

# THE NORTHERN DIGEST

For an Efficient, Smart and Green Corridor

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Soon we will hit the road freely

## Northern Corridor stakeholders' online meetings on initiatives to facilitate cross-border trade and curb the spread of Covid-19

Though the first case of COVID-19 was recorded in China in December 2019, the impact and effects on transport and trade patterns in the Northern Corridor region only started in February 2020.

The port of Mombasa is projected to handle 35.9 million tons in total throughput and 1.49 million TEUs in container traffic in 2020. With the pandemic, the Port projection may not be attained due to disruptions in the global value chain.

The COVID-19 pandemic struck when the Northern Corridor region was performing well. In the period January-December 2019, the Port of Mombasa recorded 34,439,264 tons with a growth of 3,515,976 tons or 11.4 per cent compared to the 30,923,288 tons registered in the corresponding period in 2018.

These meetings on trade facilitation along the Northern Corridor in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic are chaired by Mr. Omae NYARANDI, the Executive Secretary of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) and attracts a number of Northern Corridor Public and private Sector Stakeholders in Member countries of Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and South Sudan who are involved in Cross-Border Transit Transport as well as Regulatory Agencies at border points.

"Following the outbreak of the Coronavirus disease declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the importance of interactive Northern Corridor stakeholders' forums to discuss and address issues pertaining to trade and transport facilitation along the Northern Corridor cannot be underscored.



The port and the Northern Corridor Road Networks is facing a slowdown movement of cargo leading to increased cargo dwell time at the port and traffic jams at border points.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is changing day by day based on different measures taken by each and individual Northern Corridor Member State. A coordinated approach requires joint efforts and collaboration in Trade Facilitation Initiatives along the Northern Corridor during this COVID-19 pandemic period.

In respone, the Northern Corridor Secretariat in April 2020, put in place a platform for an online virtual meeting convened every Tuesday with Northern Corridor Stakeholders that mainly focus on what is happening in real terms in each Member State in general and in particular at each transit or transport nodes along the Corridor (Port, Weighbridges, Border Posts, ICDs, and Container Freight Stations).

Member States have instituted different measures to mitigate the spread of the disease some of which have impacted on the flow of goods and created some challenges to stakeholders which require a regional response", said Omae NYARANDI.

The COVID-19 containment measures which is being periodically updated by each Member State, on one hand need to trickle down to the logistics service providers on the ground for their efficient implementation, on the other hand, challenges faced in the implementation of these measures need to be identified and addressed.

According to the NCTTCA Executive Secretary, data from the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory which monitors the performance of the Corridor, reveal that international trade; imports, exports and return of empty containers to shipping lines; regional and cross border trade both formal and informal trade are experiencing challenges since COVID-19 pandemic started.

"NCTTCA interventions include among others; monitoring tools, the regional online platform for Stakeholders' real-time discussions to jointly monitor what is happening across the entire Corridor and exchange on how to address any identified challenges impacting on the flow of goods across the region as well as challenges that may compromise measures to contain the Coronavirus disease", added Omae NYARANDI commending the effectiveness of the regular and timely discussions on Trade Facilitation Initiatives along the Northern Corridor during COVID-19 pandemic.

Stakeholders highlighted some challenges including the queue of trucks awaiting clearance into Uganda at Malaba Kenya-Uganda that was reported to stretch for a distance of 35km due to the measures being implemented by Uganda to contain the spread of COVID-19. It was attributed to the limited number of Port Health staff at the border stations used in drawing samples from drivers for the COVID-19 tests, furthermore, restrictions relating to the number of people allowed per truck and confusion regarding relay driving.

Stakeholders, however noted that the long queues that were experienced at the border points especially Malaba and Elegu had eased and commended the quick action by the member countries while noting the need for more to be done to bring the cost of doing business down. Furthermore, the Northern Corridor Member States need to harmonize their response measures and interventions on the essential sectors of Trade and Transport and Health services for better coordination and collaboration.



The queue of trucks awaiting clearance into Uganda at Malaba Kenya-Uganda hat was reported to stretch for a distance of 35 km

It was reported that Kenyan drivers were facing mistreatment and stigmatization in the other Member States through which they traverse when delivering cargo to the respective destinations. Truck drivers are cautioned to stick to their itinerary and guidelines issued by the Member States to contain the spread of the disease. Nevertheless, the Member States should ensure the safety of the truck drivers in their countries by providing security for them especially at the designated rest stops and along sections of the Corridor.

