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**Statement by Stephen L. Lieberman, Minister Counselor for UN Management and Reform,  
On Agenda Item 134 – Standards of accommodation for air travel  
at the First Resumed Session of the 66<sup>th</sup> GA  
March 15, 2012**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States would like to thank Assistant Secretary General Warren Sach for introducing the Secretary General's report on air travel and the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), Mr. Collen Kelapile, for introducing the Committee's report on this subject.

As we stated at the beginning of the first resumed session last week, the Committee's discussion on air travel represents an opportunity to advance key parts of an agenda for reform that should be shared by all who want to strengthen this institution.

Mr. Chairman,

In his report, the Secretary-General's reminds us, and the ACABQ reiterates, that resources for official travel must be utilized judiciously. We commend the Secretary-General's leadership in putting forward recommendations to spend the UN's over \$73 million airfare budget more efficiently, and we encourage him to implement the measures outlined in the report as soon as possible. My delegation encourages the expanded use of technology such as video teleconferencing to bring people together without the high cost of air travel. But we also recognize that technology cannot replace the value added of all face-to-face meetings. Where travel is required we have an obligation to ensure much more careful and common-sense use of finite travel resources.

The Secretary-General's report brings to light a number of disturbing facts that demonstrate the need for the Secretariat to update the UN's standards of accommodation for air travel to more closely align with the air travel policies of Member States. For example, the report notes there are on average 3-5 changes per reservation before a ticket is issued, and that daily subsistence allowance is currently payable to officials of the United Nations while in flight. Mr. Chairman, these are just two egregious examples of waste that cannot be justified and must be changed.

Furthermore, the UN should immediately clamp down on the costly and wasteful practice of excessive use of business and first-class travel. This is an easy way to meet the Organization's travel requirements at a reduced cost.

It is also the obligation of Member States to more responsibly use UN resources for official travel. For example, we have a responsibility to scrutinize practices such as Member State representatives' entitlement to an additional 40% above the standard daily subsistence allowance.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we share the concerns voiced in the ACABQ report regarding the lack of transparency on system-wide travel data. In order to realize maximum savings, we need a comprehensive view of patterns of waste and abuse across the UN system. While we're encouraged by the assurances that Umoja will be up and running in 2015, we urge the Secretary-General to find ways to track the overall expenditure in the interim

Mr. Chairman,

The United States reiterates the importance of the Secretary-General's leadership on this issue and encourages him to continue to find ways to more efficiently and effectively utilize air travel resources. We look forward to working with colleagues to further explore ways to get the greatest value from limited travel funds, and to have UN personnel and member states set an appropriate example at a time when so many of our people around the world face economic hardship.