



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

29 July 2020

Dear New York-based Colleagues,

I trust that you and your family are well and in good health.

I am writing to provide an update on our phased return to the premises. Your health and safety are my top priority. Senior leaders and I continue to work closely with our counterparts at the local, state and federal levels of the host country to ensure that our return to the Headquarters complex is fully in line with established protocols.

On 20 July 2020, we transitioned to Phase 1, covering those functions that can only be performed on site. The vast majority of staff continue to work remotely under alternative work arrangements. I thank you for your continued flexibility and cooperation as we manage the occupancy levels in the buildings in order to mitigate the risk exposure to personnel and delegates.

In anticipation of continued progress throughout Phase 1 and of New York City continuing to meet public health milestones for its phased reopening, the United Nations Headquarters in New York will transition to Phase 2 on 24 August 2020. Phase 2 allows for a gradual increase in personnel and delegates on site, from the 10 per cent maximum in Phase 1 to 40 per cent maximum in Phase 2. Personnel performing functions that can be more efficiently or effectively conducted on site will be permitted to return to the office, as long as the 40 per cent occupancy level is not exceeded. I wish to stress that the 40 per cent occupancy is not intended as a goal, but as a ceiling. Managers are currently identifying these functions and will discuss with their teams who may be needed on site, while taking into account their personal circumstances and preferences, as much as possible. Given the need for utmost caution and care, it is clear that the majority of personnel will continue to work remotely under the current alternative work arrangements.

For staff who do enter the complex during Phase 2, physical distancing will be strictly enforced for common spaces. There will be limited face-to-face meetings, as well as strict social distancing, mask use and adherence to all other guidance. Masks must be worn outside designated workspaces, and personnel will be expected to wipe down equipment and clean personal workspaces each day. Decisions regarding catering services will be based on local restaurant guidance.

I have written separately to Member States to set out the same requirements, and to stress the very limited capacities available for meetings at this time.

All United Nations Staff Members
New York

By swiping their valid United Nations identification cards upon entering United Nations Headquarters premises, personnel will confirm that they meet the following requirements:

- No COVID-19 symptoms in the past 14 days;
- No positive COVID-19 test in the past 14 days; and
- No close contact with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case in the past 14 days.

I have instructed the Office of Human Resources (OHR) to provide further guidance as we continue to transition through the various phases of our return to the premises. In the coming days, OHR will issue guidance on the need for personnel who have left the duty station during phases 0 and 1 to return to New York. This will allow sufficient time for staff to make the necessary travel arrangements.

We will continue to review these arrangements and will keep you fully apprised of any further developments.

Updates will continue to be shared on the COVID-19 website on iSeek (<https://iseek.un.org/nyc/workplace-unhq>) and at www.un.org/coronavirus. The COVID-19 helpline (212 963 9999) remains in place, and the Department of Operational Support and the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance stand ready to assist as needed.

I again urge anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, test results or any health-related questions to contact the United Nations Division for Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety and Health using the confidential self-reporting portal (medical.un.org) or via osh@un.org. All such approaches will be handled with confidentiality and respect for privacy.

Thank you for your flexibility and commitment during these challenging times.

Yours sincerely,

with my warmest personal regards


António Guterres