PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

PACIFIC HUMANITARIAN PATHWAY ON COVID-19 (PHP-C)

COMMON PROTOCOLS FOR IMMIGRATION

Purpose

1.   To provide **guidance** on a common and consistent approach with respect to immigration controls and visa policy to facilitate the entry, stay and departure of foreign health and other related aid and relief personnel working within the PHP-C.

Application and Scope

2.   These protocols:
   (a)   are subject to, and intended to be applied only to the extent permissible under, the laws, policies and operational frameworks of Members;
   (b)   apply only to facilitating the access to jurisdiction by foreign health and related aid and relief personnel that are engaged by Members to support their COVID-19 response mechanisms and to address the health impacts of the COVID-19 in their jurisdictions; and
   (c)   are based in part on:
      (i)   the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* (Chicago Convention 1944), Annex 9, Chapter 8, Part C – "*Relief flights following natural and man-made disasters which seriously endanger human health or the environment, and similar emergency situations where United Nations (UN) assistance is required*";
      (ii)   the Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC) *Model Standard Operating Procedures on Entry of Disaster Response Personnel[1]; and
      (iii)   relevant WHO guidance on air travel.[2]

Definition

3.   In these protocols, **"relief personnel"** :
   (a)   means all foreign entrants, professional or volunteer, requesting to enter a Forum Member country for the purpose of assisting with COVID-19 related support, relief and/or initial recovery efforts; and
   (b)   includes crew of aircrafts and ships, medical personnel, UN and foreign military staff, advisors, technical experts and support staff, and any other personnel deemed necessary by the Forum Member country.

Guidance to Members

4.   Members recognise the need for health professionals and other relief personnel to quickly enter their borders to help Governments respond to the effects of the COVID-19

---

[1] https://www.pidcsec.org/UserFiles/PidcSec/File/Policy/PB1-Immigration-and-disaster-response.pdf
[2] https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/key-considerations-for-repatriation-and-quarantine-of-travellers-in-relation-to-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/

pandemic and its aftermath, but further recognise that these protocols must be applied in a manner that does not increase the risk of spreading COVID-19, nor provide a loophole for the illegal entry of foreign nationals and criminal elements.

5.   In alignment with section 4, Forum Member countries will endeavour to facilitate the timely movement and access by such health professionals and relief personnel across Forum Member jurisdictions, and the jurisdiction of destination, while also recognising that it remains essential that Forum Member countries' immigration authorities continue to:
   (a)   maintain effective control of national borders;
   (b)   ensure that necessary details of relief personnel are accurately recorded; and
   (c)   manage the risks that persons who represent a threat may seek to enter a Forum Member country during this vulnerable period.

6.   In respect of foreign health professionals and relief personnel:
   (a)   the *sending* country and/or assisting entities will provide all the information required by the receiving country for the facilitation of applicable immigration clearances; and
   (b)   the *receiving* country will endeavour to facilitate the required immigration clearances, inclusive of pre-clearance and expediting any applicable waiver(s), visas and permits.

7.   The arrival, entry, and stay of relief personnel will be guided by the PHP-C *Common Protocols on the Deployment of Technical Personnel* and relevant WHO guidance on air travel, including national measures for entry screening and containment strategies with respect to COVID-19.

[Ends]