



UN Monitor: COVID-19 Round-Up - 15/06/2020

The UN has released a [three phase plan](#) for re-opening the United Nations, releasing information on what the “new normal” will look like for Member States, UN Staff and other stakeholders. The plan indicates:

“During Phase 1, only select activities will be allowed. Maximum occupancy at the Headquarters complex will be capped at 400 people a day, as opposed to the 4,200 limit in normal times. For annex buildings, including DC1 and DC2, maximum occupancy will also be kept to 10 per cent of the usual level. Emphasis will be strictly on those tasks that must be performed on site, with many critical tasks continuing to be done remotely.

During Phases 1 and 2, routine administrative or organizational face-to-face meetings are not permitted. To move into Phase 1, the ‘New York on PAUSE’ executive order must be relaxed. Improvements also must be seen in the local epidemic situation and health care capability, in accordance with city and state recommendations.

In Phase 2, building occupancy will gradually increase to a maximum 1,100 personnel a day at the Headquarters complex, or about 40 per cent of normal levels. For other buildings, 40-50 per cent occupancy will apply. Alternate working arrangements will largely remain in place and many personnel will continue to work remotely. Shifting from Phase 1 to 2 will require a further reduction in the epidemic and strengthening of the health care system in the host city.

Phase 3, which will be a ‘new normal’, would take place when workplace risks are reduced to pre-epidemic levels, and COVID-19 related restrictions are lifted by New York City and State, including those that will allow for the reopening of day-care services and public schools. The Department of Operational Support says it is still too early to outline the work modalities that will be in place under this phase.”

The UN has [also announced](#) it will postpone some July meetings, and move others to a virtual format. Acting UN Medical Director Bernhard Lennartz noted that “in-person meetings should continue to be avoided when possible. Events should be virtual whenever possible.” Among the meetings moved to a virtual format will be the 2020 High-level Political Forum (HLPF) scheduled for 7-16 July and the ECOSOC High-level Segment scheduled for 17 July.

The high-level meeting on the [25th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women is tentatively scheduled for 1 October and the](#) multi-stakeholder hearing leading up to it is currently scheduled for 21 July in a virtual format.

Upcoming work of the General Assembly

The General Assembly held a virtual Town Hall on the [zero draft of the Omnibus Resolution on COVID-19](#) on 12 June. Virtual informal consultations will follow in the coming weeks and delegations will be invited to submit written statements as well. Read more about the content and process of preparing the zero draft in UN Monitor #16, “All Protocols Observed” [here](#).

The General Assembly, ECOSOC and Security Council will all hold [elections](#) for new members by secret ballot at UN Headquarters on 17 June. Each delegation will nominate one representative who will cast the secret ballot in-person at the UN General Assembly Hall in New York. The President of the General Assembly has released [more information on the modalities](#) of voting in the time of COVID-19.

The President of the General Assembly has submitted a [paper outlining elements](#) for Member State consideration on arrangements for the high-level week of the 75th Session of the General Assembly. These include proposals for recorded video statements from Heads of State and Government, with in-person participation restricted to one NYC-based representative per delegation. At a virtual meeting with Member States the President of the General Assembly [outlined the following](#):

“I propose that the President of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General of the United Nations would be present in the General Assembly Hall on the 22 September to facilitate the PGA delivering an opening statement and the Secretary-General’s presentation of the report on the work of the Organization.

Heads of State and Government or Ministers would be invited to address the General Debate via pre-recorded video statements. The list of speakers would be managed as per usual practice for the General Debate. In accordance with social and physical distancing guidelines, physical presence of delegations in the General Assembly Hall would be limited to at one delegate from each New York-based delegation to attend the General Debate. This may be extended to two delegates, if possible.

In addition, all persons present would be requested to wear a face covering at all times. Similar arrangements would be put in place for the high-level meetings; including the high-level meeting to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, scheduled to take place on 21 September 2020.”

More details and decisions are anticipated this month to be announced on the PGA website [here](#).

To mark the commemoration of the signing of the UN Charter, the President of the General Assembly will hold a [virtual ceremony](#) on 26 June. As part of the broader 75th Anniversary activities, the meeting will be an opportunity to “take stock of both the successes and lessons learned in implementing the United Nations Charter over the last 75 years, as well as to look ahead and examine how best to collectively overcome current and upcoming challenges”.

