11 March 2020

Excellency,

In light of the evolving situation of the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) around the world and its impact on public health, I have heard a briefing from Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, met constantly with the Secretariat, and convened an informal meeting of the General Committee of the General Assembly (GA) to discuss this issue. I have also exchanged views with the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as well as the President of the Security Council. Together with the President of ECOSOC and the Secretariat, I convened a joint informal meeting on 10 March 2020, to brief and exchange views with Member States on the preparedness of, and risk mitigation at the United Nations.

It was clear from the meetings and consultations that Member States must stand together in solidarity, and the United Nations should continue to take a coordinated approach based on sound risk assessment, with a view to take measures mitigating the risk of spreading the virus while maintaining business continuity. Accordingly, based on advice from the Secretariat, and in conformity with the Risk Assessment Matrix for Meeting provided by the United Nations Secretariat (a note from Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, Catherine Pollard, conveying the Meetings Risk Assessment Matrix, is hereby enclosed), my Office undertook risk assessments on meetings under the auspices of the GA, scheduled from March to April 2020. Also in light of views expressed by Member States during our various meetings, I strongly recommend the following measures:

i. Scale down the number of people at gatherings within the UN premises. Delegations are encouraged to limit participation at meetings to not more than two (2) New York-based delegates;

ii. Hold meetings in large conference rooms, when possible, to allow for adequate space among participants;

iii. Refrain from inviting non-New York area residents to serve as panelists, speakers and participants at meetings;

iv. Refrain from inviting visitors into the United Nations building;

v. Cancel side events; and

vi. Postpone or scale down National Days.

All Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York
Already, the GA has decided to postpone the 4th Session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (cf. my letter dated 9 March 2020). Furthermore, I have also decided to:

i. Postpone, in consultation with the President of ECOSOC, the Youth Plenary in preparation for the commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the UN, scheduled for 31 March 2020 (cf the letter from the President of ECOSOC and me, dated 10 March 2020);

ii. Suspend Morning Dialogues forthwith;

iii. Not to go forward with the High-level Interactive Panel on Anti-microbial Resistance, scheduled for 14 April 2020; and

iv. Not to go forward with the High-level event to commemorate and promote the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, scheduled for 24 April 2020.

I am still considering some large-scale meetings in the period of March-April and will revert to Member States with proposals, by the end of this week.

We are, without doubt, facing a global challenge which requires the support and cooperation of all Member States. I urge all delegations to follow the guidance provided by the Secretariat to protect themselves and others. I will continue to follow the situation as it unfolds and revert to Member States accordingly.

Delegations are advised to monitor relevant websites and be guided by the advice of Local Health Authorities and the World Health Organisation, viz:

World Health Organization Website:
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

Center for Disease Control and Prevention:

New York State Website

New York City Website:
https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/coronavirus.page

Schedule of the General Assembly plenary and related meeting for the 74th Session:

In the meantime, I would like to reiterate my solidarity with Member States who are fighting against COVID-19 and my sincere condolences for their loss.

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

Tijjani-Muhammad-Bande
UNCLASSIFIED

Most Immediate

Note to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the ECOSOC

Meetings Risk Assessment Matrix

1. Thank you for convening today's joint informal meeting of the General Assembly and ECOSOC for the Secretariat to brief Member States regarding measures to strengthen its preparedness and ensure business continuity at United Nations premises and of its operations.

2. As part of the contingency measures to address the COVID-19 outbreak, the Division of Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety and Health in the Department of Operational Support, together with the Sustainable Development Unit in the Executive office of the Secretary-General, has prepared a risk assessment matrix based upon WHO guidelines, for use in taking decisions about the convening of planned meetings. These are attached.

3. In my capacity as alternate Chair of the Senior Emergency Preparedness Team, I have written to Secretariat Heads of Departments to urgently review all meetings - both mandated and non-mandated - for which they are the substantive lead, and reach out to the respective secretariats and bureaus of the bodies they service substantively, to request these bodies to assess the feasibility of holding them as planned, or whether to scale down, postpone or cancel, and to document and communicate their decisions to DGACM and DMSPC.

