

IHO File No. S1/1900/A

**CIRCULAR LETTER 12/2020**  
**02 March 2020**

**INFORMATION ON THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)  
ON IHO ACTIVITIES**

References:

- A: ACL No 1/2019 dated 29 April 2019 *Announcement and General Arrangements*
- B: Information about COVID-19 in the Principality of Monaco <https://en.gouv.mc/Portail-du-Gouvernement/A-la-Une-du-Portail/Information-about-COVID-19-in-the-Principality-of-Monaco>

Dear Hydrographer,

1. Given the rapidly evolving nature of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic, the Secretariat has adopted a stance of increased vigilance aiming to maintain the duties of the Secretariat under these exceptional circumstances.
2. Measures to be taken will affect the regular operations of the Secretariat, the participation of Secretariat's staff members in events outside Monaco and the conduct of meetings of IHO bodies in Monaco.
3. In order to minimize the likelihood of risk of infection, the Secretariat will decide on active participation in external events abroad on a case by case basis after careful consideration of official notices provided by recognized authorities (travel advisories issued by IHO Member States' governments hosting events, World Health Organization, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, etc.). Travel in or via risk areas will be avoided or cancelled in general.
4. The Secretariat is maintaining regular contact with the Monegasque authorities. At this stage, the instructions announced by the Government of Monaco with regards to the holding of conferences and events in the Principality, are not recommending that events should be cancelled or postponed. This advice will be reviewed regularly as the situation changes. However, organizers such as the IHO Secretariat have been advised not to invite people from regions with significant numbers of confirmed coronavirus infections. Notwithstanding the rapid evolution of risks levels around the world, the currently risk areas identified by the Principality of Monaco, as of 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020, are:
  - China (including Hong Kong, Macau)
  - Singapore
  - Republic of Korea
  - Thailand
  - Japan
  - Malaysia
  - In Italy the region of Lombardy, Veneto and Emilia-Romagna
  - Islamic Republic of Iran

- Bahrain
- Vietnam
- In France the Department Oise (North of Paris)

5. The list of risk areas will be updated on a regular basis and latest information will be maintained via the *News* category at the IHO main web page ([www.iho.int](http://www.iho.int)). Member States are invited to consult this source regularly.

6. The Secretariat will follow this general policy with respect to invitations for upcoming IHO meetings to be held in Monaco such as the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of WENDWG from 7 to 9 April 2020, and, in particular, for the forthcoming Assembly scheduled in April 2020.

7. Affected Member States are invited to consider identifying and nominating national representatives who are resident outside of the identified risk areas (European-based diplomats, for instance). The Secretariat is fully aware of the limitations this brings to discussions and decision processes of the affected bodies, but decided to act in full respect of the recommendations of the host country, the Principality of Monaco.

8. Since the evolvement of the situation is unpredictable at this stage, the Secretariat will review the status weekly. The final decision with regards to holding or postponing the Second Session of the IHO Assembly will be made in consultation with the Council Chair at the end of March 2020 at the latest. Any such alternatives would expose the Organization and the Secretariat to very significant consequences in terms of formal and operational activities of all IHO bodies and will have to be carefully considered.

9. Nevertheless Member States are encouraged to register for Assembly participation at the earliest convenience in advance of the target date of 15 March 2020. This applies in particular to those Member States in the currently identified risk areas. In view of the situation at hand all Member States are likewise encouraged to keep the Secretariat up to date with its respective policy in Assembly participation to assist the Secretariat to estimate if a quorum of 50% Member States participation can be achieved to approve decisions.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Mathias JONAS  
Secretary-General