



Check Against Delivery

United Nations General Assembly Seventy-second Session

Fifth Committee

Introduction of the Note of the Secretary-General on the
“Review of air travel policies in the United Nations system: achieving efficiency gains and cost
savings and enhancing harmonization”

Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to introduce, on behalf of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), the note of the Secretary-General conveying his comments and those of CEB members on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit “Review of air travel policies in the United Nations system: achieving efficiency gains and cost savings and enhancing harmonization” contained in document A/72/629/Add.1

Organizations were pleased with the Joint Inspection Unit for having produced a clear, comprehensive and constructive report on air travel policies and practices across the United Nations system and considered several of its conclusions practical and feasible, on the understanding that no additional cost will be incurred in their implementation.

Some organizations noted that the report would have benefitted from focussing on air travel expenditures in conjunction with accommodation expenses, which in some cases may account to up to 75 percent of the overall travel expenses.

Some organizations commented about the methodology adopted as part of the proposed recommendations as being headquarters centric and not reflecting decentralized travel operations - which in some cases account for up to 80 per cent of such operations -.

Organisations also noted that any proposed initiative for system-wide policy alignment should include reviewing best practices at all entities of the United Nations system, not solely within the Secretariat.

Finally, organizations considered the management of travel expenses the responsibility of the management of the Organization, and in the event a decision was reached regarding the proposed establishment of a formal advisory committee on travel, they called for its scope to be framed within a definition of high-level principles applicable across the United Nations system, and reiterated their active engagement in the activities of the existing Inter-Agency Travel Network.

As you can see from the Note of the Secretary-General, organizations generally support the findings in the report and its recommendations, although not without comment regarding some of them. Overall organisations recognise the importance of not creating an undue burden on travellers by imposing longer itineraries with insignificant savings, noting the importance of staff safety, health and wellbeing. In reference to advance purchase policy, as contained in recommendation 4, organisations raised concerns about the benefits of a single policy to advance purchase for all operations.

Comments notwithstanding, on behalf of the organizations of the UN system, I would like to thank the JIU for this report, which covered a topic of interest to CEB members and importance to the entire UN system.

I stand ready to answer any questions you or the committee may have.

Thank you