Commonwealth of Dominica

Office of the Maritime Administrator

TO: **ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, MASTERS AND OFFICERS OF MERCHANT SHIPS, AND RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATIONS**

SUBJECT: **Guidelines for Extending the period of Validity of a Certificate due to COVID-19**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Administration recognizes that due to current exceptional circumstances as a result of COVID-19, difficulty can be encountered when scheduling docking or repair facilities for Statutory survey requirements, necessitating an extension of the Docking and/or Renewal Surveys.

1.2 As per MSC-MEPC.5/Circ.1, it is noted that in SOLAS and other mandatory IMO instruments the following provisions apply:

"If a ship at the time when a certificate expires is not in a port in which it is to be surveyed, the Administration may extend the period of validity of a certificate, but this extension shall be granted only for the purpose of allowing the ship to complete its voyage to the port in which it is to be surveyed, and then only in cases *where it appears reasonable to do so.* No certificate shall be extended for a period longer than three months, and a ship to which an extension is granted shall not, on its arrival in the port in which it is to be surveyed, be entitled by virtue of such extension to leave that port without having a new certificate."

1.3 In such instances where an extension of the Docking and/or Renewal Surveys is sought, the Dominica Maritime Administration is instructing its Recognized Organizations (ROs) involved in the Statutory survey and certification of Dominica registered vessels to be guided as follows.

2.0 Instructions

2.1 All Statutory Renewal Surveys shall be progressed and carried out to the maximum extent possible by their nominal due dates, equivalent in scope to at least an annual

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survey required by the relevant certificate, with the exception of the Docking Survey items.

2.2 For those Renewal Surveys which are not completed, either the original harmonized certificate can be extended by endorsing Regulation I/14(e) or short term Statutory certificates can be issued for the same period of validity as the extension period per paragraph [3.2], subject to authorization by the Administration based on the recommendation by the Classification Society.

2.3 In cases where a dry docking is required, but cannot be carried out, an underwater inspection of the ship's bottom shall be carried out before the nominal Docking Survey due date.

2.4 In cases where an underwater inspection is not possible (e.g. poor water visibility, draft restrictions, excessive current, refusal by the port Authority), an internal inspection of the ship's bottom structure, to the maximum extent practicable, may be considered.

2.5 In case of extensions of not more than one (1) month in lieu of underwater inspection of vessel's bottom, a general examination afloat to determine the vessel's fitness for continued service during the extension period, including examination and testing of the steering machinery as considered necessary, review of onboard records to confirm satisfactory operation of the propulsion machinery, and that no damages and/or groundings have occurred since the last attendance by Classification Society may be considered. In addition, external examination of the saltwater systems with attention to non-metallic expansion pieces (if fitted), sea valves and their attachments to the sea chests/side shell should also be carried out.

3.0 Conditions for Extension

3.1 The ship should only be allowed to sail directly to a named final agreed cargo discharge port and then directly to a named agreed port to complete the survey and/or dry docking, which shall be clearly described in the ship operator's request for extension. If the final cargo discharge port is not known at the time of the extension request, a tentative port or range of ports may be accepted in special cases.

3.2 The extension period should only be for the minimum amount of time needed for the ship to complete its agreed voyage and to complete the survey and/or dry docking under the relevant certificate(s).

3.3 The condition of the ship found by the surveys indicated above should be considered by the attending Class Surveyor in determining the duration, distance and operational restrictions, if any, of the voyage needed to complete the survey and/or dry docking.

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3.4 The extension period of the relevant Statutory certificate(s) should not exceed the period of validity of the certificate which may be issued to document compliance with the structural, mechanical and electrical requirements of the recognized Classification Society.

3.5 For consideration of a Docking and/or Renewal Survey extension, proper and reasonable circumstances should be considered as follows:

3.5.1 The unavailability of dry docking or repair facilities or the unavailability of essential material, equipment or spare parts for dry docking;

3.5.2 Delays incurred by action to avoid severe weather conditions;

3.5.3 Unanticipated delays at loading/discharge facilities.

3.6 Extensions for Docking or Renewal Surveys shall not be granted for commercial reasons.

4.0 Documentation

4.1 A request for an extension of a Docking or Renewal Survey shall be made by the ship operator to the vessel's Classification Society, who in turn shall submit a documented proposal to the Administration with appropriate recommendations.

4.2 If unavailability of dry dock or repair facilities is the basis for the extension, the Administration shall be provided with documentation from at least three facilities contacted citing unavailability, and a confirmed booking for the proposed dry dock. Please note that the Administration is aware that there are shipyards prepared to and are issuing stock letters of unavailability. Certain letters may be questioned by the Administration.

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