



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

9 March 2020

Excellency,

I have the honor to bring to your attention the attached letter of the President of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (“the BBNJ Conference”) dated 9 March 2020.

In light of the situation concerning COVID-19, we will consider proposed draft decision to postpone the fourth session of the BBNJ Conference in plenary meeting of the General Assembly on Wednesday, 11 March 2020, at 10 a.m.

I would also like to avail this opportunity to again express our solidarity with Member States who are fighting COVID-19 and our sincere condolences for their loss, and call on all Members to strive together in our joint efforts to fight the disease in the spirit of multilateralism to deliver for all.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive script.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



President of the Intergovernmental Conference
on an international legally binding instrument under
the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
on the conservation and sustainable use of
marine biological diversity of
areas beyond national jurisdiction

9 March 2020

Excellency,

I write to you concerning the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (“the conference”).

Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 72/249 of 24 December 2017 and 74/19 of 10 December 2019, the fourth session of the conference is scheduled to be held from 23 March to 3 April 2020 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

However, in light of the situation concerning the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), I held an informal meeting with delegations on 9 March 2020 to consider the postponement of the fourth session of the conference. During that meeting, it was agreed that the fourth session of the conference will be postponed to the earliest possible available date to be decided by the Assembly.

In this regard, please find attached the draft decision for adoption by the General Assembly. I kindly request that a formal meeting of the General Assembly be convened as soon as possible, and no later than 12 March 2020, to adopt the draft decision.

As the conference is at a critical stage, I also kindly request that your office, in consultation with the Secretariat, give special consideration to the conference when allocating new dates for the fourth session, so that we may continue our work to develop the instrument as soon as possible.

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Rena Lee', is positioned above the typed name.

RENA LEE
Ambassador for Oceans and Law of the Sea Issues
Special Envoy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore
President of the BBNJ intergovernmental conference

H.E. Prof. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande
President of the United Nations General Assembly

Enc.

Seventy-fourth session

Agenda item 74 (a)

Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Draft decision

Intergovernmental Conference on an International legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 72/249 of 24 December 2017, in which it decided to convene an intergovernmental conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee on the elements and to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, with a view to developing the instrument as soon as possible, and also decided that, initially with respect to 2018, 2019 and the first half of 2020, the conference shall meet for four sessions of a duration of 10 working days each;

Recalling also its resolution 74/19 of 10 December 2019, in which it decided to convene, from 23 March to 3 April 2020, the fourth session of the intergovernmental conference;

Noting with concern the situation concerning the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19);

Decides to postpone the fourth session of the conference to the earliest possible available date to be decided by the Assembly.