specific groups covered by international law such as humanitarian mission personnel, Diplomats, military personnel, etc.



## **2.3 Protection for Transport Sector Workers**

10. **Equipping & Training:** Transport sector personnel at airports and ports, including ticket controllers, bus and van drivers, crew of passenger ships, maritime pilots, staff providing assistance to passengers, especially people with disabilities and reduced mobility, should be adequately consulted, equipped and trained, and they should receive adequate instruction on how to fulfil their mission in minimizing risks to their health and that of their families, colleagues and passengers.

## **2.4 Protection for Passengers for all Modes of Transport**

### **2.4.1 Restore travel and passengers transport in the context of Covid-19 and to prevent any further spread.**

11. These measures are to be observed in the short term of re-opening borders and relaxed gradually subject to health data on the evolution of the pandemic in respective Member States. The primary objective is to prevent further spread of COVID-19 and protect public health.

#### **A. Pre-Departure**

- i. Be screened for SARS-CoV-2 and have a Negative PCR Covid-19 Test 72 hours (3 days) before arrival, with Certificate from a recognized Laboratory
- ii. Traveler Locator Information Sheet with full contact details at Origin & Destination should be made available to national health authorities when required.
- iii. Negative Covid-19 Evocative Symptoms Check before departure.



## **B. At Departure/Boarding**

- i. Health and Immigration Authorities as well as officials of the transport company (Airlines & Cross-Border Buses) should confirm that all traveling passengers possess the requisite SARS-CoV-2 and have a Negative PCR Covid-19 Test conducted within 72 hours (3 days) before arrival, with Certificate from a recognized Laboratory.
- ii. All passengers must wear face masks when boarding and throughout the journey. They must also follow the regulations according to transport company rules. The transport company rules must align with the approved public health COVID-19 protocols;
- iii. Negative Covid-19 Evocative Symptoms check by Border Health Agency
- iv. Normal Temperature check less than 38°C
- v. All passengers presenting temperature 38°C or higher or any COVID-19 evocative symptoms will not be accepted and will be systematically referred to national health authorities for appropriate actions in accordance with the national procedures for managing suspected cases of COVID-19.
- vi. Departure/Boarding Health Agency officials should ensure that the criteria set out in Sections A and B are fully met

## **C. On arrival**

- i. Arrival Border Health Agency officials should confirm the following:
  - a. Certificate of Negative COVID-19 test,
  - b. Negative COVID-19 Evocative Symptoms Screening Sheet.
  - c. Completed Traveler Locator Information Sheet & Covid-19 Evocative Symptoms Screening Sheet.
  - d. Normal Temperature less than 38°C
- ii. Any passenger presenting a high temperature of 38°C or higher or symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 will be systematically isolated, sampled for laboratory tests and managed in accordance to national protocol



- iii. Any passenger with no symptoms suggestive of Covid-19 and a temperature less than 38°C will fill out an information sheet regarding his age, sex, address, and personal phone number/phone number of a relative. In the case of a child, the telephone number of a parent or legal guardian will be collected. The passenger will receive a written information on how to contact health authorities if needed.
- iv. If the person has a negative COVID-19 test certificate and has no evocative symptoms and has a temperature less than 38°C on arrival, quarantine will not be necessary. However, he/she must make him/herself available to the health authorities, if necessary.

12. For all forms of **public** passenger transport, including water transport, reasonable measures to **limit contact between transport workers and passengers**, as well as **between passengers**, should be taken. Where feasible, distancing practices between passengers should be applied as long as the overall health situation requires it. Other measures that reduce the risk of infections should be applied as long as the overall health situation requires it, such as:

- i. **passengers to wear nose masks** at all terminals, transport platforms and vehicles used in public transport, in particular where physical distancing measures cannot be respected at all times ;
- ii. At the **initial stages of relaxation of restrictions, reduce, as much as possible, passenger density in public transport and in waiting areas so that the applicable social distancing** requirements are duly respected;
- iii. the **maintenance of existing or installation** of new protective barriers in all infrastructure serving as transport terminals, hubs and vehicles (e.g. loading terminals, rest stops, ticket offices or access control points);



