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INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19: INITIATIVES AND DECLARATIONS BY THE UN, WHO, WCO, WTO AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ON WORLD TRADE, CUSTOMS LAW AND SOLIDARITY IN A HUMAN EMERGENCY

- Carsten Weerth*

ABSTRACT

The worldwide spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus from Wuhan, Hubei province, China, in 188 countries (according to WHO figures: 216 countries, territories and economic areas) represents an unprecedented threat to Global Health and Global Trade in the times of Globalization. The virus triggers COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease 2019), which can range from a symptom-free course to severe respiratory syndrome (pneumonia) and affect other organ systems as well. More than 10 million persons were infected worldwide in the end of June 2020, more than 500,000 persons die from COVID-19 (as of 30 June 2020) – a truly global pandemic spread.

The United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO), The Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO), World Trade Organization (WTO), World Customs Organization (WCO) and its stakeholders and partners have in the light of the global COVID-19 pandemic joined forces and developed joined trade policies and legal approaches and declarations in order to combat the social and economic impact COVID-19. This paper gives an overview of the initiatives and different approaches and sorts them in different categories: (Joint) Declarations, Lists / Databases, Reports, Guidance, Warnings and Press Releases.

INTRODUCTION

The worldwide spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (a corona virus) from a wildlife market in the 11 million metropolis of Wuhan, Hubei province, China, in 188 countries (according to WHO figures: 216 countries, countries and economic areas) represents an unprecedented threat to global health and Global Trade in times of Globalization. The virus triggers COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease 2019), which can range from a symptom-free course to severe respiratory syndrome (pneumonia) and affect other organ systems apart from the lung as well (e.g. the gut, heart and brain).

More than 11 million people were infected worldwide in the beginning of July 2020, more than 525,000 people die from COVID-19 (as of 4 July 2020) – a truly global pandemic spread.¹

The situation in the different countries is dynamic and the measures taken by national and regional governments vary from week to week, from month to month. Most economies suffer strongly due to social and economic lockdowns: The world trade, the industrial production and the overall economic development slows and sometimes stops.

The United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO); the World Customs Organisation (WCO), the World Trade

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¹ The situation is dynamic and can best be seen on the Johns Hopkins University Corona Dashboard, URL: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

Organization (WTO), and its stakeholders such as the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), World Road Transport Organization (IRU) and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) have joined forces in order to create (joint) declarations, guidance and warnings to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic and social consequences of slowed or halted industrial production, lockdowns and curfews and a severely cut down global trade. Again, it is urged that all medical supplies must be delivered with a high priority and the trade in essential goods such as medication and food must be upheld and ensured over borders that are closed for humans in order to stop the spread of COVID-19. INTERPOL and EUROPOL and others are warning over new criminal approaches and counterfeit products in the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper reviews the answers and approaches of the International Organizations and their official publications.

Categories of declarations, guidance, lists and databases

The different contributions of the International Organizations can be sorted in different categories: (Joint) Declarations, Lists / Databases, Reports, Press Releases, Guidance and Warnings (a warning or declaration or report or guidance may be released as press release).

Method

An internet search of all relevant International Organizations and their sites was conducted from the beginning of March 2020 to the end of June 2020. Limitations: Although all relevant information is researched and pooled only limited organizations and information can be displayed here. All results are listed in the List of references as original link.

RESULTS

United Nations

The most important and the most outstanding single declaration was made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) *António Guterres* who has personally stated in his published statement “We are all in this together”.² The UN represents 194 nations of the World. The UN has an internet site dedicated to the COVID-19 response³ and generally underlines that the human rights must be enforced⁴, mankind must work together in order to combat COVID-19 and all humans must have access to medication and a possible future vaccine.⁵ The UN-Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS) and other agencies have issued joined declarations with the World Customs Organization (WCO) and other stakeholders - six UN agencies have issued a joint statement with the IRU: UN-OHRLS, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; United

² Guterres, We are all in this Together: Human Rights and COVID-19 Response and Recovery, UN, URL: <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/we-are-all-together-human-rights-and-covid-19-response-and> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