More than 5000 truck cross Mariakani Weighbridge every day, and the traffic at Athi River Weighbridge is even higher. Generally, Busia and Malaba have 400 and 1000 trucks crossing on daily basis.

## Covid-19: Impact on Transit Transport in the Northern Corridor region

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) which was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 has continued to spread across the world and in the Northern Corridor region. The Covid-19 pandemic is having a devastating effect on people worldwide and in the region. According to Johns Hopkins University, more than 5.5 million people have been infected and at least 347,000 people have died worldwide and figures are increasing day by day.

The assessment of the COVID-19 impact made by the Northern Corridor Secretariat on transit transport in the Northern Corridor Region in terms of key indicators from the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory revealed that the response by the regional Governments, Companies and Organizations over the COVID-19 pandemic has suddenly impacted the transport sector and the supply chain. These responses and restrictions are meant to "flatten the curve" by reducing or slowing down the escalating infection and mortality rates in our region.



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A regional approach in response to COVID-2019 is necessary too fast-track driver mass testing and clearance of goods at border posts.

The pandemic has forced Governments to respond with travel restrictions and bans to minimize the spread of the disease from Country to Country. Member States have also enacted domestic measures such as social distancing, mandatory curfews, and lock downs.

According to the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory, the port dwell time has not been adversely affected by the pandemic, though a slight increase in the cargo dwell time has been registered compared to general performance for the year 2019. The Mombasa Port, being an essential service provider has been operating 24/7 during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure business continuity. Most of the Agencies involved in the clearing of goods at the Port have continued to work during this period.



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To ensure operations are not interrupted, the Port of Mombasa in conjunction with the Port Public Health officers' procedures handle vessels when they arrive were instituted including but not limited to;

- Mandatory Pre-Arrival Reporting on board must be undertaken at least 48 hours before the vessel arrival in Kenya's territorial waters. Masters of ships must, therefore, submit a duly completed and compulsory Maritime Declaration of Health form to the Port Health officer.
- All arriving vessels with crew/passengers with recent travel history to countries with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days must undergo special monitoring
- Every ship entering Kenya from a country with confirmed cases of COVID-19 is subjected to rigorous inspection at the designated location as directed by the Harbor Master in consultations with Port Health Office.
- Crew/passengers of vessels from confirmed COVID-19 countries are not granted shore passes.
   Only Kenyans and foreigners with valid residence permits are allowed to disembark after the presentation of Health Declaration forms and by the Health Authorities.
- All visitors (dockworkers, agents, surveyors, port state inspectors) to a ship from countries confirmed with COVID-19 cases must be informed about the precautionary measures while on board.
- Masters of all ships due to arrive in a Kenyan port are required to declare their last 10 ports of call or

- voyage memo for the last three months, whichever is higher, and confirm that there is no crew showing symptoms of COVID-19 on board.
- Suspension of crew change and bagging services.

During the period January-March 2020, the number of ships calling at the Mombasa port has not changed compared to the year 2019. However, the number was expected to be higher in the year 2020 if it was not for the Pandemic. Vessel waiting time before berth performance was also still within the expected time frame.

During the first three months of the year 2020 (January, February, March), a total of 137,713 trucks were weighed at the Mariakani weighbridge. The average daily traffic going to Malaba via Webuye was 821 trucks in April 2020. The new measures to combat the spread of the virus require the temperature of the truck crew to be taken at entry Point and thereafter at designated weighbridges at Athi River, Busia, Gilgil, and Mariakani. Testing for COVID-19 is also done before the crew commences journey from Kenya, furthermore, all truck crew entering Kenya are tested at the border post of entry.

As being observed, the Coronavirus disease has become a severe pandemic and poses many serious challenges in transport in the region. Since more countries have put up strict measures affecting transport since March 2020, a clear picture will be shown as more data is made available along the Corridor in the coming days.

Apart from trucks long queues at border points, there is a delay in the return of empty containers at the Port which attracts retention charges by the shipping lines.

