

Statement of the Chairman

Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

4 March 2015

Standards of accommodation for air travel

(ACABQ report A/69/787, related report A/69/643 & Corr.1)

Mr Chairman,

I am pleased to introduce the Advisory Committee's report (A/69/787) on standards of accommodation for air travel.

The Advisory Committee notes that the number of exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel authorized by the Secretary-General pursuant to the discretionary authority vested in him continues to increase. The request contained in General Assembly resolution 67/254 regarding the limitation of the use of exceptions has therefore not been fulfilled.

As indicated in paragraph 15 of the Advisory Committee's report, the growth in the number of exceptions is essentially due to the prominent traveller category. The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that criteria for determining prominent traveller status should be clarified. The Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly consider establishing a clear definition and a common set of criteria for determining the prominent traveller status of individuals, and that it request the Secretary-General to submit proposals for its consideration in this regard.

The Advisory Committee also comments on the scope and content of the report. It considers that the narrow focus of the report which is devoted almost exclusively to the presentation of exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel, no longer meets the requirements of the General Assembly. The Committee is of the view that the detailed information on the exceptions authorised must be accompanied by data on the overall travel activity and related costs in order to provide the General Assembly with a full picture of the situation, and also allow meaningful analysis of trends. The Advisory Committee also considers that the General Assembly should be provided with more data and analysis on the financial impact of the decisions taken in its resolutions 65/268 and 67/254 regarding the standards of accommodation for air travel.

The Secretariat has indicated that it cannot provide detailed travel statistics owing to the limitations of current information systems, but that the required data will become available following implementation of the travel module of Umoja, planned for the end of 2015. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to broaden the scope and enhance the content of the report of the Secretary-General to include, in addition to the data currently provided on authorised exceptions, comprehensive information on Secretariat-wide air travel activity and costs under all sources of funding. The report should take into account the provisions and requests contained in previous General Assembly resolutions as well as relevant observations and recommendations of the oversight bodies, and all other relevant factors.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.