



**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

19 November 2020

Dear New York-based Colleagues,

As COVID-19 cases rise across the globe, I want to thank each of you for continuing to deliver on the vital work of the United Nations.

Not only have you adapted to telecommuting and the challenges it has placed on you and your families, many of you are also providing in-person support to intergovernmental processes and on-site activities, in some cases, since the height of the crisis in March.

Without doubt, this has been an extraordinarily difficult period filled with disruption, emotion and, for those who have lost loved ones, deep sorrow. Coping with so many competing feelings, fears and professional and personal demands has been a profoundly taxing experience. We can draw inspiration and hope from the dedication of people across the world in responding to the crisis, including United Nations staff. At the same time, recent waves and spikes in infections in some regions could indicate a longer period of upheaval, which creates a further sense of uncertainty. I want to assure you of my solidarity with all of you at this time, and my admiration for your continued hard work.

Since it is now nearly three months since we moved to Phase 2 on 24 August 2020, I wanted to update you on what we have done and how we will move forward.

Our approach has focused first and foremost on protecting your health and safety, and the phased plan developed by the Crisis Operations Group (COG) has worked well.

The measures we have put in place and our collective resolve to abide by them have kept the number of positive cases among staff and delegates at the United Nations premises in New York at a very low level. We continue to stay in close contact with New York City and New York State authorities to ensure our compliance with local protocols and safety measures.

However, we need to remain vigilant as we are seeing a rise in COVID-19 cases throughout the tri-state area and beyond. I count on you to continue following the requirements of the Division of Health-care Management and Occupational Safety and Health (DHMOSH): wear masks, respect physical distancing, wash your hands and stay home if you feel unwell.

All United Nations Staff Members in New York

Given the expectation that the pandemic may be with us for longer than originally foreseen, I anticipate that Phase 2 will remain in place for the foreseeable future. Phase 2 allows for a maximum 40 per cent occupancy level at the United Nations Headquarters premises and annex buildings for required on-site personnel and for those who have expressed a preference to carry out their jobs from the workplace. We will continue to monitor the situation and change the arrangements as needed.

I have also asked the Office of Human Resources to review the provisions of the existing policy on flexible working arrangements and to work on any necessary changes.

We will keep you fully apprised of further developments. Updates will be shared on the United Nations Intranet-iSeek on the COVID-19 page (<https://iseek.un.org/nyc/workplace-unhq>); and the COVID-19 helpline (212 963 9999) remains in place.

I again encourage anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test result to contact DHMOSH using the confidential self-reporting portal ([medical.un.org](https://medical.un.org)) or via [osh@un.org](mailto:osh@un.org). Be assured that all such approaches will be handled with confidentiality and privacy.

Let us continue to take care of ourselves, our families and our communities as we work together to serve others.

Thank you again for your commitment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'António Guterres', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a long, thin horizontal line that extends to the right.

António Guterres