



**Statement on behalf of the Member States of the European Union**

by

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**Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

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**Agenda Item 136.g. - Standards of Accommodation for Air Travel**

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**– As delivered –**

Madam Chair,

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

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

I would like to thank Mr. Patrick Carey, Director of the Division of Administration at the Department of Operational Support, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Cihan Terzi, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for presenting the Committee's related report.

The Member States of the European Union continue to support the Secretary-General in his efforts to strengthen both the effectiveness and efficiency of the UN. In that regard, we are looking for substantive progress in adjusting and improving the Secretariat's policies and practices on the management of air travel.

Together, with the ACABQ report, the Member States of the European Union believe that resources for official travel should be utilized more judiciously. We note with concern that the overall costs related to air travel have increased year after year, biennium after biennium. In this regard, we welcome the efforts displayed by the Organization to slowly reverse this trend for the

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\* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

period January-June 2018, and we encourage every entity across the UN to continue to strive for greater discipline.

With a view to enhancing our organizational efficiency, promoting a culture of accountability at the UN is key to guarantee a more prudent use of travel resources, also considering, on a case-by-case basis, the necessity to travel at all, e.g. the possibility to use modern ITC technologies more intensively.

The Member States of the European Union encourage an increased transparency regarding the sharing of comprehensive information on air travel activities. In particular, we note that the accessibility of such information through Umoja remains clearly uneven. We believe that more progress can be made in the widespread use and implementation of Umoja in order to ensure more transparency on travel costs including more comparative data showing the effectiveness, cost efficiencies or impact on staff productivity. This is particularly important since over-expenditures in travel budgets are still a recurring issue.

Madam Chair,

This session the Member States of the EU would like to highlight the following issues:

First, we continue to note with concern the low level of adherence to the advance purchase policy across the UN. We believe that including the level of compliance with this policy as a performance measurement in managerial evaluations would efficiently serve this purpose.

Second, the Member States of the European Union would like to strongly reiterate their position that first class should be abolished entirely across the organization. It is not a good practice in the spirit of a modern, accountable, effective and efficient UN. Business class is today functionally equivalent to the first class of yesterday, and while we work on its formal abolishment, voluntary downgrades should continue being incentivized across the UN.

Third, we would like to reaffirm the need for a single-threshold total-travel-time model and believe that ACABQ's comments and recommendations on this topic form a good starting point which will help us refine its implementation and future use.

Finally, we would invite the Secretary-General to undertake a long overdue comprehensive review of the policy for air travel also for members of organs, subsidiary organs, committees, councils, commissions and conferences of the United Nations.

The Member States of the European Union look forward to an open and constructive dialogue on this important agenda item.

Thank you, Madam Chair.