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REFERENCE: 20200623UnNvStatesParties

The Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations presents its compliments to Permanent Missions to the United Nations of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and has the honour to refer to the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, originally scheduled to be held in New York from 15 to 19 June 2020, pursuant to paragraph 56 of General Assembly resolution 74/19 of 10 December 2019, as well as to the notification from the Secretary-General of the United Nations regarding the convening of the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties dated 14 April 2020, which was circulated pursuant to rule 5 (Notification) of the rules of procedure for Meetings of States Parties (SPLOS/2/Rev.4).

The Office of Legal Affairs is pleased to transmit attached herewith a letter dated 23 June 2020, from the President of the twenty-ninth Meeting of States Parties addressed to States Parties to the Convention, regarding preparations for the opening of the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties in light of the evolving situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to Permanent Missions to the United Nations of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea the assurances of its highest consideration.

  
 23 June 2020



## Permanent Mission of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the United Nations

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23 June 2020

Excellencies,

In my capacity as President of the twenty-ninth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and further to my letter of 11 May 2020, I wish to update you on the preparations for the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties.

States Parties may recall that the thirtieth Meeting has been postponed to a period of at least three days between 31 August to 4 September 2020, provided that a suitable conference room and conference services are available during that week. However, developments that have occurred following the postponement of the thirtieth Meeting have made it apparent that: (i) the election of Members of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea will be time-consuming as a result of the COVID-related precautions that will need to be implemented during in-person meetings; and (ii) pending final information on the exact duration and dates of the thirtieth Meeting, it is likely that fewer than five days of conference room and related conference services will be allocated.

Following consultations within the Bureau and the regional groups, I am therefore proposing to advance the process and open the thirtieth Meeting by a letter from me addressed to all States Parties. This letter would be circulated as soon as practicable following the completion of the silence procedure, as outlined below. An early opening of the thirtieth Meeting would allow States Parties to take certain decisions of a procedural nature that are usually addressed without a debate at the beginning of the Meetings of States Parties, namely the election of the President, adoption of the Agenda, the election of the Vice-Presidents and the appointment of the Credentials Committee. This would also enable the President of the thirtieth Meeting to conduct consultations on the organization of work with a view to giving priority to the most urgent and time sensitive items on the agenda of the Meeting ahead of the anticipated in-person meetings during the period between 31 August and 4 September.

In the light of the foregoing, I propose that:

1. Until the start of the in-person meetings, States Parties to the Convention will take decisions of a procedural nature through a silence procedure, similar to that contained in General Assembly decision 74/544. These decisions would concern, in particular, the election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the thirtieth Meeting, the appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee and the adoption of the agenda and of the organization of work. The silence procedure would not apply to the election of Members of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Moreover, the silence procedure would not amount to an amendment to the relevant rules of procedure for Meetings of States Parties (SPLOS/2/Rev.4), but would be a pragmatic mechanism, modeled after that contained in General Assembly decision 74/544. The thirtieth Meeting would take note of all decisions adopted by silence procedure at its first in-person meeting.

Representatives of States Parties to the 1982  
United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

2. On **29 June 2020**, the Secretariat will circulate a communication to: (i) inform States Parties that the thirtieth Meeting will be opened on **6 July 2020**; and (ii) provide all relevant details concerning the logistical and procedural aspects of the Meeting, including the transmission of credentials; and
3. On **6 July 2020**, I will circulate a letter to: (i) declare open the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties, (ii) table a draft decision that would enable the thirtieth Meeting to adopt decisions by silence procedure and (iii) propose that the draft decision be deemed adopted **if no objections are received by 5 p.m. on 9 July 2020**.
4. If the draft decision is adopted, on **10 July 2020** I will circulate another letter by which I would (i) inform States Parties of the nomination of a candidate for the position of President of the thirtieth Meeting and (ii) propose that the nominated candidate be deemed elected as President if no objection is received by **5 p.m. on 16 July 2020**.

It will be up to the newly-elected President of the thirtieth Meeting to then circulate communications addressing the election of the Vice-Presidents, the appointment of the Credentials Committee, the adoption of the agenda and, following consultations with the Bureau and State Parties, the organization of work.

If I hear no objection to the above proposal by **5 p.m. EDT on 26 June 2020**, I will inform the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly accordingly, and I will proceed as outlined above.

Let me seize this opportunity to emphasize that, in order to proceed as suggested above, it is important that the nomination process concerning the President, Vice-Presidents and members of the Credentials Committee of the thirtieth Meeting be completed as expeditiously as possible. I have been informed by the Secretariat that only a few nominations have been received to date:

- Presidency: nomination of one candidate by the Group of Asia-Pacific States;
- Vice-Presidency: nomination of one candidate by the Group of Eastern European States; and
- Credentials Committee: nomination of one candidate by the Group of Eastern European States.

I would urge States Parties to complete their consultations and submit the required nominations to the Secretariat, through the respective regional groups, **no later than 26 June 2020**.

I will keep you informed of any other relevant developments, in particular the exact dates and duration of the in-person meetings of the thirtieth Meeting. In the meantime, you can find my previous communications, as well as the documents of the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties at [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/meeting\\_states\\_parties/thirtiethmeetingstatesparties.htm](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/meeting_states_parties/thirtiethmeetingstatesparties.htm).

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



Michael Imran Kanu (SJD)  
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative  
of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the United Nations