³ UN, Covid-19 response, <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁴ UN, COVID-19 and HUMAN RIGHTS, We are in this together, URL: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_policy_brief_on_human_rights_and_covid_23_april_2020.pdf (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁵ UN, Declaration of solidarity of the United Nations in the face of the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), URL: <https://www.un.org/pga/74/wp-content/uploads/sites/99/2020/03/A-74-L.51.pdf> (retrieved 4/7/2020) and UN, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 2 April 2020, 74/270. Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), URL: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/270> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

Nations Economic Commission for Latin America; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.⁶

World Health Organization

The World Health Organization (WHO) formally represents 194 UN member states but also recognizes 216 countries, territories and economic entities.⁷ It is in charge of global health. The WHO has a very large coverage of COVID-19 on special dedicated internet sites.⁸

The WHO has issued two COVID-19 warning in its stages: On 30 January 2020 WHO declared that the outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). On 11 March 2020 the WHO characterized the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) as a pandemic.⁹

During the following months it issued warnings on criminals¹⁰, cybercrime attacks¹¹ and offered technical guidance and lists of medical and personal protective equipment (PPE) in demand globally.¹² Together with the World Customs Organization (WCO) it repeatedly offered guidance on the legal customs classification of medical equipment, medication, chemicals and PPE (shown in the section of the WCO). The WHO Director-General is holding online press conferences three times a week and talks about the global situation (two statements are cited in the conclusion.¹³

Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO) has a special dedicated internet site on COVID-19¹⁴ and the FAO is also answering many FAQs regarding food production and supply chains and the impact of COVID-19.¹⁵ Besides offering sound advice (as guidance/reports¹⁶ and policy briefs¹⁷) and the FAO issues press releases and the FAO is pooling information on food export restrictions in a FAO database.¹⁸

World Trade Organization

⁶ IRU, UN recognises eTIR as key to combat COVID-19 impacts, URL: <https://www.iru.org/resources/newsroom/un-recognises-etir-key-combat-covid-19-impacts> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁷ Weerth, The World Trade Organization and World Customs Organization key conventions and agreements (TFA, HSC, RKC): membership trends and opportunities, World Customs Journal, Vol. 14 No. 1 (2020), 110-128 and WHO, URL: <https://www.who.int/countries/en/> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁸ WHO, URL: <https://covid19.who.int/> and WHO, URL: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁹ WCO, COVID-19 – WCO updates, URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/coronavirus.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

¹⁰ WHO, Beware of criminals pretending to be WHO, URL: <https://www.who.int/about/communications/cyber-security> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

¹¹ WHO, WHO reports fivefold increase in cyber attacks, urges vigilance, URL: <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/23-04-2020-who-reports-fivefold-increase-in-cyber-attacks-urges-vigilance> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

¹² WHO, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) technical guidance: Essential resource planning, URL: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/covid-19-critical-items> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

¹³ WHO, WHO Director-General, Speeches, URL: <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

¹⁴ FAO, Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), URL: <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/en/> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

¹⁵ FAO, Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), Answers to frequently asked questions, URL: <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/q-and-a/en/> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

¹⁶ FAO, Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), Keeping food and agricultural systems alive - Analyses and solutions in a period of crises - COVID-19 Pandemic, URL: <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/analysis/en/> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

¹⁷ FAO, Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), Policy Briefs, URL: <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/resources/policy-briefs-test/en/> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

¹⁸ FAO, IFPRI Food Export Restrictions during the COVID-19 crisis, URL: <https://public.tableau.com/profile/-laborde6680#!/vizhome/ExportRestrictionsTracker/FoodExportRestrictionsTracker> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

The World Trade Organization (WTO) represents 164 member states. The WTO has an extra dedicated site for COVID-19¹⁹ and offers a short list of answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs).²⁰ The Deputy Director Alan Wolff underlines that the COVID-19 pandemic shows the need to improve the world trading system.²¹ Together with many other International Organizations and stakeholders the WTO has created a COVID-19 Trade Facilitation Database which continuously lists trade restrictions and other documents related to the global COVID-19 situation for World Trade and it is regularly updated.²² This database will prove to be an important source for trade practitioners and researchers alike.²³

