



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

10 September 2020

Excellencies,

I am writing to you in relation to 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 (BBNJ) convened pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/249.

As you would recall, the General Assembly, in its decision 74/543 of 11 March 2020, decided to postpone the fourth session of the Conference to the earliest possible available date. Since that time, I have been closely monitoring the developments on the COVID-19 situation, including its impact on cross-border travel and on in-person meetings at the UN Headquarters in New York. I have been in close contact with the UN Secretariat regarding possible dates for the fourth session. I have also consulted the bureau of the Conference, with the above-mentioned developments in mind. Pursuant to these consultations, it has been determined that the earliest possible available date that the fourth session of the Conference can be held is in 2021.

Given the period of time between now and the fourth session, it is important that we continue to work during the intersessional period, to maintain the momentum of the process. In line with consultations held with various delegations earlier this year, as well as with the facilitators of the informal Working Groups, and the bureau of the Conference, I set out the broad schedule for an intersessional work programme below. Specific details of the programme will be posted on the website of the Conference.

Permanent Representatives of  
Member States to the United Nations  
Members of the specialized agencies  
Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

The intersessional work programme is designed to assist delegations to enhance their understanding of the issues and the views of different delegations. The programme is not intended to be a substitute for the negotiations, which will resume during the fourth session.

Month	Workstream	Facilitator
September 2020	Environmental impact assessments	Mr. René Lefeber
October 2020	Marine genetic resources, including questions on the sharing of benefits	H.E. Ms. Janine Elizabeth Coye-Felson
November 2020	Measures such as area-based management tools, including marine protected areas	Ms. Alice Revell
December 2020	Capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology	H.E. Ms. Ngedikes Olai Uludong
December 2020	Cross-cutting issues	H.E. Mrs. Rena Lee

I intend to hold a briefing on 14 September 2020 for all delegations to introduce the intersessional work programme and its modalities. All interested delegations are invited to attend the briefing. Details will be circulated separately by the Secretariat.

I also intend to hold informal bilateral consultations with interested delegations during October/November, to evaluate and review the modalities of our intersessional work. Details for the bilateral consultations will be circulated in due course.

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



**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