- iv. the delimitation of **separate lanes or the separation, by other means, of different passenger flows** in all infrastructure serving as transport platforms (ports, airports, railway stations, bus stops, ferry berths, river transport terminals, urban public transport hubs, etc.);
- v. the **removal of equipment that encourages concentrations of people** (e.g. **benches or tables**) or, at least, a different layout to ensure that the distancing measures are respected in these infrastructure (airports, bus and ferry stations);
- vi. **clear presentation of accessible information on recommended practices** (e.g. frequent hand washing or disinfection, maintaining appropriate distances) and on specific measures in place in the infrastructure or mode of transport concerned;
- vii. **adequate measures for boarding** and security control (e.g. in buses, no boarding or alighting of passengers through the front door; opening of doors by default; disinfection of trays) and other measures which help to **minimise contact** (e.g. on short ferry routes, possibility of allowing passengers to remain in their vehicles if a sufficient general level of security can be ensured);
- viii. **priority should be given to the transport of disabled persons** and persons with reduced mobility as well as elderly persons ;
- ix. reducing the risk of infections in infrastructure serving as transport hubs and in vehicles (including ferries and canoes), for all modes of transport, should be a priority. **Intensified cleaning and disinfection of infrastructure serving as transport platforms** and vehicles for all modes of transport should be carried out on a regular basis;



- x. **Provide facilities** and implement protocols in infrastructure used as transport platforms to **immediately isolate suspected cases of COVID-19 infection** until other appropriate measures can be taken. To this end, **security zones** and specialised and **trained personnel with adequate protective equipment** should be designated. Existing medical facilities and medical personnel (e.g. at airports, in ports or on board ships) should be reinforced to cope with the increased volume of traffic as restrictions are lifted;
- xi. Clean potable water supply should be made available at all transport hubs and sanitation and hygiene measures should be put in place and practices ensured.
- xii. **Ticketing and the provision of information** should be carried out **electronically and automatically. Electronic pre-sale of tickets** should be strongly encouraged and preferred, as well as **early or preferably online check-in and reservation procedures**, while ensuring that ticket sales remain accessible to those who do not have access to or are unable to use electronic tools. A contactless environment should be promoted as far as possible.
- xiii. **Check-in, loading and unloading of baggage** should be organised in such a way as to avoid **concentrations of passengers.**
- xiv. Wherever possible, the **pre-ordering of services** and meals on board should be encouraged at the time of booking in order to reduce contact between staff and passengers ;
  - a. management of passenger flows to ensure compliance with distancing measures;
  - b. **regular cleaning and disinfection of premises, equipment and goods;**

- c. the installation of barriers between customers and staff at checkouts; the compulsory use, in particular at the entrance and exit of the point of sale, of a sufficient number of hydro-alcoholic gel distribution points;
- d. the presentation of **information on safe behavior** in a manner clearly visible to customers;
- e. provisions to ensure that sales staff are adequately trained and equipped to interact with customers and handle goods in accordance with guidance provided by health authorities on safe practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, face masks should be used at all times and one meter distance should be maintained on queues at all times.

13. In addition to other measures to limit the risk of infection, the use of mobile apps could be used to collect relevant information on passenger such as place of residence. This will strengthen contact tracing and warning measures. The information could be on a voluntary basis, by passengers to detect and interrupt infection chains and reduce the risk of further transmission as long as transmission risks persist.

14. In order to **facilitate the tracing of passengers**, the following measures will be taken :

- i. Passengers must travel with a valid travel documents (passport or ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card -ENBIC).
- ii. Passenger manifest to be deposited at the point of departure and arrival in strict compliance with the texts on free movement of travel documents
- iii. Mandatory registration of all passengers and provision of duplicates for records and for ease of reference
- iv. Detailed information on the passenger, his or her relatives, address and telephone numbers.



15. **Workplace protocols, areas and facilities:** Transport operators and service providers should have specific protocols in place in the event that passengers become ill or show symptoms of COVID-19 during or immediately after travelling or being on a transport platform. These protocols should include clearly identified safety zones for symptomatic passengers, defined steps on how to minimize their exposure to other passengers and transport workers, how to collect and analyse all relevant information on contacts with other passengers and transport workers, etc. For booked travel, this should include the possibility to identify and alert other passengers who were in the vicinity.

16. Other considerations & Commercial Activities:

- i. Sales of other goods, including food and beverages, should be limited in vehicles.
- ii. To lower the risk of infections, operators of integrated travel retail locations, such as duty free shops, coffee shops, restaurants should take adequate measures, including:
  - a. Managing passenger flows to ensure distancing (including the use of floor markers, optimising layouts, if necessary restricting customer numbers)
  - b. Regular cleaning and disinfection of locations, equipment and merchandise;
  - c. providing sufficient hand-sanitising stations throughout the retail location and requiring their use, in particular at entry and exit points;
- iii. Ensuring that retail staff are adequately trained and equipped to deal with customers and merchandise in line with guidance provided by health authorities on safe behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic.