Trade and transport is vital for the region during the COVID-19 pandemic to enable get the necessary provisions to fight the pandemic as well as not to suffocate our economies. A regional approach in response to COVID-19 is necessary too fast-track driver mass testing and clearance of goods at border posts.

The Northern Corridor Secretariat continues to urge stakeholders to provide protective equipment and hygiene facilities at all transport nodes such as the Port, Weighbridges, Inland Container Depots, and Border points.

In collaboration with the transport operators, the Northern Corridor Secretariat is devising ways to implement a sustained sensitization program for Transit operators and their employees; with a coordinated approach and harmonization in the region especially on policies affecting Corridor transport, co-ordination mechanisms for identifying and monitoring the spread of the outbreak as well as mapping out policy responses by the individual Member States, and within the Northern Corridor.

On Post-pandemic action, the transport sector will be extremely affected by responses to this pandemic. The Northern Corridor Secretariat should fast-track the programs such as a well coordinated joint border committees and Road Side Stations and wellness centres equipped with health facilities that enables to fight communicable diseases such as COVID-19, Ebola, HIV/ AIDS, etc.



The Northern Corridor Member States in a bid to curb the spread of Coronavirus at border entry and exit points have set aside testing facilities along the Northern Corridor route to test truck drivers and crew.

Drivers leaving the Mombasa Port will undergo mandatory testing at Miritini. Other facilities set aside in Kenya are; South B in Nairobi, Ahero Sub-county Hospital in Kisumu, Migori County Hospital, Eldoret, Nakuru Provincial Hospital, Naivasha, Kilifi Medical and Training College, Machakos, Marsabit, Kwale Sub-county hospital, Kinango and Msambweni.

This comes after the EAC Secretariat urged its Partner States to enforce mandatory testing of drivers and crew at the border posts and conduct monitoring during transit at selected inland points.

"As members of the East African Community, we believe that these discussions and arrangements we have within the EAC will facilitate the testing of drivers in an efficient way while at the same time not impeding the flow of trucks and cargo across the borders," Health CAS Rashid Aman said during a daily brief on COVID-19 status.

In adherence to EAC guidelines requiring Partner States to prevent the drivers from spreading Coronavirus, Kenya has designated stop centres

at Busia, Gilgil, Taveta, Namanga, Mlolongo, Malaba and Webuye, where the drivers will stop for rests. For COVID-19 certificate check, truck drivers and crew will be stopped at Lunga Lunga, Taveta, Namanga, Busia, Moyale and Isebania.

All truck drivers and crew are required to be tested at least 48 hours before they begin the journey. Once tested, the results will be sent to the Ministry of Health, which prints a certificate indicating that one is COVID-19 free and allowed to start their journey. They are also supposed to stay in designated hotels and guesthouses, and not any other facility of choice.

To address the border crossing delays, the government of Kenya revealed they will use digital tracking of the results and COVID-19-free certificate.

"We are even thinking of having an express lane in Busia and in Malaba in which case your test results will be received before your arrival, then your passing through the border is fast tracked," said the Ag Director General of the Ministry of Health in Kenya Dr. Patrick Amoth during a daily Coronavirus status update.



All truck drivers and crew are required to be tested at least 48 hours before they begin the journey.

In Uganda, a laboratory to test COVID-19 at Mutukula has been launched. All truck drivers and crew arriving via Mutukula border will be tested and results given in 45 minutes. The laboratory is estimated to conduct 64

tests in an hour and only those who test negative for Coronavirus will be allowed to proceed. At the moment, samples from all cross-border truck drivers are taken to the Uganda Virus Research Institute while the suspects are left to proceed into the country as they wait for the results

Rwanda has halted the previous directive of relay trucking across border and instituted that Rwanda-bound goods be offloaded at the border or transshipped at entry points except for perishable goods and petroleum products. These goods have to be transported between 0600hrs and 1800hrs (local time) and must be accompanied by free escort.

Truck drivers and crew are to rest and spend the night at designated accommodation facilities at the importers cost. With regard to testing, the government of Rwanda has made available mandatory testing facilities for all truck drivers and crew in transit and those transporting fuel and perishable goods.

Mandatory testing has also been instituted for trucks from Tanzania and are done at every regional designated stopping centres.

"Partner States to designate specific points along the transport corridor where the drivers can recuperate without mingling with the local communities and such resting places to be communicated to the Secretariat and other Partner States", EAC Secretariat said in a statement in the guidelines issued.

