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Circular Letter No.4220/Add.1
18 March 2020

To: All IMO Members
United Nations and specialized agencies
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status
Liberation movements

Subject: **Update on the status of the International Maritime Organization
Headquarters building and telecommuting arrangements due to the
COVID-19 outbreak**

1 Further to Circular Letter No.4220 of 12 March 2020 providing information on the status of the IMO Headquarters building at 4 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7SR; the purpose of this circular letter is to provide an update to delegations and other attendees on the non-meeting activities and the work of the IMO Secretariat.

2 The IMO Secretariat has been closely monitoring developments of the impact of COVID-19 at local and global levels and has followed advice provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Government of the United Kingdom (as the host government) and actions taken by other UN agencies.

3 The Secretary-General acknowledges the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the shipping industry and the world as a whole and the negative impact on the good progress that IMO was making on key policy issues, such as environmental protection, in particular the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships, implementation of the single window system, the regulatory scoping exercise for autonomous vessels and seafarers welfare issues, including abandonment. It is critical that work in this regard continues. The Secretariat has made arrangements to ensure supporting Member States to the greatest extent possible.

4 However, in order to protect staff and visitors and to contribute to wider efforts to mitigate the impact of the disease and in view of the new measures announced by the host Government, on Monday, 16 March 2020, the Secretary-General has taken the decision to allow IMO staff members to work remotely making full use of telecommuting and teleconferencing technology starting from Wednesday, 18 March 2020.

5 As the virus continues to spread, the IMO Secretariat remains fully committed to delivering on the Organization's objectives and mandates. Staff members take all necessary actions to support Member States and are available to assist with any queries, as usual. Member States are thereby requested to use electronic communication as much as possible during this period and visits to the building are discouraged, as the regular staff complement will not be in place. In addition, the IMO HQ cafeteria will be closed with effect from Wednesday, 18 March 2020.

6 The Secretary-General requests your forbearance in these unique circumstances and looks forward to continued cooperation and collaboration. Return to the normal operation of the IMO Headquarters building will resume as soon as safe and feasible.
