

MEMORANDUM FOR PRESENTATION TO CABINET
BY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE & CUSTOMS

Relief Consignments in the Event of Disasters

On the 8th June, 1970, the Customs Co-operation Council of Brussels adopted a Recommendation inviting members to expedite the forwarding of relief consignments in the event of disasters.

L-Arkiwi! Nazzjonalita Malta

The Recommendation enjoins member states to contribute to the efforts made to assist victims of disasters by simplifying and harmonising Customs formalities, thus speeding up assistance and making it more effective.

The Recommendation requires member states to waive all import duties and import prohibitions and restrictions on goods contained in relief consignments especially where such consignments consist of foodstuffs, medicaments, clothing, tents, prefabricated houses and other goods of prime necessity.

Member States will be required to approve organisations existing in their countries which would be authorised to withdraw relief consignments free of import duties and import prohibitions and restrictions. Waiving of duty would be effected by a special exemption order under Section 14 (1) of the Import Duties Act, 1964. No difficulties should arise regarding the issue of import and export licences on relief consignments.

The Recommendation enjoins member states to facilitate as far as possible the carriage of relief consignments in Customs transit and to grant temporary importation facilities on equipment loaned free of charge to the approved organisations referred to above, without requiring, where possible, any security provided the organisation gives an undertaking that the equipment will be re-exported.

Member States are also enjoined to authorise, as far as possible, the clearance of relief consignments outside the hours and places normally prescribed and if possible, waive any charges for Customs attendance.

The Recommendation invites Members to approve without delay the national organisations which would be responsible for the receipt and distribution of relief consignments, and to issue to the competent Customs offices all necessary instructions in order to ensure, should the case arise, the immediate implementation of the provisions of this Recommendation.

It is also pointed out that the term "disaster" applies to natural disasters and similar catastrophes, and that the facilities provided for by the Recommendation do not apply to alcohol, alcoholic beverages and tobacco goods.

The provisions of the Recommendation do not preclude the prohibitions or restrictions imposed under national laws and regulations on grounds of public morality or order, public security, public hygiene or health or based on veterinary or phytopathological considerations.

Acceptance of this Recommendations would not require any amendment to the Import Duties Act, 1964, and the Supplies and Services Act, 1947.

The Crown Advocate General agrees with the Recommendation at issue.

Hon. Ministers are requested to signify their approval of Malta's acceptance of this Recommendation.