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Agenda Item 136(g): Standards of Accommodation for Air Travel
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[As Delivered]

Thank you, Madam Chair.

My delegation would like to thank Mr. Patrick Carey, Division of Administration, Department of Operational Support and Mr. Cihan Terzi, Chair of the ACABQ, for introducing their respective reports.

Madam Chair,

An organization's travel policies and their related implementation offer important insights into how it plans and utilizes its resources. Effective travel allows for well-managed and mission-essential resource utilization based on organizational priorities. Conversely, travel luxuries limit the availability of funds for essential travel and exposes an organization to reputational harm.

Last year, this Committee agreed on a responsible resolution that ended first class travel for UN staff. As highlighted by previous ACABQ and JIU reports, we share the view that today's business class is yesterday's first class. We believe that now is the time to consider how we can broaden the categories of UN-related personnel included in this prohibition. Relatedly, while we note with appreciation the Secretary-General's proposal before us on the use of a single threshold for business class, we are disappointed that cost-savings was not one of the primary goals. We therefore look forward to finding common ground on a single threshold that ensures mandate implementation and is cost-effective.

Madam Chair,

We appreciate the efforts that have helped decrease the use of exceptions mentioned in the report and for the use of voluntary downgrades. We remain concerned that the only decrease in travel volume was in the use of economy class, while the use of business and first class travel increased during the 2018 reporting period. Additionally, we note the data provided does not allow for a direct comparison of expenditures and presents information on all modes of transportation; we therefore look forward to clarifying that comparison with regard to air travel. We further note

that only 35 percent of official travel conformed to the current advanced purchase policy. Clearly, the Organization can and must do more to address these challenges.

Madam Chair,

In closing, my delegation notes that many member states, including my own, have adjusted their travel policies to reflect the modern-day travel alternatives and budgetary realities. The UN, whose travels are financed by member state taxpayers, must also adapt, update, and focus its resources where they can have the most positive impact. This session, my delegation will continue to support cost-conscious and mission essential travel. We believe the time is ripe to consider comprehensive travel rules for UN-related personnel at all levels. We look forward to a robust and constructive discussion on all the elements contained in the report and working with all partners in reaching consensus. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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