Catherine Pollard
10 March 2020

cc: Chef de Cabinet
    Mr. Abelian
    Mr. Khare
    Mr. Michaud
UN Meetings in the Context of COVID-19

Guidance for organizers holding meetings during the COVID-19 outbreak.

SECTION A – INSTRUCTIONS

The below document provides an overview of the following:

- Decision process for meeting risk assessment and decision tree flow chart (Section B)
- Information to gather on the meeting (Section C)
- Risk assessment tool (Section D)**
- Decision matrix that incorporates the risk assessment and mitigation measure scores (Section E)

In order to accurately provide answers for the Sections B-C, organizers must be knowledgeable on the current COVID-19 outbreak. The organizers should reference the daily global COVID-19 situation reports provided by WHO as well as the national COVID-19 situation reports, if available.

Section B supports the undertaking of a risk and criticality screening for meetings, which the Decision Tree puts into a visual flow chart.

The risk assessment tool (Section D) should only be used if it is determined in that special risk management is needed under Section B and must be completed in the accompanying excel spread sheet as the scores are automatically calculated here. After the risk assessment and mitigation measures checklist (Section D) have been completed, the scores you receive in the excel spreadsheet for both sections will need to be inputted into the decision matrix (Section E) for the overall risk.

It is important to remember that while mitigation measures can reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections, they cannot completely eliminate the threat.

Decisions about any given event should take into account the epidemiological COVID-19 situation at the time the decision is made. The epidemiological situation is rapidly evolving, many uncertainties remain with respect to the dynamic of the transmission of COVID-19.

As per any mass gathering event, risk assessment-related considerations outlined in the following document should be taken into account: Public health for mass gatherings: key considerations.
SECTION B – DEcision process for meeting risk assessment and decision tree flowchart

Guidance for organizers holding meetings or events during the COVID-19 outbreak.

For further advice contact the Occupational Safety and Health team of DHMOSH/DOS via osh@un.org.

Risk Screening
The first step in application of the decision tree is to allocate a risk score. 1 point is allocated for each of the following questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is there documented local transmission (community spread) in the host country?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Will the event include in-person participants from outside of the host country?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Will the event include in-person participants from countries that have documented active local transmission (community spread)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Will the event include a large number of in-person participants at higher risk of severe disease (eg, people &gt; 65 years of age, people with underlying health conditions)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Will the event be indoors with a high density of people in close contact with one another?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The meeting is considered high risk if the risk screening score amounts to 5. In this instance, the meeting risk cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level unless one of the key risk criteria are modified. Of the five criteria, there is potential to modify criteria 2 through 5 by either adjusting the participation, venue or mode (e.g., virtual meeting). For example, criteria 2 could be modified by excluding external participants, while criteria 5 could be modified by reducing the number of participants, thereby reducing the density.
To facilitate the process, the following questions could be considered:

1. Could the meeting be limited to New York-based participants?
2. Could the meeting be held virtually?
3. Could the meeting be scaled-down, postponed or cancelled. Postponement should consider availability of conferences services and financial implications.

Once the risk score is 4 or below, a criticality score becomes relevant. The criticality scale is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criticality (of holding the event)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Very critical - instances where the impact is imminent and could disrupt operations and critical areas of work, or is critical to ensure the safety of staff and premises.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Moderately critical – instances where it will take 1–2 years to recover from the impact of not holding the event, including meetings outcomes that would impact on other intergovernmental processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Not critical – instances where there might be some short term impacts if the event is not held, but those might be recoverable within a year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the meeting scores a criticality level of 3, it could only proceed if the risk score is 2 or less.
If the meeting scores a criticality level of 2, it could proceed if the risk score is 3 or less
If the meeting scores a criticality level of 1, it could proceed if the risk score is 4 AND the mitigation score is 76 or higher.

