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Circular Letter No.4220/Add.12
24 January 2022

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 pandemic**

1 Further to Circular Letters No.4220/Add.1 of 18 March 2020, No.4220/Add.2 of 10 September 2020, No.4220/Add.3 of 2 November 2020, No.4220/Add.4 of 2 December 2020, No.4220/Add.5 of 6 January 2021, No.4220/Add.6 of 9 April 2021, No.4220/Add.7 of 17 May 2021, No.4220/Add.8 of 19 July 2021, No.4220/Add.9 of 1 September 2021, No.4220/Add.10 of 1 December 2021 and No.4220/Add.11 of 12 January 2022 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 update Member States, international organizations and other interested persons regarding access to the Headquarters building.

2 The IMO Secretariat has been closely monitoring developments of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic 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. In particular, the Secretariat has been monitoring actions taken in response to the recent spread of the Omicron variant.

3 The host government will end the current COVID-19 restrictions on 27 January 2022 and will no longer be asking people to work from home.

4 To continue to protect staff and visitors and to contribute to wider efforts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, the Secretary-General would like to advise on the following measures regarding access to the Headquarters building, effective from 31 January 2022.

5 The IMO Headquarters building will be open with some access limitations, superseding the guidelines in Circular Letter No.4220/Add.11, as follows:

- .1 for Secretariat staff, working from the Headquarters building will return as the working modality, in conjunction with the teleworking policy of the Organization, offering an opportunity for staff to work from home for up to three days a week, in line with the general UN teleworking policy. Staff will be available to meet with delegates and other visitors in the Headquarters building and advance appointments will be encouraged;

- .2 some social distancing measures will remain in place throughout the building and the use of meeting rooms will be limited to the established room capacity;
- .3 delegates and visitors are strongly encouraged to limit their movement to the pre-agreed meeting room, the Maritime Knowledge Centre (MKC) on the third floor and the cafeteria on the fourth floor only. Those wishing to conduct research are encouraged to contact the MKC at mkc@imo.org in advance and for assistance;
- .4 the cafeteria will be open from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. and will operate from the coffee bar until 28 January 2022. It is currently planned that a full kitchen service with normal opening hours will resume on 31 January 2022; and
- .5 any person with COVID-19 symptoms or awaiting a result of a PCR test must refrain from coming to the building.

6 As advised in document C 126/3 at the 126th session of the Council and in Circular Letter No.4220/Add.11, it remains no longer possible for delegates to follow the remote programme of meetings from the IMO building. Work has begun on the refurbishment of the audio-visual (AV) facilities in the Main Hall and Committee rooms and the enhancement of IMO remote participation capabilities. The contractor will carry out the work in several phases including the preparation for the new control room, on-site installation, commissioning and testing. The contractor will be removing existing AV systems, cameras and video systems. Therefore, no AV equipment will be operational in the Main Hall or in the Committee rooms. The new equipment will be installed and tested through the end of March 2022. Until this part of the work is completed, no access to the Main Hall or Committee rooms will be permitted as scaffolding towers will be in place and potentially noisy work will be ongoing. All remote meetings scheduled up to early April will be held without the opportunity for delegates to participate from these meeting rooms.

7 All individuals accessing the Headquarters building will be subject to the following requirements:

- .1 all IMO entry passes for delegates have been reactivated;
- .2 all persons are urged to observe social distancing guidance (staying 1 m plus apart) in all parts of the building; and
- .3 all persons are encouraged to wear face masks while moving around the building. All persons should bring their own masks. A limited number of masks may be available at the Security Desk for those who forget to bring them. Persons should wash their hands frequently. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been installed throughout the building for easy access.

8 Staff members remain available to assist with any queries, as usual. Delegations are encouraged to continue to use electronic means of communication with the Secretariat as much as possible. The programme of remote IMO meetings is not affected by these new measures and will continue as scheduled in document PROG/130 of 16 December 2021.

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

10 This guidance will remain under review and will be updated, as appropriate.