



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA
BY MR. MAJED BAMYA, FIRST COUNSELLOR AT THE MISSION
OF THE STATE OF PALESTINE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM
148: 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-THIRD SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(New York, 12 March 2019)**

Madam Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 148: Programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 - Standards of accommodation for air travel.
2. The Group would like to thank Mr. Patrick Carey, Director, Division of Administration, Department of Operational Support, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel. We also thank Mr Cihan Terzi, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing its related report.
3. The Group of 77 and China notes that the budget of the Organisation has faced significant constraints over the last few biennia, in particular with respect to the travel budget. Hence, and in the context of the ongoing implementation of the management reform, the Group will examine the Secretary-General's proposals on standards of accommodation for air travel with a view to empower the Secretariat to deliver on all its mandates in a cost-effective manner, that ensures the effective and efficient utilization of resources allocated to air travel.
4. The Group attaches great importance to the benefit realization with regard to the implementation of Umoja in travel administration, particularly in providing the necessary comprehensive analysis of travel data and improving transparency and accountability. It is crucial to make full use of the Umoja business intelligence module and the related online dashboard to improve the quality and transparency of information provided to Member States. We will be interested to learn about progress made in this regard.

Madam Chair,

5. The Group has carefully examined the report of the Secretary General as well as the related report of the advisory committee, and I would like to highlight few points in this regard:

- Firstly, the Group welcomes the decreasing trend of exceptions of standard of accommodation of air travel authorized by the Secretary General during the biennium 2016-2018 compared to the preceding biennium in line with relevant General Assembly resolutions. We encourage the Secretary General to further intensify his efforts to minimize the use of exceptions. Furthermore, the Group shares the view of the advisory committee that the approval process for exceptions regarding air travel will not be decentralized as part of the new delegation of authority system being implemented in the context of the management reform.

- Secondly, the Group reiterates its disappointment with the low compliance rate with the advance purchase policy directive particularly with regard to travel purposes where travel can be easily planned by respective officers. This is particularly regrettable in the case of entitlement travels. Furthermore, the Group concurs with the advisory committee that the Secretariat should redouble its efforts in this regard and will seek clarification in the ensuing informal consultation regarding the challenges encountered by the Secretariat that have hindered the full implementation of the General Assembly resolutions.

- Thirdly, the Group attaches great importance to ensuring that the procurement process for all air travel management services contracts is conducted in full compliance with general procurement principles. The Group will seek detailed information during the informal consultations regarding the specific measures taken by the Secretariat to realize this objective.

- Fourthly, The Group takes note of the Secretary General's proposal to establish a single threshold for the use of business class by staff below the level of Assistant Secretary-General to replace the currently used dual threshold. We will seek further information regarding this proposal. Any new system should not impose an additional burden on the organization's finances nor should it have a negative impact on staff productivity.

Madam Chair,

6. 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.