However, in instances of recording a criticality score of 3, it would be advisable to determine if it is absolutely necessary to proceed, together with the designated UN COVID-19 outbreak coordinator, with the event before performing the risk assessment. In some instances, it might be best to decide at this stage that the event could be canceled or postponed without performing a risk assessment and determining the mitigation score.
The WHO risk assessment and mitigation measure (Section C-E) is to be used where special risk management is needed (risk score 4, criticality score 1 - orange box above). It is used to determine the mitigation score (%). Only mitigation scores of 50 or higher would allow a meeting to go ahead.
DECISION TREE

WHO Risk Scoring Process:
One point for each of the following "yes" answers:
- Is there documented local transmission (community spread) in the host country?
- Will the event include participants from outside of the host country?
- Will the event include participants from countries that have documented active local transmission (community spread)?
- Will the event include a large number of participants at higher risk of severe disease (e.g., people > 65 years of age, people with underlying health conditions)?
- Will the event be indoors with a high density of people in close contact with one another?

UN Secretariat Criticality Scoring System
Criticality Level 1: Very critical - instances where the impact is imminent and could disrupt operations and critical areas of work, or is critical to ensure safety of staff and premises
Criticality Level 2: Moderately critical - some impacts which will take 1 - 2 years to recover, including meetings outcomes that would impact on other intergovernmental processes
Criticality Level 3: Not at all critical - some impacts in the short term, but recoverable within a year
### SECTION C – COLLECTION OF MEETING INFORMATION

To be completed by meeting organizer.

| **Name of event** |  |
| **Sponsoring Office/Division/Department** |  |
| **Contact person** |  |
| **Dates (Start – Finish)** |  |
| **Hosting City and Country** |  |
| **Expected number of participants?** |  |
| **International participation?** |  |
| Number of international participants traveling on G or A visas (exempt from full range of host nation screening requirements)? |  |
| The number of participants coming from countries or areas affected by the COVID-19 outbreak* within 14 days prior to the event? |  |
| Estimated percentage of participants over 70? |  |
| Estimated percentage of participants who are healthcare workers, potentially see COVID-19 patients or have had COVID-19 exposure? |  |
| Will there be Head of State / Head of Government / Ministerial or deputy ministerial involvement (number)? |  |
| Have you coordinated with SSS (contact name, last contact)? |  |
| Have you coordinated with FMS (contact name, last contact)? |  |
| Which room(s) will you use and how full do you expect them to be? |  |
| Will there be side events? |  |
| Have you reviewed the ‘Meeting guidelines for Organizers’? |  |
| Have you distributed the ‘Meeting guidelines for Participants’? |  |
| Will the event be attended by registered and non-registered participants. If so, estimated percentage of each? |  |
| What measures have you put in place to minimize close contact between participants? |  |
| What measures have you put in place specifically regarding remote attendance by both participants and speakers? |  |
| Briefly, what are seen as the major impact(s) of postponement of the meeting (financial, operational, reputational etc)? |  |
| Any other information relevant to the meeting that may affect the risk assessment. |  |

*See WHO daily COVID-19 Situation Report for list of countries. Link: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/*
SECTION D – RISK ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The risk assessment tool will enable organizers to review the key considerations for hosting an event, and so inform their risk assessment of COVID-19 on the event. This will help organizers to understand and manage any additional risk from COVID-19.

This should be reviewed regularly during planning and updated immediately prior to the handover to the operational phase especially in light of the rapidly evolving outbreak with reference to the updated guidance and situation reports on the WHO website.

The COVID-19 risk assessment for the event must be coordinated and integrated with the host country’s national COVID-19 risk assessment and should include input from the local public health authority, along with consulting WHO’s updated technical guidance and ensuring that there is an up-to-date evaluation of the epidemiological situation.

Mitigation measures assess the current effort and planning to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19. As mitigation measures can reduce the overall risk of the mass gathering contributing to the spread of COVID-19 they should be taken into account after the risk assessment has occurred to gain a clearer understanding of the situation. Together with the risk assessment score, the mitigation measure will contribute to the decision matrix and influence the mass gathering/event recommendations.

