



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA  
BY MR. MOHAMED FOUAD AHMED, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA  
ITEM 136: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2018-2019,  
STANDARDS OF ACCOMMODATION FOR AIR TRAVEL, AT THE FIFTH  
COMMITTEE DURING THE FIRST RESUMED PART OF THE SEVENTY-SECOND  
SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
(New York, 15 March 2018)**

Mr Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 136: Programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 - Standards of accommodation for air travel.
2. The Group would like to thank Mr. Christian Saunders, Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Central Support Services, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel. We also thank Mr. Babou Sene, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing its related report.
3. The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to the effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel in the United Nations. We note that the budget of the Organisation has faced significant constraints over the last few biennia, in particular the travel budgets. We also note that in the 67<sup>th</sup> and 69<sup>th</sup> Sessions, the General Assembly endorsed significant changes to the standards of accommodation for air travel in the United Nations.
4. In the context of this progress, and ongoing management reform proposals, the Group will examine the Secretary-General's proposals on standards of accommodation for air travel to ensure that the Secretariat is empowered to deliver on all its mandates in a cost-effective manner.
5. Of equal importance to the standards of accommodation for air travel, is the need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of travel management in the Secretariat. The Group will look forward to further information on benefit realization with regard to the implementation of Umoja in travel administration, particularly in providing the necessary comprehensive analysis of travel data; improving transparency and accountability.

Mr Chair,

6. Let me highlight four issues:

7. Firstly, the Group takes note of the proposal to abolish the use of first-class travel by Assistant and Under-Secretaries-General, and looks forward to engaging with the secretariat during the upcoming informal consultations to seek clarifications and more information in this regard.

8. Secondly, the Group reiterates its concern with the low compliance rate with the advance purchase policy directive. We share the view of the Advisory Committee that the Secretariat should be encouraged to make stronger efforts in this regard.

9. Thirdly, the Group notes the challenges raised by the Secretariat on applying the current travel policy, but notes that no concrete proposal has been made in this regard. We will request further information during the informal consultations, but note that decisions which have a far-reaching impact on staff and the Organisation should be based on a solid business case.

10. Lastly, the Group notes the declining acceptance of the lump-sum option from 93% to around 74% since the implementation of the interim measure, and looks forward to our upcoming consultations to seek clarifications regarding the impact of this proposal.

Mr Chair,

11. The Group of 77 and China reiterates that any policy changes or new formulations in the area of standards of accommodation for air travel remain the exclusive prerogative of the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly. To this end, we reiterate our readiness to engage constructively in the upcoming discussions, with the aim of concluding this agenda item in a timely fashion.

I thank you, Mr Chair.