

Explanation of Position on General Assembly decision 74/561 entitled “Extension of the procedure for taking decisions of the General Assembly during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic until the end of August 2020”

on behalf of Qatar, Singapore, Switzerland and Liechtenstein

Qatar, Singapore, Switzerland and Liechtenstein recall their position with regard to General Assembly decision 74/555 of 15 May 2020 and 74/558 of 18 June 2020 as expressed in their joint Explanations of Position duly communicated to the President of the General Assembly and circulated to the membership. This position continues to apply to General Assembly decision 74/561.

Our countries have consistently expressed the view that a strong, engaged and fully functional General Assembly is needed in these times of unprecedented challenges for the United Nations and that therefore the General Assembly must be given the necessary tools to fully and efficiently discharge its important mandate. The procedure established in decision 74/544 and repeatedly extended does not allow the General Assembly to live up to that expectation. In particular, it has effectively prevented the General Assembly to restore its tool box by adopting an electronic voting procedure.

The General Assembly must be fully functional, in particular in times of crisis. That the Assembly should be deprived of the possibility to vote while it is unable to meet in-person is an unacceptable state of affairs the negative consequences of which become increasingly evident during the present COVID-19 crisis. An important lesson learnt from the present crisis must therefore be to prevent such a state of affairs in the future.

We consider it essential for the General Assembly, in the long term, to be equipped with an electronic voting procedure for decision-making on any matter in the event that the Assembly is unable to meet in-person. We are committed to working towards this goal by creating the necessary mandate as soon as in-person meetings of the General Assembly resume.

In this regard we reiterate our call on the President of the General Assembly to put safe arrangements for in-person voting in place without further delay, with full respect for the required social distancing measures. It is our clear understanding that should a member State exercise its sovereign right to call for a vote on a draft proposal, there is no other choice but to hold an in-person meeting of the General Assembly, taking into account relevant medical advice.

We kindly request that this Explanation of Position be duly reflected in the records of the adoption of the draft decision and circulated to the membership.

New York, 4 August 2020
