

Explanation of Position on A/74/L.72 entitled “Extension of the procedure for taking decisions of the General Assembly during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic until the end of July 2020”

on behalf of Qatar, Singapore, Switzerland and Liechtenstein

Our countries recall their position with regard to General Assembly decision 74/555 of 15 May 2020 as expressed in the joint Explanation of Position by Qatar, Singapore, Switzerland and Liechtenstein duly communicated to your office on 15 May 2020 and circulated to the membership. This position continues to apply to the decision contained in A/74/L.72.

We have consistently expressed our 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. We are disappointed that efforts to agree on an electronic voting procedure failed again. We consider such a procedure a necessary complement to the procedure for taking decisions established by decision 74/544 of 27 March 2020 and extended twice since. The current state of affairs is not acceptable as it undermines the ability of the General Assembly to be fully functional at a critical time.

On this basis, we had requested the President of the General Assembly in our letter dated 18 June 2020 to extend the silence procedure to allow for further consultations before seeking adoption of A/74/L.72. We are disappointed that our good-faith request was ignored by the office of the President with no explanation, while similar extensions have been granted in other contexts.

We wish at this moment to place on record our view 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 the recommendations of the Acting Medical Director in his latest note dated 2 June 2020. We therefore urge the President of the General Assembly to put safe arrangements for in-person voting in place expeditiously, with full respect for the required social distancing measures.

At the same time, it continues to be 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, and decisions need to be made under the most exceptional of circumstances. We are committed to working towards this goal. 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, 22 June 2020