However, the testing at the border entry and exit points in the region has not been without challenges. Long queues at the border points have been witnessed, extending even up to 50 kilometres in the case of Busia border between Kenya and Uganda.

The EAC, in its directives and guidelines has urged Partner States to continuously share information on the COVID-19 pandemic with each other and with the EAC Secretariat, and to minimise human contact and physical exchange of documents by utilizing the Single Customs Territory (SCT) processes particularly information technology systems.

In response to the increased delays at the border posts, the Northern Corridor Transport and Transit Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) has urged its Member States of Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda to harmonize the COVID-19 testing exercise to prevent further delays.

"We are requesting our Member States to have uniform regulations, increase the testing capacity, and the results to take a shorter period from the 48 hours period currently in practice", said Omae NYARANDI, the Executive Secretary of the NCTTCA during a press briefing on Tuesday 19th May 2020.

# EAC directs Partner States to adopt a multi-sectoral and coordinated approach to facilitate Movement of Goods and Services during the COVID-19 pandemic

East African Community has urged Partner States to adopt a multi-sectoral and coordinated approach to facilitate Movement of Goods and Services during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is to complement Partner States' national measures against the Coronavirus pandemic, ensure uninterrupted movement of goods and services, and mitigate the negative effect of the pandemic on the movement of goods and services.

Through an 18-page document titled 'East African Community (EAC) Administrative Guidelines to Facilitate the Movement of Goods and Services during the COVID-19 pandemic', the Secretariat called on the

Partner States to provide access at all designated points for entry and exit of goods, provide adequate personnel at designated points, and treat cross border movement of cargo and trucks as essential services.

The Secretariat directed Transporters and Transporters Associations to adhere to the requirement of having only two to three operators of the truck including the driver.

Partner States are required to enforce mandatory testing of drivers and crew at the border posts and conduct monitoring during transit at selected inland points. If found positive or display COVID-19 symptoms, the

drivers and crew are to be quarantined for 14 days under the supervision of the Ministries responsible for Health.

"Treating of the driver and crew who are tested for COVID-19 and found to be positive in the host Partner State where the test was carried out, Partner States are urged not to repatriate infected drivers and crew to the country of origin to avoid the spread of COVID-19", EAC said on a statement in the guidelines.

The Secretariat further urged the Partner States to prioritise essential goods such as food, fuel, medicaments, agricultural products and inputs, security supplies, emergency and humanitarian relief goods to mitigate COVID-19 pandemic. Partner States are to put in place mechanisms to screen all cross-border truck drivers at least twice a month or at least before they commence a trip to the neighbouring Partner States. Truck drivers and crew are to be allowed to proceed with their trip upon being tested at border posts awaiting communication of the test results.

To prevent the drivers from spreading Coronavirus, the EAC Secretariat directed the Partner States to designate specific points along the transport corridor where the drivers can recuperate without mingling with the local communities and such resting places to

be communicated to the Secretariat and other Partner States

As a way to minimise human contact and physical exchange of documents, Partner States are to use the Single Customs Territory (SCT) processes particularly information technology systems.

On the exchange and sharing of information, Partner States are urged to continuously share information on the COVID-19 pandemic with each other and with the EAC Secretariat.

The Secretariat stressed the need for all transit transport agencies to adhere to the Partner specific guidelines. Northern Corridor Member States instituted the following measures in an attempt to flatten the curve:

#### Burundi

- Quarantine anyone traveling into the Country by air or road
- Mandatory quarantine at own cost for all persons entering the country at government-designated facilities:
- To enter the Country, passengers must prove that they have at least 50% of the subsistence cost for the quarantine of14 days;
- Enforcing WHO measures to combat COVID-19;
- · Maritime transport, boats are and crew are not allowed to go beyond the beach or the port;