### 3.0 PRACTICAL GUIDANCE ON SPECIFIC MEASURES TO ENSURE SAFE PASSENGER TRANSPORT FOR ALL MODES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

17. In addition, the measures set out below should be implemented and applied, which take account of the specific characteristics and needs of each mode of transport.

#### 3.1 Air Transport

18. The way out of this crisis will require **regaining the confidence of passengers and convincing them that aviation is a safe mode of transport.** To this end, it will be essential that aviation and health **stakeholders communicate widely on the measures put in place** and how they are mitigating the risks. The aviation industry **should ensure that measures are highly visible, coordinated and communicated to the travelling public at all times.**

19. The aviation sector has longstanding experience in the field of risk management in safety and security, and is used to operating in a highly controlled environment. In the ECOWAS Region, lessons from the EBOLA Epidemic will be greatly revisited for industry operations. Priority should be placed on regaining the confidence of passengers that aviation is a safe travel mode, which will be instrumental for existing this crisis. To this effect, industry players and operators should note the following:

- a. It will be essential that aviation and health stakeholders communicate widely on the measures in place, as well as on how these measures mitigate the risks.
- b. Make sure that **measures are highly visible, coordinated, and communicated to passengers at all times.**

##### 3.1.1 Airlines & Crew

20. Airlines operating within and to the ECOWAS Region should observe the following measures:

- i. In collaboration with Health and Immigration Authorities, confirm that all traveling passengers possess the requisite SARS-CoV-2 test and have a Negative PCR Covid-19 Test conducted within 72 hours (3 days) before arrival, with Certificate from a recognized Laboratory.
- ii. Reinforcement of ventilation, filtering of hospital type air and vertical air circulation;
- iii. Seating arrangements for passengers aboard an aircraft should be spaced to minimize physical contact and the use of face masks should be ensured.
- iv. Limiting the risk of contamination at all stages of the journey (for example, by avoiding concentrations of passengers, by limiting interactions on board, by optimizing the allocation of seats according to technical constraints and by favouring electronic documents and means of payment);
- v. **Reduced movement in the cabin** (for example, less cabin baggage, less interaction with the crew);
- vi. Adequate management of passenger flows (for example, by **distributing information on arrivals before the scheduled time** at the airport; by giving priority to **electronic check-in and self-check-in**; by ensuring **distance and minimizing contact at baggage-drop points, security checkpoints, border control, and boarding, and baggage claim**); accessible information on airport procedures should be provided to passengers before their journey.
- vii. **Manual disinfection and regular spraying before and after take-off and landing.** Airlines are recommended to change the high efficiency particulate filter for ventilation more often and to sell tickets with empty seats between passengers while being encouraged to sell simple in-flight meals.
- viii. **Cabin crew members should wear face masks and latex gloves** and monitor their health through temperature and symptom checks before and after work. Crew members who experience suspicious symptoms are excluded from work. **In addition, cabin crew members and cargo industry workers are exempt from the 14-day mandatory**



**quarantine rule.** However, they are required to wear face masks while travelling and cannot leave the hotel where they are staying during a stopover abroad, while being required to constantly monitor their health upon their return to their home city.

### 3.1.2 Airports

21. For all local, regional and international airports in the ECOWAS Region, the following should be observed:

- i. **Public facilities such as chairs in departure/arrival halls, elevators, handles, toilets, water fountains** and shuttle trains should be disinfected at least three (3) times a day.
- ii. Facilities mostly used by groups more vulnerable to infections such as children and the elderly must undergo disinfection more than four times a day.
- iii. Other **traveler facilities like saunas, pedicure services and massaging chairs should be well regulated or temporarily closed to prevent the spread of the disease** through such places.
- iv. **Signs and markings should be made on the floor** of all public spaces to help guide people to stand 1.5 meter apart from one another while waiting in line.
- v. Provide **facilities for epidemiological tests when a case is suspected.** Also make it possible to identify people assumed to have close contacts with the confirmed patient and the pathways that the patient took immediately disinfected.
- vi. **All airport workers must wear face masks and have their temperature checked before and after their work** using the non-contact thermometer. Those with measured body temperature of 38°C or higher are excluded from their duties.

- vii. Thermal imaging cameras should be set up as well at main entrances used by airport workers to monitor their health condition.
- viii. Governments should support the provision of protective gear including face masks. Offices and lounges for airport staff are disinfected on a regular basis.