The WTO reports regularly on restrictions to World Trade and has done so with particular focus on COVID-19 restrictions (mostly of PPE and also of medication).²⁴

Together with the WCO the WTO has issued a joined declaration to minimize disruptions to cross-border trade in goods.²⁵

World Customs Organization

The World Customs Organization is an inter-governmental organization with 183 member states founded as Customs-Cooperation Council in Brussels. The WCO offers a very detailed set of information, guidance and declarations on its dedicated webpage on COVID-19.²⁶

The WCO has a recommendation on natural disaster relief but this covers smaller and local events such as earth quakes, volcanic eruptions, wild fires or floods than a global pandemic.²⁷

The WCO has created its own guidance and lists and joint declarations together with other International Organizations – it is truly the hub for international customs policy and customs law expertise and has developed accordingly since 2008.²⁸ As early as 20 March 2020 the WCO reacted and openly was pulling all internal and external strings of its global network in order to communicate sober stringent

¹⁹ WTO, COVID-19 and World Trade, URL: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/covid19_e/covid19_e.htm (retrieved 4/7/2020).

²⁰ WTO, Frequently asked questions: The WTO and COVID-19, URL: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/-covid19_e/faqcovid19_e.htm (retrieved 4/7/2020).

²¹ WTO, DDG Wolff: Pandemic underlines need to improve trading system's relevance and resilience, URL: https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news20_e/ddgaw_18jun20_e.htm (retrieved 4/7/2020).

²² WCO, WCO partners with stakeholders to launch a COVID-19 Trade Facilitation Repository, URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/may/wco-partners-with-stakeholders-to-launch-a-covid-19-trade-facilitation-repository.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

²³ Weerth, WCO, WTO and its stakeholders on COVID-19: COVID-19 Trade Facilitation Repository, Researchgate 2020, DOI: [10.13140/RG.2.2.26099.76322](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.26099.76322).

²⁴ WTO, WTO report finds growing number of export restrictions in response to COVID-19 crisis, URL: https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news20_e/rese_23apr20_e.htm (retrieved 4/7/2020), WTO, COVID-19: Trade and trade-related measures, URL: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/covid19_e/trade_related_goods_measure_e.htm (retrieved 4/7/2020), WTO, WTO report looks at impact of COVID-19 pandemic on services trade, https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news20_e/serv_29may20_e.htm (retrieved 4/7/2020) and WTO, WTO report on G20 shows moves to facilitate imports even as trade restrictions remain widespread, URL: https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news20_e/trdev_29jun20_e.htm (retrieved 4/7/2020).

²⁵ WCO, WCO and WTO join forces to minimize disruptions to cross-border trade in goods, URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/april/wco-wto-joint-statement-on-covid-19-related-trade-measures.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

²⁶ WCO, Covid-19 webpage, see URL: <https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/coronavirus.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

²⁷ WCO, Resolution of the Customs-Co-Operation Council on the Role of Customs in Natural Disaster Relief, 2011, URL: http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/about-us/legal-instruments/resolutions/resolution_e.pdf (retrieved 4/7/2020).

²⁸ Weerth, Recent Developments in the World Customs Organization, in Bungenberg/Herrmann/Krajewski/Terhechte (Eds.), EYIEL 2016, 787.

helpful messages to the customs administrations, customs officers and the general public and businesses²⁹ and a guide of how to best communicate in a global crisis was also published.³⁰

The WCO warned early about fake medicine and other fake goods (PPE) for COVID-19³¹, it has prepared together with the WHO customs classification guidance³² on medical supplies and PPE³³ and it has again with the WHO prepared customs classification guidance on medicine and chemicals (INN).³⁴

In the COVID-19 pandemic the WCO and its member states also went on to online meetings and online trainings in order to practice social distancing and reduce personal contact.³⁵

The WCO has issued joined declarations with the WTO³⁶, the ICC³⁷, the IMO³⁸, the IRU³⁹, the OTIF/OSJD⁴⁰ and the UN-OHRLLS⁴¹ on the importance of trade facilitation, the openness of borders and World Trade.

