

Statement of the Chairman
Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
15 March 2012

Proposals for a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel
(ACABQ report A/66/739; Secretary-General's report A/66/676)

Mr Chairman,

I am pleased to introduce the Advisory Committee's report (A/66/739) on proposals for a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel. The report of the Secretary-General sets out a number of measures, in response to General Assembly resolution 65/268. In its report, the Committee makes overall observations and addresses the individual measures put forward by the Secretary-General.

The Advisory Committee stresses that resources for official travel should be utilized judiciously in the interests of the Organization. It emphasizes that, before official travel is authorized, full account should be taken of its cost-effectiveness and the impact on productivity. The Committee is not fully satisfied with the quality of the Secretary-General's report. Information on cost savings, the potential impact on staff productivity, working hours lost or gained and effective mandate implementation should have been provided. In this regard, the Committee is suggesting that the Secretary-General be requested to provide such information on the measures put in place in an initial report to be presented to the General Assembly at the sixty-seventh session, and in subsequent regular reports. Due to the insufficient details in the Secretary-General's report, the Advisory Committee had to request significant additional information in order to assess the merits of each measure, and that information is reflected in its report and also taken into account in its conclusions and recommendations.

Section III of the Committee's report addresses the individual measures contained in the Secretary-General's report, including on frequent flyer miles, advance purchase of tickets, the standard of accommodation for air travel, daily subsistence allowance, travel time and the lump sum option. These measures and the related Committee's conclusions are discussed in detail in the report.

The Advisory Committee deals with other air travel-related issues in Section IV of its report. It has noted that the tracking of all air travel costs in the Secretariat is contingent upon the implementation of Umoja solution, the travel module of which is projected to be deployed in 2014. The Secretary-General has also provided information on the delegation of authority for granting exceptions for first-class travel. The Advisory Committee will examine this issue further in the context of the Secretary-General's biennial report on the standards of accommodation for air travel. On procurement, the Committee considers that, given the costs involved, the Secretary-General should be requested to explore other cost-effective options for acquiring air travel services, taking into account the experiences of other organizations. As requested by the General Assembly, the Committee noted that a

comprehensive OIOS audit of all air travel activities and related practices was scheduled to begin in February 2012.

Finally, the Advisory Committee has drawn attention to consultations with other affected United Nations system organizations that may arise from the adoption of the measures presented and also recalls that the General Assembly has previously stressed the importance of a meaningful and constructive dialogue between staff and management. The Committee trusts that this will be ensured.

I thank you, Mr Chairman.