### **3.2 Cross Border Land Transport and Free Movement**

#### **1. Cross Border Mobility of Persons**

22. The guidelines apply to the cross-border movement of people, with harmonized procedures to be applied from the **point of departure**, the **country of transit** and the **arrival country**. These conditions also apply to air and sea ports respectively:

- i. Total **compliance to sanitary/hygiene guidelines** by drivers and passengers at stations
- ii. Early arrival at parks/stations to avoid rush and congestion
- iii. Compulsory use of face mask within the premises and inside the vehicle
- iv. **Passengers to travel with valid travel documents** (Passport or ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card -ENBIC);
- v. Manifest of passengers to be deposited at point of departure and arrival with strict **adherence to free movement texts** relating to travel documents
- vi. Compulsory registration of all passengers and provision of duplicate copies for records for ease of reference;



- vii. **Detailed Information about the passenger, next of kin, address and phone numbers;**
- viii. Points of departure, transit and destination compliance with the number of passengers for specified vehicles.

## **2. Border Formalities**

- i. Border officials to maintain **strict hygiene and safe distancing** while performing their task;
- ii. Compulsory use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE);
- iii. Maintain safe distancing during operations (Avoid chaos);
- iv. **Fast-track passenger clearance and avoid delays while being security conscious;**
- v. Share necessary information with officials at adjoining borders;
- vi. Encourage the use of **WHO approved Pyrometers and identify dedicated places for temporary quarantine** on the advice of a qualified medical personnel;

## **3. Transit Formalities**

- i. Transit passengers to **stay within the transit designated areas while at the borders;**
- ii. Border Officials to **fast track clearance of transit passengers by the use of express lines;**
- iii. Continuous use of face masks by all passengers including those in transit;
- iv. Formalities at the **Ports/Borders to be conducted in compliance** with hygiene procedure in transit countries;





- v. Transit formalities by air to be conducted in compliance with **National and International rules and regulations** relating to air travels.

#### **4. Designation of specific points of entry and strengthening of their capacity according to the International Health Regulations (IHR)**

23. In order to avoid the frequent disruption to the ECOWAS flagship free movement of persons and goods, there is the need to prioritize among the numerous land border entry points between ECOWAS Member States and strengthen them to fully comply with IHR and the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) recommendations. This will help ECOWAS to maintain the free movement even during epidemic crisis.

24. For this purpose ECOWAS should work with Member States to designate some target points of entry based on volume of travellers, access to health care, connectivity to priority populations and locations, strengths of the surveillance system and coordination with neighbouring countries.

25. Looking to the future, it will be very important to use the ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card (ENBIC) with health information to facilitate free movement while ensuring the security of persons including health security.

### **3.3 Sea Ports**

26. In line with COVID-19 related measures proposed by international bodies such as **United Nations Council for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), International Association of Ports and Harbours (IAPH), World Customs Organisation (WCO)** and others, Member States are to:



- i. Continue to provide **all necessary services**, from bunkering and supplies, to health services for sailors and certification of regulatory compliance **to ensure that shipping carriers remain in operation**
- ii. Ensure health measures are implemented in ways that minimize unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade; in particular, by respecting the requirements of "free pratique" for ships under the International Health Regulations (IHR)
- iii. Recognize that it is crucially important that the flow of commerce by sea should not be unnecessarily disrupted. At the same time, the safety of life at sea and protection of the marine environment must also remain paramount.

### **1. Ports Operations**

27. Ports provide essential services to international trade and must therefore remain open to ships and intermodal connections as much as possible. Member States should ensure the following:

- i. Identify **port workers, port authority and port service personnel**, and, inter alia, **vital ancillary personnel** such as pilots, mooring tug and dredger crew, and ship suppliers as "key workers" because they provide an essential service to facilitate shipping and port operations to maintain the movement of cargo and the conduct of other vital economic activities, regardless of whether they are public or private sector employees;
- ii. Governments should allow crews to board their ships or be repatriated from any seaport in the world;
- iii. Ensure that health measures are implemented in ways that minimize interference with international traffic and trade;

- iv. Apply judiciously, the requirements of the **International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code**, to ensure continued security of maritime supply chains while preserving the flow of trade;
- v. In line with the UNCTAD Note on Port Operations in this COVID-19 era, protect regional and international trade of critical goods and speed up customs clearance and trade facilitation;
- vi. **Ensure the right of transit.** All Member States, including landlocked and transit countries need to maintain their access to seaports. National Governments, in particular transit Member States, and organizations in supply chain and logistics facilitation, should support transit, transport and trade corridors and maintain customs transit regimes and other transit-related facilitation procedures, such as use of special procedures and lanes for transit traffic; and
- vii. **Automate and go paperless since physical contact between people needs to be minimized.** It has become ever more important to maximize the use of electronic submissions and paperless transactions.

