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Circular Letter No.4220  
12 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 its closure due to the COVID-19 outbreak**

1 The Secretary-General 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. Further to information provided in Circular Letters No.4213 and No.4213/Add.1 on the postponement of several meetings at IMO due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the purpose of this circular letter is to inform delegations and other attendees the status of the IMO Headquarters building at 4 Albert Embankment, SE1 7SR, London for non-meeting activities.

2 The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Antonio Guterres, in a letter to all United Nations staff members, expressed his concerns about the significant challenge that the disease poses and confirmed that the health and safety of all staff, and of the people the UN system organizations serve, are his priorities. The IMO Secretary-General shares those concerns and is acting accordingly.

3 The IMO Headquarters building is temporarily closed from 12 to 16 March 2020, inclusive. This closure is necessitated by guidance from the host government National Health Service that a deep cleaning of specific areas of the IMO Headquarters building is appropriate, after information was received that one of the short-term conference interpreters who had been working in the IMO HQ building on 4 March 2020, but showing no symptoms, was later diagnosed with COVID-19. All spaces in which the affected person was present have been identified, and all persons she had contact with have been identified and informed.

4 In response to this information, the Secretary-General and the Senior Management Committee decided on following additional actions:

.1 to cancel all external events and group visits and events until 15 April 2020;

- .2 social visits to the IMO headquarters building, such as a social luncheon, are actively discouraged for the time being. The short-term goal is to minimize visitors to the IMO HQ building. Delegates wishing to meet with Secretariat staff should consider whether the meeting goals can be accomplished by other means of communication (telephone, email, teleconference, etc.); and
- .3 to continue operations of the Organization through the Secretariat with maximum use of flexible working arrangements, including work from home, where appropriate.

5 The Secretary-General will be consulting with Member States, and in particular Members of the Council, on these actions and any other necessary steps required in the interest of public health and safety. The Secretary-General will continue to monitor all developments related to COVID-19 and will advise as soon as possible, on future developments. Return to the normal operation of the IMO Headquarters building will resume as soon as safe and feasible.

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