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The Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations presents its compliments to Permanent Missions to the United Nations of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and has the honour to refer to the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, scheduled to be held in New York from 15 to 19 June 2020, pursuant to General Assembly resolution A/RES/74/19 of 10 December 2019, paragraph 56, as well as the notification regarding the convening of the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties dated 14 April 2020, which was communicated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, pursuant to rule 5 (Notification) of the Rules of Procedure for Meetings of States Parties (SPLOS/2/Rev.4).

The Office of Legal Affairs is pleased to transmit the attached letter dated 11 May 2020, from the President of the twenty-ninth Meeting of States Parties addressed to States Parties to the Convention proposing the postponement of the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties in light of the evolving situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to Permanent Missions to the United Nations of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea the assurances of its highest consideration.


 11 May 2020



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the United Nations

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11 May 2020

Excellencies,

In my capacity as President of the twenty-ninth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, I wish to inform you that, in light of the situation concerning the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Bureau of the twenty-ninth Meeting of States Parties has conducted an assessment on the feasibility of holding the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties in New York from 15 to 19 June 2020, as originally scheduled pursuant to paragraph 56 of General Assembly resolution 74/19 of 10 December 2019.

The assessment has been based on a matrix and decision-making tools which follow World Health Organization guidelines, as prepared by the Division of Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety and Health in the Department of Operational Support of the United Nations Secretariat.

In preparing this assessment, the Bureau has taken into account information provided by the Secretariat, as well as by the Registrar of the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea with regard to the time-sensitive agenda items related to the Tribunal (see, in particular, agenda sub-item 11(c) and item 13 on the provisional agenda, document [SPLOS/30/L.1](#)).

The outcome of the assessment by the Bureau is outlined below.

Date and Format

The Bureau proposes to postpone the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties to a period of **at least three days between 31 August to 4 September 2020** provided that a suitable conference room and conference services are available during that week. Such postponement would hopefully allow the COVID-19 situation to improve and for in-person meetings to resume. Alternatively, postponement would afford more time to consider all possible formats for elections, including with a view to ensuring the integrity of the election process.

The proposed time-frame is tentative and the Secretariat has been requested to keep the Bureau informed of possible options and the approvals that would be required, including by the Committee on Conferences. In this regard, however, the Bureau draws the attention of delegations to the need to hold the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties during the proposed time-frame as the term of office of seven judges of the Tribunal expires on **30 September 2020**.

Distribution of the Agenda Items

Given the proposal to postpone the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties, and in light of the need for the Secretariat to provide services to a number of rescheduled meetings, consideration will have to be given to “scaling down” the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties and to consider how certain less-time sensitive items on the provisional agenda could be dealt during a Meeting that will have to be shorter than originally scheduled.

In this connection, the Bureau also notes that 2021 is a new United Nations budget year and, should States Parties wish to resume the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties in the first half of 2021, this would require a statement of programme budget implications.

In view of the above, the Bureau proposes to defer to a time closer to the postponed Meeting any decision concerning: (a) which agenda items need to be prioritized, with due regard given to the time-sensitive items related to the Tribunal and the need to also consider other issues of importance, such as the conditions of service of members of the Commission of the Limits on the Continental Shelf; and (b) whether to convene a resumed thirtieth Meeting of States Parties to deliberate on the items not addressed during the dates proposed above.

If I hear no objection to the above by **midnight on Friday 15 May 2020**, I will inform the President of the General Assembly accordingly.

I will keep you informed directly, or through the Secretariat, of any developments on this matter in due course.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Michael Imran Kanu
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the United Nations