



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

13 March 2020

Excellency,

We are facing a rapidly evolving crisis, and now, more than ever, we must come together to tackle this challenge.

I convened a meeting of the co-facilitators and co-chairs of General Assembly mandated processes for the 74th session yesterday. It was clear from our deliberations that it has become imperative to make further decisions on risk mitigation and prevent the spread of COVID-19. In my last letter, dated 11th March 2020, I addressed the need to scale down, postpone and cancel meetings. We need to assess the criticality of in-person meetings and explore alternative ways to conduct our business. I have advised co-facilitators and co-chairs accordingly.

My Office is now exploring with the United Nations (UN) Secretariat, the Information and Communications Technology tools that would enable us hold virtual meetings. More information on this will be communicated to Member States by the UN Secretariat.

In the meantime, all in-person meetings of General Assembly mandated processes for the 74th session scheduled for next week have been cancelled.

I have decided to:

- i. Advise the Fifth Committee to cancel today's meeting, and explore convening virtual meetings;
- ii. Recommend to all regional groups to postpone the upcoming substantive session of the UN Disarmament Commission to a period in 2021 to be decided by the Assembly, at its 75th session;
- iii. Recommend that plenary meetings scheduled on International Days be postponed;
- iv. Postpone the plenary meeting on the prevention of armed conflict [item 31 (a)] to consider the Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011; and

- v. Reconsider the format and timing of the joint thematic event, convened with the President of the Economic and Social Council, on the theme “Accelerated implementation of the 2020 Agenda in the Least Development Countries to leave no one behind”;

I have also circulated a letter from the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing seeking feedback on a proposal to adopt a scaled down programme and format for its forthcoming eleventh session.

Discussions are also ongoing regarding mandated events by the General Assembly scheduled to take place at the end of April (such as the Fourth Conference on Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and Mongolia on 24 April 2020 and the International Law Commission next session to be held at the United Nations Office in Geneva from 27 April to 5 June 2020). We will likely need to meet for a very short session of the General Assembly at the end of next week to adopt a few key decisions.

We are also working on business continuity plans in the event we cannot convene a formal meeting of the General Assembly at the UN Headquarters. I will be in contact with Member States early next week with proposals to allow certain essential decisions to be taken in these circumstances and facilitate further postponement of meetings.

I would also like to avail of this opportunity to express solidarity with Member States who are fighting COVID-19 and extend my sincere condolences for their loss.

Please accept Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
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