²⁹ WCO, The Global Customs community mobilizes efforts to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/march/the-global-customs-community-mobilizes-efforts-to-mitigate-the-effects-of-the-covid-19-pandemic.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

³⁰ WCO, COVID-19 Crisis WCO Guidance on how to communicate during a crisis, URL: http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/media/guideline/wco-guidance-on-how-to-communicate-during-a-crisis_en.pdf?la=en (retrieved 4/7/2020).

³¹ WCO, COVID-19 Urgent Notice: counterfeit medical supplies and introduction of export controls on personal protective equipment, URL: http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/march/covid_19-urgent-notice-counterfeit-medical-supplies.aspx (retrieved 4/7/2020).

³² Weerth, Basic Principles of Customs Classification under the Harmonized System, Global Trade and Customs Journal 2008, 61-67.

³³ WCO, HS classification reference for Covid-19 medical supplies 3.0 Edition, URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/-en/media/newsroom/2020/june/new-edition-of-the-wco-who-hs-classification-list-for-covid-19-medical-supplies-now-available.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

³⁴ WCO, COVID-19 - WCO-WHO Cooperation, List of priority medicines for customs during COVID-19 pandemic - WHO Secretariats of INN Programme and EML, URL: http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/-public/global/pdf/topics/nomenclature/covid_19/prioritization-medicines-list-during-covid_19-_v9_wco_en.pdf?la=en (retrieved 4/7/2020).

³⁵ Japan Customs, Japan Customs conducts online induction training for new recruits, WCO news No. 92, June 2020, 30-31 and WCO, Completion of online training on combating the trafficking of cultural property in Africa, WCO news online 17 June 2020, URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/june/completion-of-online-training-on-combating-the-trafficking-of-cultural-property-in-africa.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

³⁶ WCO, WCO and WTO join forces to minimize disruptions to cross-border trade in goods, URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/april/wco-wto-joint-statement-on-covid-19-related-trade-measures.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

³⁷ WCO, COVID-19: WCO and ICC issue joint statement and call for increased action on Customs and trade facilitation, http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/april/covid_19-wco-and-icc-issue-joint-statement.aspx (retrieved 4/7/2020).

³⁸ WCO, Joint WCO-IMO statement on the integrity of the global supply chain during the COVID-19 pandemic, URL: http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/april/joint-wco_imo-statement-on-the-integrity-of-the-global-supply-chain.aspx (retrieved 4/7/2020).

³⁹ IRU, WCO and IRU joint statement on responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on cross border transport, URL: <https://www.iru.org/resources/iru-library/wco-and-iru-joint-statement-responding-impacts-covid-19-cross-border-transport> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁴⁰ WCO, Joint WCO-OTIF-OSJD statement on responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on cross-border railway transport, URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/may/joint-wco-otif-osjd-statement-on-responding-to-the-impacts-of-covid-19.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020) and WCO, Joint Statement on global supply chain continuity during COVID-19 pandemic, URL: http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/media/press-release/2020/wco-otif-osjd_joint_statement.pdf?db=web (retrieved 4/7/2020),

⁴¹ WCO, WCO and UN-OHRLLS call for trade and transit facilitation during the COVID-19 pandemic, URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/may/wco-and-un-ohrls-call-for-trade-and-transit-facilitation-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020) and WCO, Joint Statement on facilitating trade and transit during the

Experiences of national customs authorities in the COVID-19 pandemic have been shared⁴², the WCO Director-General has issued a statement of cooperation in a unique pandemic⁴³ and the industry is calling in its WCO Private Sector Consultative Group for open borders and fast lanes in order to secure trans-border global trade.⁴⁴ Practitioners reported on the importance of air traffic transport⁴⁵ and customs agents in a global pandemic crisis.⁴⁶

The WCO news bulletin No. 92 (June 2020) was dedicated in its focus on COVID-19.⁴⁷

Apart from the important joint declarations and the joint customs guidance that was created in cooperation with the WHO the most influential report and working paper was the 72-page report “WCO Secretary Note: What Customs can do to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic” (4th edition 29 May 2020).⁴⁸