#### DRCongo

- Adoption of exceptional measures which concern in particular economic activity, household, budgetary policy, and monetary and change policy.
- Declaration of a state of a health emergency for a period of 30 days throughout the national territory;
- Closure of all borders of the country to passengers and any person, except for cargo ships and other means carrying goods. Their crews are however subject to the necessary public health checks.
- All flights from risk countries and transit countries are suspended;
- Systematic health control of all persons entering the national territory and those departing from cities. All the passengers arriving in the DRC should fill in an information form and wash their hands besides temperature testing;
- All migratory movements, by public transport, of buses, trucks and other vehicles from the interior to the Capital and from the Capital to the interior are prohibited;
- Barriers to be erected by the Governors of Provinces and the crews to submit to rigorous control related to COVID-19;
- Ban on all river transport of passengers from Kinshasa to the Provinces and vice versa. Only boats and craft carrying goods with crews and conveyors will be allowed
- Creation of a Response Cell against the COVID-19, with administrative and technical autonomy, operating under the authority of the President of the Republic;
- The maritime, river, lake and land entry points of the national territory to be equipped with the surveillance device to reinforce control of passengers coming from abroad
- Construction of appropriate tents (including at border posts) to strengthen the overall capacity for receiving medical training;
- Continuation of the awareness campaign by SMS on the health measures to be taken to protect against COVID-19;
- · Quarantine anyone traveling into the Country by air or road
- Enforcing WHO measures to combat COVID-19;
- Exemption from all taxes, duties, levies, and charges on imports and trade in pharmaceutical inputs and products, as well as medical materials and equipment related to the pandemic for six months;
- Emergency removal of pharmaceutical products currently under customs control
- Suspension, for three months, of penalties in the event of delay in the clearance of essential goods;
- The removal of police barriers and checkpoints, within the national territory, on the routes of transport of essential products;

#### Kenya

- Curfew at night running from 7:00 Pm to 05:00 Am
- Cessation of movement from Nairobi and Mombasa except for essential services
- Mandatory COVID-19 tests at the border.
- Trucks and cargo transport have been listed as essential services in the
- · Curfew Notice and therefore permitted to be cleared to travel at night;
- The cargo trucks clearing exercise will be facilitated by multi-agency teams comprising KRA, Immigration, Health, Interior, EAC, MFA, and Trade;
- Immigration, Customs, and Port Health officials are exempted from the provisions of curfew and therefore required to work 24 hours;
- Temperature to be taken at entry Point and thereafter at designated weighbridges
- Each truck occupants must have their temperature health forms until they exit Kenya unless they are Kenyan residents;
- · Only trucks entering Kenya at border points will be subjected to temperature testing requirements;
- Wearing of face masks;
- Enforcing WHO measures to combat COVID-19;

#### Rwanda

- All cargo and conveyors shall be offloaded and transshipped at the Customs point of entry (i.e. Rusumo and Kagitumba Customs Border Posts);
- Transporters who shall have two drivers for a truck (one from the point of departure and a second driver based on Rwandan territory), shall be allowed to proceed to the final destination driven by the Rwanda truck driver after fulfilling the health guidelines;
- All services that have been offered by Customs offices in Kigali and other Customs controlled areas shall be availed at the entry borders;
- Warehousing facilities shall be available for loading, offloading and warehousing of cargo at the entry points;
- Inland Cargo depots shall be availed for effective loading and transshipment exercises—at the Customs entry point;
- Clearing of goods should be done using the pre-clearance mechanisms currently in place i.e. SCT Clearance framework and payment of duties and taxes before the arrival of the goods for quick release at the entry border posts;
- All declaration documents accompanying cargo must be submitted electronically to customs administration to avoid paper manipulation;
- Clients with perishable goods and consignments that require special warehousing facilities such as petroleum products shall be allowed to proceed to destination after a change of crew members (truck drivers) in respect with the current health guidelines in place;
- Clearing agents must declare the full detailed description of goods to expedite the clearance and release of goods;
- All importers must use EBM version 2 to ease declaration and release of their goods;
- Transit cargo should be escorted upon entry to the final destination and truck drivers will only stop at designated points
- Unnecessary movement and visits outside the home are not permitted;
- Public and private employees to use technology to work from home;
- Borders remain closed except for goods and cargo as well as returning Rwandan citizens and legal residents who will be subject to mandatory 14 days quarantine at designated locations;
- Travel between cities and districts of the Country is not permitted;