Mitigation measures cover a variety of topics including:

- Level of understanding of the current COVID-19 situation by meeting organizers
- Overview of the planned international event
- International Health Regulations (2005)
- Coordination with partners and stakeholders
- C4: command, control, coordination, and communication arrangements
- Risk and crisis communication
- Public information and health promotion
- Disease surveillance and outbreak response
- Infection prevention and control measures
- Event medical services
- Resource requirements

**Use the accompanying excel spreadsheet to conduct the risk assessment and the mitigation measures checklist**
SECTION E – FINAL DETERMINATION

The decision matrix takes the overall risk score and the overall mitigation score to provide a color-determination.

**Risk Vs Mitigation Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Risk Score</th>
<th>Very Prepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (0-25)</th>
<th>Somewhat Prepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (26-50)</th>
<th>Somewhat Unprepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (51-75)</th>
<th>Very Unprepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (76-100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 (negligible risk)</td>
<td>Evaluate criticality of meeting (all risks OK)</td>
<td>Evaluate criticality of meeting (all risks OK)</td>
<td>Evaluate criticality of meeting (1.62 OK)</td>
<td>Evaluate criticality of meeting (1.62 OK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Very Low Risk)</td>
<td>Evaluate criticality of meeting (all risks OK)</td>
<td>Evaluate criticality of meeting (1.62 OK)</td>
<td>Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 only OK)</td>
<td>Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 only OK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Low risk)</td>
<td>Evaluate criticality of meeting (1.62 OK)</td>
<td>Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 only OK)</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (moderate risk)</td>
<td>Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 only OK)</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (high risk)</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Very High risk)</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
<td>Do not proceed with meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As of (Date), based on

- the current stage of the outbreak and known transmission dynamics,
- the geographic distribution, number of participants, and their individual risk profile,
- risk assessment tool
- the mitigation measures currently in place or feasibly proposed

**Recommendation:** (overall score of risk assessment and mitigation measures)
The tool below will enable organizers to review the key considerations for hosting an event, and so inform their risk assessment of COVID-19 on the event. This will help organizers to understand and manage any additional risk from COVID-19. This should be reviewed regularly during planning and updated immediately prior to the handover to the operational phase especially in light of the rapidly evolving outbreak with reference to the updated guidance and situation reports on the WHO website:

The COVID-19 risk assessment for the event must be coordinated and integrated with the host country's national COVID-19 risk assessment and should include input from the local public health authority, along with consulting WHO's updated technical guidance and ensuring that there is an up-to-date evaluation of the epidemiological situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Assessment</th>
<th>Additional Risk of COVID-19 to the mass gathering</th>
<th>Yes (1)/No (0)</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there documented local transmission (community spread) in the host country?</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Will the event include in-person participants from outside of the host country?</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Will the event include in-person participants from countries that have documented active local transmission (community spread)?</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the event include a large number of in-person participants at higher risk of severe disease (e.g., people &gt; 65 years of age, people with underlying health conditions)?</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the event be indoors and/or will people be in close contact with one another?</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total COVID-19 Risk Score</td>
<td>Total Mitigation Score from COVID-19 Mitigation Tab</td>
<td>Risk Vs. Mitigation Matrix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (high risk)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total COVID-19 Risk Score
- **Very Prepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (76-100)**
- **Somewhat Prepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (51-75)**
- **Unprepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (26-50)**
- **Very Unprepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (0-25)**

### Total Mitigation Score from COVID-19 Mitigation Tab
- **Very Prepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (76-100)**
- **Somewhat Prepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (51-75)**
- **Unprepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (26-50)**
- **Very Unprepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (0-25)**

### Risk Vs. Mitigation Matrix
- **0 (negligible risk)**: Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 & 2 OK)
- **1 (Very Low Risk)**: Evaluate criticality of meeting (All levels OK)
- **2 (Low risk)**: Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 only OK)
- **3 (moderate risk)**: Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 & 2 OK)
- **4 (high risk)**: Do not proceed with meeting
| 5 (Very High risk) | Do not proceed with meeting | Do not proceed with meeting | Do not proceed with meeting | Do not proceed with meeting |   |   |   |