## **2. Port Authorities and Related Services:**

28. In line with the recommendations of the International Association of Port & Harbours, Member States are encouraged to ensure their respective Port Authorities:
- i. Ensure that any special requirements or pre-arrival information required from arriving ships, due to measures introduced in response to COVID-19, are effectively shared and communicated as quickly as possible to international shipping and all relevant stakeholders such as ships' agents, etc.;
  - ii. Ensure the mandatory disinfection of all containers and related carriers arriving at all Sea Ports in the ECOWAS Region, in line with international standards.



- iii. Promote the **use of electronic solutions for ship-shore**, administrative and commercial interactions between all entities operating in a port and ships in order to reduce the risks posed by interaction or the exchange of documents;
- iv. Ensure customs and border control stations in ports, and port health authorities, are provided with sufficient resources to clear and process import and export cargo shipments, ships and crew, taking into account any new protocols or procedures enacted as a result of COVID-19 or for the fact that some port workers may be in self-isolation, caring for others or ill themselves;
- v. Have arrangements in place so that pilots can continue to embark and disembark from visiting ships to which they are providing critical services to ensure safe navigation;
- vi. Permit any essential ship's classification and statutory surveys and inspections to be undertaken when these are necessary to allow ships to maintain compliance, (notwithstanding any temporary extensions that may be granted by Member States);
- vii. Limit, as far as possible, the number of interactions with shipboard personnel by entities in the port to only those critical and essential for the continued operation and supply of the ship;
- viii. Consider temporarily restricting shipboard personnel to the ship while in port (except or until the situation permits otherwise) unless disembarking as part of a crew change or to receive emergency medical attention not available on board the ship; and
- ix. Provide seafarers with access to emergency medical treatment ashore in the event of medical emergencies.

#### **4.0 TRADE FACILITATION OF COVID-19 GOODS & SERVICES**

29. In order to facilitate the movement of goods across borders, the importation of products and other emergency shipments in response to the pandemic, Member States are encouraged to:

- i. Treat COVID-19 medical supplies as relief goods and to benefit from customs simplified procedure.
- ii. Implement customs simplified procedures as stated in the ECOWAS Customs Code.
- iii. Implement risk management to allow low-risk critical supplies to quickly pass clearance controls.
- iv. Ensure the rapid deployment of SIGMAT (Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit) in all Member States to ensure speedy and safer clearance of transit goods at the borders.
- v. Promote the use of Information technology to support trade (e.g., single windows and trade information portals)
- vi. Enhance border management coordination mechanisms, both at the policy level and at the operational level (ports, airports and border posts) to facilitate the import of critical supplies (including medical and food items)
- vii. Adhere to provisions of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS)
- viii. Ensure that the national administrative measures taken in the context of the fight against the COVID 19 pandemic do not have a negative impact on the free movement of goods within the territory of the Community.
- ix. Ensure that market closures, the establishment of curfews and the restrictions on movement of persons among other measures, although necessary, must not prevent the seamless movement of goods from production areas to consumption areas.
- x. Draw inspiration from the list of products and services exempted from Value Added Tax (VAT) laid down by Directive C/DIR.2/12/17 December 14, 2017 harmonizing the laws of the ECOWAS Member States on VAT
- xi. Use the exemption of 3% deviation from ECOWAS CET, as provided by the Supplementary Protection Measures, to adopt suitable customs duties on imported goods sensitive to the population during this situation of COVID-19 pandemic.
- xii. Better equip regulatory agencies and other authorities responsible for assessing product conformity



- xiii. Promote the development and implementation of e-commerce initiatives to limit physical interaction by, inter-alia, providing adequate ICT Infrastructure, adopting and/or revision of relevant policies such as Data Privacy and Cybersecurity Laws, as well as promoting cashless policy including use of mobile payments systems
- xiv. Protection of front-line border control agencies workers, by acquiring and enforcing the use of PPE and limiting physical interaction
- xv. Promote the production and distribution of Personal Protection Equipment and other essential medical products required for fight the pandemic.

