

**Statement of the Chairman**

**Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)**

**12 March 2019**

**Standards of accommodation for air travel**

*(ACABQ report A/73/779; related report: A/73/705)*

Madam Chair,

I am pleased to introduce the report of the Advisory Committee on the standards of accommodation for air travel.

The Advisory Committee recommends the adoption of the proposal of the Secretary-General for a single threshold for the use of business class by staff below the level of Assistant-Secretary-General and their eligible family members but recommends that the proposed ten hours of travel time will be implemented on a pilot basis.

During this pilot project, the Secretary-General should make full use of the available Umoja data and assess the qualitative and quantitative benefits and cost efficiencies of the proposal, and then draw conclusions and lessons learned. The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General present the results of the pilot project for consideration and decision by Member States in the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly.

With respect to the authority to approve exceptions, which is delegated by the Secretary-General to the Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, the Advisory Committee trusts that this approval process will not be decentralized under the new system of delegation of authority. The Committee welcomes the decreasing trend in the granting of exceptions and trusts that additional efforts will be made to encourage staff members to voluntarily downgrade from their entitled class, where possible.

The report of the Secretary-General provides updates on the various elements of air travel. In this context, the Advisory Committee emphasizes that full use of Umoja capabilities, including the capability to extract separate data on the cost for travel on commercial aircraft, should be made so as to improve the quality and transparency of the information provided to Member States.

Madam Chair,

The Advisory Committee continues to express disappointment with the persistent low overall level of compliance with the advance purchase policy and reiterates that stronger efforts are required in this area. The Committee expects that increased awareness in that respect will be communicated to staff members and management.

Thank you, Madam Chair.