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MEDIA RELEASE

-For Immediate Release-

Arrangements for Crew Changes on Fishing Vessels in Namibia.

Following the declaration of the State of Emergency on 17 March 2020 due to COVID-19 and the implementation of Stage 1 restrictions with the subsequent lockdown of Khomas and Erongo Region, business operations were restricted to critical services and essential goods as per the State of Emergency regulations. Thus, only those businesses providing essential and critical services could operate. To secure livelihoods and jobs, fishing was listed as critical service in Proclamation 7250 published 22 June 2020 this includes “Harvesting fish (including artisanal other than for leisure), cultivation of fish and value chain activities relating to fish, as part of food production for Namibia and for export, maintenance of fishing vessels and maintenance of fishing processing plants” (Annexure A, Part B). Consultations held with the fishing companies allowed them to operate under strict conditions. Companies in the sector were obligated to put in place measures to prevent potential transmission of COVID-19. They were also required to put in place Business Continuity Plans in the context of COVID-19.

Since crew members on these vessels, invariably include non-Namibians, specific measures were put in place regarding approval for their entry into the country and boarding of vessels as crew change.

- (a) All non-Namibians arriving into the country on chartered flights for crew change purposes are subjected to prior approval process initiated through a Note Verbale from their respective diplomatic representative in Namibia to the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation, for onward submission to the Ministry of Health and Social Services.
- (b) All arriving crew members (On-signers) are placed under supervised mandatory quarantine for a period of 14 days, without exception, at the cost of the company.
- (c) They are required to produce a negative COVID-19 PCR test result not older than 72 hours upon arrival. As per the Ministry’s protocol, they are also tested after arrival at quarantine and on the twelfth day(12th) of quarantine. Only crew members who test negative are allowed to board the vessel.
- (d) All exiting crew members (off-signers) are also quarantined for 14 days and tested following the established protocol.
- (e) The current situation in Erongo Region, Walvis Bay in particular calls for systems and processes re-engineering to deal with the fast unfolding pandemic in that locality. Most accommodation establishments are occupied by quarantined or isolated individual confirmed cases of COVID-19. The Ministry is further, looking into the available facilities

for use as quarantine and isolation facilities as new confirmed cases and close contacts are identified.

- (f) Based on the above background, the Ministry assessed the arrival of 127 crew members, who were initially approved to quarantine at quarantine facilities on land, but due to increasing cases in Walvis Bay, these facilities will be needed for use by confirmed and contacts cases identified locally. Hence, alternative options were sought, including the assessment of the vessels where the individuals were going to board. After these assessments, a final decision was reached to allow on-signers to be quarantined on such vessels. This approval was based on the fact that these vessels were vacated by any crew on board before the new arrivals could board, following the established COVID-19 crew disembarkation health protocols. The aim is to avoid and prevent any contact between the foreign on-signing crew members and the crews who have been on board a particular vessel. On-signers were to quarantine on vessels so that the facilities on-shore are reserved for MoHSS use.

- (g) The Ministry is committed, and will continue to do everything with due diligence to protect our people against COVID-19.

The reports currently circulating on social media, that foreign crew members boarded a fishing vessel, while the local crew on board are devoid of any truth. **Reports of this kind** are designed only to sensationalize, cause confusion and fear among the public during this difficult time. We urge members of the public to disregard these false reports. As a nation, we **MUST** remain united and focused in the fight against the COVID_19 pandemic as we have been doing since the start of this pandemic.

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