

Friday, 10 March 2017

Agenda Item 134: Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

INTRODUCTION

**Report of the Secretary-General on
Standards of accommodation for air travel (A/71/741 and Corr.1)**

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Madam Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to introduce the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel (A/71/741 and Corr.1). The present report provides information on standards of accommodation for air travel for the two-year period ended 30 June 2016 and comparative statistics for the two-year period ended 30 June 2014 as well as trend analyses for the past ten years.

In its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly decided that, for official travellers below the level of Assistant Secretary-General and with certain provisos, the standard of accommodation for air travel would be business class if a single-leg journey was nine hours or more and would be business class for a multi-leg journey if the combined travel time of the journey was 11 hours or more. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to modify his administrative instructions on standards of accommodation for air travel so that the duration of a journey should be determined based on the most economical route available, provided that the total additional time of the whole journey did not exceed the most direct route by four hours. The Assembly also endorsed recommendations to establish economy class as the standard of accommodation for air travel for

consultants and individual contractors, unless determined otherwise by the Secretary-General, taking into account the circumstances of the traveller (e.g. health reasons) and the interests of the Organization.

The Under-Secretary-General for Management subsequently promulgated new administrative instructions on official travel (ST/AI/2013/3) and on participants in advisory meetings (ST/AI/2013/5). The new administrative instructions included changes to the travel entitlements of non-United Nations officials travelling on behalf of the Organization, with the exception of those explicitly excluded from the new policies in accordance with section VI, paragraph 20, of Assembly resolution 67/254 A.

In its resolution 69/274 A, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take immediate action to limit the use of exceptions and to conduct an analysis of the trends in the use of exceptions and to report thereon to the General Assembly. During the period covered by the current report of the Secretary-General (July 2014 – June 2016), the largest increase of exceptions was in the category of prominent persons, which was caused by a stricter interpretation by the Administration than required under the mandate given by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/254 A. Detailed analyses and explanations on the movements in the number of the exceptions and the related additional costs for the different categories are provided in sections II, III and IV of the Secretary-General's report.

The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to review the use of exceptions for the category of prominent persons and to report thereon. As additional time is required to review this matter, the Secretary-General is requesting to submit his proposals during the first resumed part of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it, (a) any new trends for making use of frequent flyer miles to improve the administration of travel, (b) detailed updates on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight on the comprehensive audit of air travel activities and related practices (A/67/695), (c) comprehensive information on air travel activities, (d) consolidated data on the gains achieved through the implementation of section VI of its resolution 67/254 A, (e) comprehensive information on the effects of the implementation of Umoja in travel administration, including updated information, trends and analysis in all areas relating to air travel in the United Nations, and (f) an assessment of the United Nations standards of accommodation regarding class of air travel. The Secretary-General reports on these matters in sections V to X of the current report.

Furthermore, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report A/69/787 to request the Secretary-General to conduct further analysis on the lump-sum option, and to provide an updated proposal in the context of the present report. As additional time is required to examine this matter, the Secretary-General proposes maintaining the lump-sum provision at 70 per cent of the least restrictive economy class fare pending the submission of a final proposal in the first resumed part of the 73rd session of the General Assembly.

Madam Chair, the Secretariat is ready to respond to any questions from the distinguished Delegates during the informal consultations.

Thank you, Madam Chair.