The Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation presents its compliments to the diplomatic missions, consular posts and international organizations established in Belgium and wishes to provide supplemental information to that previously provided by its verbal note "P0.0/PRO.3143/13.07.2020/COVID-19/10" of 13.07 on the measures taken by the Belgian authorities to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the context of the resumption of travel, the Protocol Directorate considers it useful to provide the following clarification regarding the concept of "categories of persons with an essential function or need" (see appendix) and the conditions under which an invitation for a short stay can be granted.

1. General principles

- Intra-European journeys within the European Union, the Schengen countries, the United Kingdom, Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican City (listed below as "EU+") are open to all.

- However, non-essential journeys to zones, cities or areas within the EU+ for which a travel restriction has been issued on the website of the FPS Foreign Affairs (specific containment zones), are not allowed.

- Non-essential travel to and from countries outside the EU+ will also not be permitted until further notice.

2. For diplomatic missions, consular posts and international organizations, this means the following:

2.1. When arriving on BE territory from a country outside the EU+ and from specific zones under lockdown, the traveler must be in possession of the required evidence to justify the essential nature of the journey, such as an invitation to an international conference, participation in diplomatic meetings, etc.

It is up to foreign diplomatic missions, consular posts and international organizations to judge whether a journey falls within the notion of an "essential journey or need".

2.2. When leaving for a country outside the EU+ and for specific areas in lockdown, the staff member concerned shall be in possession of a verbal note from the diplomatic missions or international organizations confirming the essential nature of the journey. A copy of that note will be sent to the Protocol Directorate via the mailbox corona-protocol@diplobel.fed.be.
Providing this information is necessary for the transmission of the data to the competent Belgian authority in order to facilitate the travel. It is requested to clearly state in the title of the email that its subject is a question in the context of a transfer outside the EU+ or to and from zones with a travel restriction.

3. The principle of self-quarantine is included in the "Public Health Passenger Locator Form" for a return of the lockdown zones within the EU+ with a travel restriction and until further notice of the countries outside the EU+. More information about this form can be found in the aforementioned verbal note and on the webpage.

The quarantine does not apply to persons with an essential function as regards the activities related to their function, but to family members.

The Protocol Directorate draws the attention of the diplomatic missions and international organizations to the fact that quarantine can only be lifted in order to fulfil the purpose of the essential travel (such as participation in an international meeting or a professional meeting), provided that this activity cannot be postponed, or in order to take up an essential function. However, those concerned should respect the quarantine for anything outside the purpose of the essential travel.

4. Short stay of the partner and the children

Inviting, for a short stay, one’s partner and children staying outside the EU+ is possible. Please refer to the "Sworn Declaration" procedure defined in point 4.4.2 of the Protocol Guide. The Protocol Directorate would point out that the use of the "Sworn Declaration" form is appropriate for these invitations even if a visa is not required.

The basic rules and health measures set out in the verbal note of 13.07.2020 and on the Protocol Directorate’s webpage remain applicable. Further explanations can also be found in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) of the National Crisis Center.

The Federal Public Service for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation seizes this opportunity to renew to diplomatic missions, to consular posts and to international organizations established in Belgium the assurances of its highest consideration.

Done in Brussels on 17 July 2020

To the diplomatic and consular missions and to international organizations in Brussels
APPENDIX

Categories of persons with an essential function or need.

- medical professionals, researchers in the field of medical science and elderly care professionals;
- cross-border workers;
- seasonal workers in the agricultural sector;
- persons working in the freight transport sector, as well as other persons working in the transport sector, to the extent necessary;
- diplomats, international organization staff, military staff and humanitarian workers performing their official duties;
- transit passengers;
- passengers travelling for compelling family reasons;
- persons in need of international protection or travelling for other humanitarian reasons with full respect of the principle of « non-refoulement ».
- Students (subject to the possibility to of visa procedures being resumed in the consulates);
- highly skilled workers if their work is necessary from an economic point of view and if said work can neither be postponed, nor be carried out from abroad;
- persons participating in meetings organized by international organizations;
- sailors.