In the end of June 2020, the WCO announced that the WCO is also contributing to the Global Trade Helpdesk which is re-organized in order to help tiny, small and medium businesses to overcome the COVID-19 crisis.⁴⁹

International Air Transport Association

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) represents more than 290 airlines and 480 strategic partners.⁵⁰ IATA has a special dedicated webpage on the impact on COVID-19.⁵¹ It has published an online database which shows the intact Air Cargo carriers in the COVID-19 crisis.⁵² And the IATA has created an interactive map that shows all air travel restrictions on a global level.⁵³

International Maritime Organization

COVID-19 pandemic, URL: http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/media/press-release/ohrlls_wco-joint-statement_covid_19_en.pdf?la=en (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁴² Dicksons, Customs in the face of COVID-19: the case of Uganda, WCO news No. 92, June 2020, 22-25, Jayaratne, Customs in the face of COVID-19: the case of Sri Lanka, WCO news No. 92, June 2020, 26-29 and Japan Customs, Japan Customs conducts online induction training for new recruits, WCO news No. 92, June 2020, 30-31

⁴³ Mikuriya, Working with you through these challenging times, WCO news No. 92, June 2020, 17-19.

⁴⁴ WCO, The Private Sector Consultative Group outlines solutions to humanitarian, government and business needs amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/april/the-private-sector-consultative-group-outlines-solutions.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁴⁵ Pope, COVID-19 and its impact on Customs and trade, WCO news No. 92, June 2020, 40-42 and Zubkov, Air cargo – the lifeline of recovery: health, trade, and society’s wellbeing, WCO news No. 92, June 2020, 32-35.

⁴⁶ Kerjean, Customs brokers and the COVID-19 crisis, WCO news No. 92, June 2020, 44-45.

⁴⁷ WCO, WCO News No. 92 (June 2020), URL: <https://mag.wcoomd.org/magazine/wco-news-92-june-2020/> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁴⁸ WCO, WCO Secretary Note: What Customs can do to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, URL: http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid_19/covid_19-categorization-of-member-input_may-29-2020_edition-4_en.pdf?la=en (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁴⁹ WCO, WCO contributes to the Global Trade Helpdesk in support of MSMEs, URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/newsroom/2020/june/wco-contributes-to-the-global-trade-helpdesk-in-support-of-msmes.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020) and ITC/UN/WTO, Global Trade Helpdesk, URL: <https://globaltrahelpdesk.org/en> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁵⁰ IATA, URL: <https://www.iata.org> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁵¹ IATA, URL: <https://www.iata.org/en/programs/covid-19-resources-guidelines/> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁵² IATA, Air Cargo Operations Status, COVID-19, URL: <https://www.tact-online.org/covid-19/carrier> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁵³ IATA, COVID-19 Travel Regulations Map, URL: <https://www.iatatravelcentre.com/international-travel-document-news/1580226297.htm> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the special organization of the UN for all maritime matters and has 174 member states.⁵⁴ The IMO has a special dedicated page for COVID-19.⁵⁵ It is in particular caring for seafarers and maritime trade and it has declared the importance of open sea ports and customs offices in this public health crisis⁵⁶ and it urges that all seafarers are allowed to go ashore, travel home and underlines the importance of crew changes.⁵⁷ It has also called for opening all customs border posts and all harbours.⁵⁸

International Road Transport Union

The International Road Transport Union (IRU) represents more than 165 individual members out of the transport sector and has its seat in Geneva/Switzerland. Together with the WCO it has published a joint declaration about the importance of road traffic in this global health crisis that urges customs authorities to hold borders open for goods and in particular critical goods by help of fast lanes (green lanes), fewer physical checks and the use of the TIR-system and electronic transit declarations (eTIR).⁵⁹ The importance of using the TIR and eTIR system in particular for landlocked developing countries in the COVID-19 crisis was underlined in two joint declarations of the UN-system.⁶⁰

International Chamber of Commerce

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) is the institutional representation of more than 45 Mio. businesses in more than 100 countries and it is situated in Paris.⁶¹ The ICC is caring in particular for the Small and Medium Businesses in the COVID-19-crisis and has called for the rescue of small and medium enterprises (SME), offers 7 key tools for SME in the COVID-19 crisis⁶² and has developed a COVID-19 Web portal in cooperation with the WHO in order to facilitate information flows by disseminating the latest and most reliable information on the COVID-19 outbreak to businesses.⁶³

