The Club has been advised by Senegal P&I / France P&I of a recent rise in the number of customs fines being imposed in Dakar if discrepancies are found between the goods listed in the customs declaration submitted by the Master (eg manifests, ship’s stores, bunkers) and the actual quantities of such goods on board. Any errors may lead to fines of up to four times the value of the undeclared goods.

At the present time the definitions of “smuggling” and “contraband” in the Senegalese Customs Code are being interpreted very broadly by local customs officers. Vessels trading to Dakar are therefore advised to be particularly careful when preparing customs declarations, ensuring that they are completed as accurately as possible.

Masters are advised to:

- Contact the local agent well before arrival to ascertain the customs regulations in force and the documents required.
- Verify that all consumables on board including bunkers, lube oil, provisions, stores, paint, stationery and crew personal effects are listed accurately on the necessary manifests and declarations.
- Ensure that all required customs documentation is ready well in advance of berthing.
- Require the ship’s agent to be in attendance when the customs officers board the vessel.
- Keep the accommodation ladder / gangway raised until the agent is in attendance and the paperwork is ready, if necessary.
- Instruct crewmembers not to trade with anyone whilst at anchor or alongside. In particular, small fishing boats may approach anchored vessels and attempt to barter with the crew. If an exchange of goods takes place, the local tradesmen may inform the customs authorities thereafter.

If customs officers allege that the requirements of the Senegalese Customs Code have been breached, under no circumstances should an attempt be made to settle the matter unofficially. This may be viewed as bribery and may result in the Master being taken into custody and the vessel being detained. In such circumstances the Master should contact the local P&I Correspondent for assistance.

Members requiring further advice should contact the Loss Prevention department.