1. Are the Courts in your jurisdiction open and functioning as per normal?

*Answer: The Executive in Venezuela issued a Decree of "State of Alarm" (the Decree) on March 13, 2020, in order to attempt avoiding/reducing the spread of COVID-19. Similarly, on 20 March 2020, the Supreme Court issued a Resolution suspending Court Working Days from 16 March to 13 April 2020, in accordance with the Decree of State of Alarm by the Executive (the Resolution). The Resolution by the Court states that all causes of action will remain suspended and procedural terms will not run. However, some specific Courts, such as the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court, the Electoral Chamber of the Supreme Court, Criminal and Domestic Violence Courts will hear urgent matters.*

*Update April 14 2020: Further to my below email, we inform that the Venezuelan Executive yesterday extended the State of Alarm for 30 calendar days. Similarly, today the Supreme Court followed suit and issued a resolution extending the closures (except as provided in my email below) of the Courts for 30 days, until 13 May 2020.*

2. If not, are there any exceptions to the arrest of ships and/or are other injunctive or enforcement procedures available?

*Answer: In case of Courts with maritime jurisdiction, there is under the Venezuelan Maritime Commerce Law a provision that allows the Court to be available at all times to file for and/or submit applications for arrest of vessels. This, in our opinion, would be considered an urgent matter pursuant to the Supreme Court Resolution referred above. Therefore, in theory the Court should receive and process arrests of vessels under the provisions in the Venezuelan maritime legislation, but it is fair to say that under the circumstances it is doubtful.*

3. Can Judicial Sale of Ships still take place?

*Answer: Based under the provisions in the Supreme Court Resolution, Judicial Sale of Ships will not take place while the State of Alarm is in place and while the Courts are "closed". The reason for this is that under Venezuelan law the Judicial Sale of the Ship requires for the complete substantiation of the trial, a favourable judgment, and the enforcement proceedings to take place. This in Venezuela can take up to a year, maybe more.*

4. Do you know how long the Courts in your jurisdiction will be closed for?

*Answer: The Resolution by the Supreme Court is supposed to be in place until 13 April 2020. The same is the case with the State of Alarm. To the date of drafting this answer, neither have been extended. However, we consider highly likely the Decree will in fact be extended, and the Resolution will follow. This could take place even on the same 13 April 2020 deadline.*

5. Is the flag registry in your jurisdiction (if applicable) operating as per normal in terms of the registration of ships and registration of mortgages and deletion of same?

*Answer: The registry is not normally working. Although the Maritime Authority's Registrar Office is said to be operating, due to COVID-19 restrictions there are reduced working hours and personnel, and with the mandatory Personal Protection Equipment -PPE- for its employees and for third parties entering the premises, also working remotely.*

6. Has your flag administration issued any special exemptions for the period of the Pandemic?

*Answer: To the best of our knowledge, there have been no special exemptions so far for the Pandemic period.*