INTERPOL

INTERPOL is the International Crime Police Organization - an inter-governmental agency of policing forces from 194 countries.⁶⁴ INTERPOL has a dedicated page for COVID-19.⁶⁵

⁵⁴ IMO, Member States, NGOs and NGOs, URL: <http://www.imo.org/en/About/Membership/Pages/Default.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁵⁵ IMO, IMO-Page on COVID-19, URL: <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁵⁶ IMO, Customs and ports urged to maintain flow of critical goods during pandemic, URL: <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Pages/12-WCO-IMO-statement.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁵⁷ IMO, IMO urges keyworker exemptions for crew changes and repatriations, URL: <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Pages/09-seafarers-COVID19.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁵⁸ IMO, Customs and ports urged to maintain flow of critical goods during pandemic, URL: <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Pages/12-WCO-IMO-statement.aspx> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁵⁹ IRU, WCO and IRU joint statement on responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on cross border transport, URL: <https://www.iru.org/resources/iru-library/wco-and-iru-joint-statement-responding-impacts-covid-19-cross-border-transport> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁶⁰ IRU, UN recognises eTIR as key to combat COVID-19 impacts, URL: <https://www.iru.org/resources/newsroom/un-recognises-etir-key-combat-covid-19-impacts> (retrieved 4/7/2020) and IRU, IRU briefs governments on COVID-19 recovery, URL: <https://www.iru.org/resources/newsroom/iru-briefs-governments-covid-19-recovery> (retrieved 4/7/2020) and IRU, IRU's open letter to global leaders, URL: <https://www.iru.org/resources/newsroom/irus-open-letter-global-leaders> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁶¹ ICC, About us, URL: <https://iccwbo.org/about-us/> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁶² ICC, COVID-19: 7 resources to help manage your small business, URL: <https://iccwbo.org/media-wall/news-speeches/covid-19-7-resources-to-help-manage-your-small-business/> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁶³ ICC, ICC launches COVID-19 web portal, URL: <https://iccwbo.org/media-wall/news-speeches/icc-launches-covid-19-web-portal/> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁶⁴ INTERPOL, Who we are, URL: <https://www.interpol.int/Who-we-are/What-is-INTERPOL> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁶⁵ INTERPOL, COVID-19, URL: <https://www.interpol.int/How-we-work/COVID-19> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

INTERPOL has issued guidance to stay safe⁶⁶ and also urgent warnings about the rise of fake goods⁶⁷ and new cybercrime threads and tactics used by organized crime in order to conduct financial fraud.⁶⁸

EUROPOL

EUROPOL is an agency of the European Union and is situated in Den Haag. It is in the EU27 responsible for coordinating the crime police work of 27 EU member states in particular for the cases that are tackling the overall common market of the EU27. EUROPOL has a special dedicated page for COVID-19.⁶⁹ EUROPOL has issued guidance to stay safe⁷⁰ and also urgent warnings about the rise of fake goods⁷¹ and new cybercrime threads and tactics used by organized crime in order to conduct financial fraud.⁷²

OVERVIEW OF DECLARATIONS, LISTS / DATABASES, GUIDANCE, REPORTS, WARNINGS AND PRESS RELEASES

The following table represents an overview of the different approaches by the International Organizations for combating COVID-19.

Table:

Overview of declarations, lists/ databases, guidance, reports, press releases

Organization	Declaration	List/Database	Guidance	Report	Warning	Press Release
UN	X			X		X
WHO	X	X	X		X	X
FAO		X	X			
WTO	X	X		X		X

