



Statement on behalf of the Member States of the European Union

By

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, we would like to thank Mr. Christian Saunders, Director at the Office of the USG for Management, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on Standards of Accommodation for Air Travel. I would also like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing the related report of that Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

Achieving greater operational efficiency of the United Nations travel practices is a major component of the modernization of this Organisation. In recent years, the Member States of the European Union consistently encouraged the Secretary-General to take practical measures for a more effective and efficient use of the Organisation's resources for air travel, in line with the evolution of travel practices in national administrations.

During the 67th session, our Committee undertook a comprehensive review of the use of travel resources of the United Nations. The result of that review is in General Assembly resolution 67/254A, which represents a turning point in the way it concretely directed the Secretary-General to a more effective and efficient use of the Organisation's resources for air travel.

Today, and in spite of the strong policy signal that we sent to the Secretary-General through that resolution, it appears that some long-standing weaknesses of the Organisation are still hampering an optimal use of resources, and much work still needs to be done to overcome them. While we are disappointed to see that the Organization is still not in a position to provide full, reliable information on travel-related costs across the Secretariat, even the partial, narrow data that is presented to us is far from comforting. Paradoxically, while the General Assembly decided to tighten the requirements for use of business class in travel, the use of exceptions has skyrocketed and as a result, there has been an increase of 81.4 per cent in additional travel costs, mostly through recourse to the so-called "prominent persons" category.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Mr. Chairman,

The General Assembly can and should further refine its policy guidance on air travel to the Secretariat, and a number of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions take this route and we are ready to support them. Likewise, there is room for further improvement of the rules relating to the use of other sources of travel expenditures such as the daily subsistence allowance and the lump sum amounts. However, at the end of the day, if travel resources are to be utilized judiciously, as we believe they should, it is essential for our Organisation to develop a system where not only travel expenditures are monitored and oversight is exercised, but, above all, the accountability of managers is strengthened to guarantee a more judicious use of funds. This is the only way to ensure that Member States' expectations are met, and the policies we approve are effectively implemented. For this reason, promoting a culture of accountability at the United Nations is a key priority for us.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, we look forward to an open and constructive discussion of all these matters in the forthcoming informal consultations.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.