



Statement on behalf of the Member States of the European Union

Delivered By

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Standards of accommodation for Air Travel

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Madam Chair,

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

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Central Support Services, Mr. Stephen Cutts, for presenting the report of the Secretary General, and Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for presenting the Committee's related report.

The Member States of the European Union continue to support the Secretary-General in his commitment to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the UN. We note with concern that the overall costs related to air travel have increased year after year, biennium after biennium. We want to be clear that the same strict discipline that Member States apply to themselves has to apply to the UN as well. We would like to highlight a few areas:

* *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

The Member States of the European Union believe that the General Assembly can and should further refine its policy guidance on air travel to the Secretariat. The huge increase in both the number and cost of exceptions approved by the Secretariat, especially given the progress made by this Assembly in the 67th and 69th session, is a serious concern. Updating the standards of accommodation should be a continual process, in line with the evolution of travel practices in national administrations.

Secondly, the Member States of the European Union believe in strengthening the accountability of managers to secure the judicious use of funds. We note in this regard the low level of compliance with the advance purchase policy throughout the Organisation, as well as recurring over-expenditures in travel budgets. Incentives should be found to deal with these long-standing weaknesses.

Thirdly, the Member States of the European Union believe it is our collective responsibility to approach air travel costs, including DSA, in a comprehensive way. In a spirit of fairness within the UN system, we would invite the Secretary-General to undertake a comprehensive review of the policy for air travel also for members of organs, subsidiary organs, committees, councils and commissions of the United Nations. Thanks to new capability enabled by Umoja, the Secretariat is now able to provide comprehensive information on air travel activities to the General Assembly. This is a welcome development as this comprehensive information was long overdue.

Fourthly, the Secretary General's report highlights that the travel processing functions at the UN remain fragmented. We look forward to discussing in informal consultations how a more centralized travel processing system might increase visibility and efficiency. We urge the Secretary-General to continue to make every effort to innovate and improve working practices, in order to manage resources as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Finally, the Member States of the European Union attach great importance to measures to protect the environment and expect the Secretariat to play its part. It is our collective responsibility to take action in this regard, especially following the success of the Paris Agreement on climate change. We therefore fully support all steps taken by the Secretariat to reduce reliance on air travel, notably through technological solutions such as video-conferencing.

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

I thank you, Madam Chair.