A [revised zero draft](#) of the Political Declaration on the UN 75th Anniversary has been released. Member States are currently negotiating the zero draft in virtual informal consultations, with plans to release a declaration under silence procedure by the end of June.

The proposed [zero-draft of the Ministerial Declaration](#) to be adopted at the 2020 HLPF is currently being circulated by the two co-facilitators, the Permanent Representatives of Bulgaria and of Lebanon. The zero-draft will be basis for discussion June 16 and June 23 at virtual informal negotiations.

Updates on existing work and meetings

The 75th session of the UN General Assembly is due to open on 15 September and the first quarter of its work is traditionally conducted through six main committees. Elections of the respective committee chairs have been conducted with the [following Permanent Representatives \(PRs\) selected](#):

First Committee, Disarmament & International Security: PR of Spain, Agustín Santos Maraver
Second Committee, Economic & Financial: PR of Nepal, Amrit Bahadur Rai
Third Committee, Social, Humanitarian & Cultural: PR of Hungary, Katalin Annamária Bogyay
Fourth Committee, Special Political & Decolonization: PR of Botswana, Collen Vixen Kelapile
Fifth Committee, Administrative & Budgetary: PR of Uruguay, Carlos Amorín
Sixth Committee, Legal: PR of Chile, Milenko Esteban Skoknic Tapia

Due to COVID-19, the ECOSOC Youth Plenary and Youth Forum have both been [deferred to the 2021 session](#), with no activities taking place in 2020.

The recent ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment was held 19-22 and 27 May in a virtual format to discuss ongoing reform to the UN Development System, with an emphasis on the ability of the UN to respond to COVID-19 at both the country and regional levels. For more information on the session, read “UN Monitor #15: COVID-19 tests the UN’s response to development challenges” [here](#).

Digital cooperation

On 11 June, the General Assembly held a virtual High-level Thematic Debate on the Impact of Rapid Technological Change on the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets. The [virtual meeting](#) served to highlight the efforts made by Member States, the UN system, other multilateral institutions, the private sector and other stakeholders to implement/accelerate progress on Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, while considering the impact of rapid technological changes, such as artificial intelligence.

This meeting was followed by the Launch of the [Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation](#) – “The State of the Digital World Today and Implementing the Roadmap”, held on 11, 12 and 15 June. These virtual meetings explore implementation of the framework, “in which all stakeholders play a role in advancing a safer, more equitable digital world, one which will lead to a brighter and more prosperous future for all”.

The Roadmap identifies eight action areas:

“Achieving universal connectivity by 2030; Promoting digital public goods to create a more equitable world digital inclusion; Ensuring digital inclusion for all, including the most vulnerable digital capacity-building; Strengthening digital capacity-building digital human rights; Ensuring the protection of human rights in the digital era artificial intelligence; Supporting global cooperation on artificial intelligence digital trust and security; Promoting trust and security in the digital environment digital cooperation; Building a more effective architecture for digital cooperation.”

Ongoing reform and revitalization work at the United Nations

The work of the UN on the [Revitalization of the General Assembly](#) has continued virtually. The co-chairs of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on Revitalization, Permanent Representatives of Slovakia and Ghana announced that it held a thematic debate on 9 June on the topic, role and funding of the Office of the PGA and will hold a thematic debate on 16 June to discuss the Secretary-General selection process.

The ECOSOC/HLPF Review process is currently being led by co-facilitators, the Permanent Representatives of Georgia and of Benin. They have circulated a [revised draft resolution](#), to be discussed at an informal virtual meeting on 18 June.

The [review process](#) of the UN Human Rights Treaty Body system will be led by co-facilitators Permanent Representatives of Morocco and Switzerland. Following a 4 June expert consultation, the co-facilitators have shared a [timeline and modalities](#) for the review process. It will include:

“informal consultation meetings with Member States, in New York, in the beginning of July, and in Geneva during the second half of July”; “dialogues with all relevant stakeholders to seek their contributions, including with OHCHR, treaty bodies, civil society members, National Human Rights Institutions and others”; and “During the month of August, we will draft the report that we will submit to the President of the General Assembly by the end of the current 74th General Assembly.”

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