#### **5.0 CIVIL SOCIETY, MEDIA & SUB-REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS IN TRANSPORT, TRADE AND LOGISTICS**

- 30. Considering the need for both public and private sector stakeholders to join forces to fight the pandemic, private sector actors will:
  - i. Support ECOWAS and related regional Agencies in monitoring the implementation of these guidelines
  - ii. Support advocacy and sensitization efforts with all stakeholders, especially to local levels of governance, towns and industry groups
  - iii. Conduct regular studies to assess the impact of the pandemic on regional trade, transport and free movement of persons
  - iv. Report on the negative impacts of COVID-19 related restrictions in the member States of the Community.

#### **6.0 INFORMATION SHARING**

- 31. The West African Health Organization (WAHO) continues to coordinate with Member States Health and Disease Control Agencies to collate and share harmonized set of data on the COVID-19 Pandemic in the ECOWAS Region.
- 32. In the area of Transport, Logistics and Trade, it is very essential to constantly update information to be made available to Governments, users and other Stakeholders.

33. Considering the rapidly changing trading environment as a result of the pandemic, it is particularly important for Governments to communicate clearly and ensure information is available to all actors and stakeholders through updated and operational online trade information and help desks.

34. There is also the need for bilateral and multilateral information sharing among Member States Agencies responsible for Air Transport, Sea Ports, Trade and Transport Corridors and Land Borders. This will limit inconsistencies in regional efforts at opening up, while limiting surprises to users and the general travellers.

35. The ECOWAS Commission in collaboration with Regional Agencies will work with Heads of ECOWAS National Units to acquire information about the state of transport, logistics and trade in their respective countries.

## **7.0 GENDER CONSIDERATIONS**

36. Member States and their partners are encouraged to include responses to violence against women, and particularly intimate partner violence, as an essential service within the COVID-19 response, to resource this adequately and to identify ways of making services accessible in the context of lockdown measures.

37. Member States and their partners are encouraged to maintain the availability of, and equitable access to, sexual and reproductive health services and to include them in the essential package of health services for the COVID-19 response.

38. Member States and their partners are encouraged to ensure that all front-line health and social workers and caregivers have equitable access to training, personal protective equipment and other essential products, psychosocial support and social protection, taking into account the specific needs of women who constitute the majority of such workers.



39. Member States and their partners are encouraged to stress that health is a human right, to ensure that emergency responses to COVID-19 are inclusive and non-discriminatory, and to avoid excessive use of emergency powers to regulate day-to-day life. They should also take measures to identify and counter stigmatizing and discriminatory practices in COVID-19 responses.

## **8.0 COORDINATION & ADVOCACY**

40. In support of the roles of the Champion of the COVID-19 response and eradication process, H. E. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the ECOWAS Commission in collaboration with related sub-regional Organizations and stakeholders will:

- i. Ensure the timely communication of these guidelines to Member States and stakeholders to encourage the uniform implementation
- ii. Undertake enhanced media activities around these guidelines including web publications, print and electronic means, documentaries etc.
- iii. Engage higher Government Authorities on the implementation of the guidelines through domestication of specific sector operational guides.
- iv. Undertake sensitization drives on all community platforms
- v. Liaise with WHO and trade, transport, migration and logistics international organizations to align regional measures to international best practice.

## **9.0 MONITORING & EVALUATION**

### **9.1 Member State level**

41. Existing structures and committees at the national level for trade facilitation, ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS), transport and free





movement should be fully engaged in monitoring the implementation of these guidelines in their respective countries.

42. Member States should designate lead Ministries to coordinate activities at the national level while ensuring compliance with these guidelines in harmony with neighbouring Member States.

## **9.2 Regional Level**

43. Establish clear databases of passengers' movements (passenger health data) to enhance traceability of COVID-19 cases across borders. These could be gotten from existing passenger manifests.

44. The respective Sector Departments in the ECOWAS Commission, the West Africa Health Organization (WAHO) and related Agencies and Institutions will jointly monitor developments in Member States and ensure a harmonized set of activities in the opening up process.

45. In the medium to long term, specific technical studies will be commissioned to come up with empirical evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Regional Transport and Trade, which will inform decision making in reorganizing the sectors to support the desired economic growth and regional integration Agenda of ECOWAS.

46. Prepare and publish periodic follow-up regional guidelines as may be required to address new challenges or issues emanating from the pandemic curve.

47. Encourage healthy peer review schemes to ensure Member States are on the same level of preparedness and implementation of the provisions of these guidelines.

=====END=====