### South

- Quarantine anyone traveling into the country by air or road
- The Government is enforcing the WHO guidelines to combat the COVID-19;
- All border crossings are closed for passenger buses and vehicles. Cargo trucks and fuel tankers are exempted;
- International flight suspension (with few exceptions for planes bringing in health-related cargo, such as medicine and medical equipment, and essential/critical food items;
- Land border restrictions;
- Passenger bus prohibitions;
- Evening curfews 10 pm to 6 am
- Social distancing and mandatory 14-day quarantine period for any traveler arriving from a virusaffected country.
- The government also encouraged businesses to allow their employees to telework and warned the business community against increasing prices and hoarding essential goods and commodities

#### Uganda

- Total lockdown
- · Quarantine anyone traveling into the country by air or by road
- Only one driver in the truck
- Truck drivers to be tested for COVID-19 before being allowed entry to proceed on transit through Uganda.
- Truck drivers to stop only at designated places
- Stopped all passengers coming into Uganda by air, land or water;
- Uganda has prohibited the entry of pedestrians from neighboring Countries;
- A curfew is affected from 19.00 hours to 06:30 hrs.

### Northern Corridor Performance during COVID-19 pandemic

The Northern Corridor region registered the first cases of Coronavirus in March 2020. In their efforts to slow the spread of the pandemic, Governments are responding in different ways resulting in a significant shock on transport along the corridor. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, most Indicators on the performance of the corridor have shown some decline reflecting uncertainty about the longer-term outlook for Corridor transport. Health experts say the pandemic will take longer to flatten the curve hence the full impact of COVID-19 on corridor transport is yet to come.

The Port Dwell Time has not been adversely affected by the pandemic, though a slight increase in the cargo Dwell Time has been registered compared to general performance for the year 2019. March 2020 Dwell Time was recorded as 92 hours while March 2019 was 90 hours. The Port and dockworker availability have been impacted but not hampering operations. Mombasa Port has continued to serve its clients unabated despite the far-reaching measures to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus.



2019.

A report on the Northern Corridor Performance during the COVID-19 period compiled by the NCTTCA and data from the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory reveals that during the first three months of the year 2020 (January, February, March), a total of 137,713 trucks were weighed at the Mariakani weighbridge, an average of about 1,530 daily traffic which was lower than 2,259 that registered in December 2019. The average daily traffic going to Malaba via Webuye was 821 trucks in April 2020 against average daily traffic of 1,941 in 2019.

Overall Port cargo volumes for January to March 2020 stagnated with 2020 registering 8,612,484 metric tons against 8,545,503 which was registered in the same period in 2019.

This was about a 0.8% increment. Containerized traffic however reduced from 348,204 TEUS to 340,812 TEUS a 2.1% decline as a result of the of COVID-19 effect where few ships canceled their schedules.

Alongside the reduced containerized cargo volumes, the port of Mombasa registered a small drop in the number of calls of container cargo vessels. Heavy delays of more than one 8 hours at the Malaba Border Post was registered from a low of 2 hours towards the end of December 2019 to a high of 8 hours in April 2020. If the situation continues, this may lead to a renewed interest in rail services.

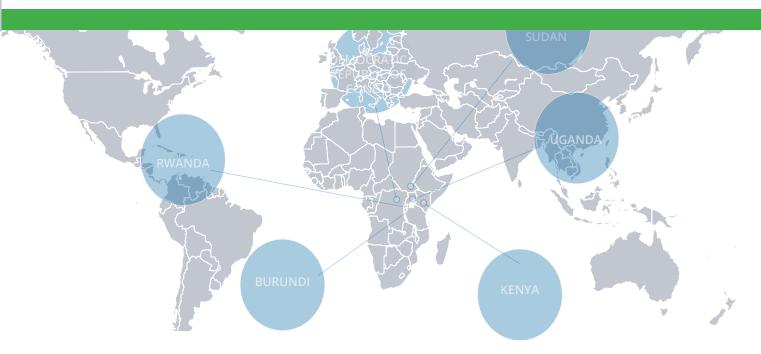
Transit time has decreased in some of the transit routes along the corridor while remaining stable in most. The restriction of movement has made the roads less congested. However, there have been delays at the border posts.

In response the East Africa Community (EAC) heads of state have emphasized adherence to the Administrative Guidelines for application during the COVID-19 period and further directed ministers responsible for Health, Trade, Transport and EAC affairs under the leadership of ministers for Health to finalize and adopt an EAC digital mechanism for testing and certification of drivers and crew on COVID-19 for use by the Partner States.















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