⁶⁶ INTERPOL, COVID-19 – Stay safe, URL: <https://www.interpol.int/How-we-work/COVID-19/COVID-19-Stay-Safe> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁶⁷ INTERPOL, Global operation sees a rise in fake medical products related to COVID-19, URL: <https://www.interpol.int/News-and-Events/News/2020/Global-operation-sees-a-rise-in-fake-medical-products-related-to-COVID-19> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁶⁸ INTERPOL, INTERPOL warns of financial fraud linked to covid-19, URL: <https://www.interpol.int/News-and-Events/News/2020/INTERPOL-warns-of-financial-fraud-linked-to-COVID-19> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁶⁹ EUROPOL, General terms – COVID-19, URL: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/general-terms/covid-19> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁷⁰ EUROPOL, Staying safe during COVID-19: What do you need to know, URL: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/staying-safe-during-covid-19-what-you-need-to-know> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁷¹ EUROPOL, Rise of fake ‘corona cures’ revealed in global counterfeit medicine operation, URL: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/rise-of-fake-%E2%80%98corona-cures%E2%80%99-revealed-in-global-counterfeit-medicine-operation> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁷² EUROPOL, How Criminals profit from the COVID-19 Pandemic, URL: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/how-criminals-profit-covid-19-pandemic> (retrieved 4/7/2020) and EUROPOL, Pandemic Profiteering: How Criminals exploit the COVID-19 crisis, URL: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/pandemic-profiteering-how-criminals-exploit-covid-19-crisis> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

WCO	X	X	X	X	X	X
IATA	X	X	X			X
IMO	X		X			X
IRU	X		X			X
ICC	X		X			X
INTERPOL			X		X	X
EUROPOL			X		X	X

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic can in its global spread and speed of spread be compared to the 1918/1919 pandemic of the Spanish flu. Economic and social lockdowns and curfews lead to severe economic downfalls in all affected countries. In 188 states (and 216 nations or economic areas according to the WHO) more than 10 Million humans were infected officially (with a huge dark number of infections) more than 500,000 persons died of COVID-19 until the end of June 2020. Lockdowns and curfews of the civil society and the economic production were issued in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 down, the airplane travel of persons came to a near halt. In times of border closures, it is of the utmost importance to keep borders open for trans-national trade in order to ensure the supply of critical medical goods and personal protection equipment, medicine/chemicals and food.

In order to enable open borders and fast delivery of essential goods all nations are urged to apply the measures of trade facilitation that are advertised by the WTO, the WCO and its stakeholders since more than ten years:⁷³ the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention and enable free flow of World Trade and commodities across borders (also by help of information technology and transit procedures) – a strong necessity for otherwise landlocked and least developed nations.

The global community and the International Organizations reacted by help of (joint) declarations, lists/databases, reports, press releases, guidance and warnings on this unprecedented threat to global trade in the times of Globalization. Organized crime and criminals are trying to use the need of personal protection equipment and cures to invent new cybercrime threats and produce and sell huge amounts of fake medial goods and fake corona cures.

“We are all in this together” (UN Secretary-General *António Guterres*) but it must be understood and underlined that COVID-19 is for many regions of the world and the weakest in the society often only one additional thread to their health and wellbeing next to sufficient sanitation and nutrition (food), clean water access and other potential deadly diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV (WHO Secretary-General *Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus*).⁷⁴ “All countries are facing a delicate balance,

⁷³ Weerth, The Revised Kyoto Convention versus the Old One: A Capable Tool for Trade Facilitation?, *Global Trade and Customs Journal* 2010, 79-82 and Wolfgang/Kafeero, Old wine in new skins: analysis of the Trade Facilitation Agreement vis-à-vis the Revised Kyoto Convention, *World Customs Journal* Vol. 8, No. 2 (2014), 27-38.

⁷⁴ Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General’s opening remarks at the media briefing on Covid-19, 17 June 2020, URL: <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---17-june-2020> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

between protecting their people, while minimizing the social and economic damage” (WHO Secretary-General *Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus*).⁷⁵

“We all want this to be over. We all want to get on with our lives. But the hard reality is: this is not even close to being over” (WHO Secretary-General *Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus*).⁷⁶

In the end we as humankind will manage to get out of this COVID-19 crisis only together...

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⁷⁵ Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General’s opening remarks at the media briefing on Covid-19, 22 June 2020, URL: <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---22-june-2020> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

⁷⁶ Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General’s opening remarks at the media briefing on Covid-19, 29 June 2020, URL: <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---29-june-2020> (retrieved 4/7/2020).

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