



**Statement on behalf of the Member States of the European Union**

by

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**Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

**72nd Session of the General Assembly: Fifth Committee: First Resumed Session**

**Agenda Item 136.a. - Standards of Accommodation for Air Travel**

**15 March 2018**

Mr. 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, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank Mr. Christian Saunders, Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Central Support Services, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Babou Sene, Vice Chair of of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for presenting the Committee's related report.

The Member States of the European Union continue to support the Secretary-General in his efforts to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. On the management of air travel, the item before us today, we are looking for substantive progress in adjusting and improving the Secretariat's policies and practices.

Clearly there has been progress made over the last few years, as reflected in the Secretary-General's report, and we look forward to further discussing and receiving additional clarifications

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

during the Questions & Answers session. We also welcome the ACABQ report and we believe its comments and recommendations form a good starting point which will help us with upcoming consultations.

In line with the ACABQ report, the Member States of the European Union believe that resources for official travel should be used more carefully. 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 both UN (and UN funded travel) as well. During the recent main session, this same Committee agreed on a reduction of resources for travel of UN staff and representatives for the 2018-2019 biennium.

As we aim at a better functioning and more efficient organization, the accountability of managers to secure a more judicious use of funds for air travel must be strengthened. We also note in this regard the low level of compliance with the advance purchase policy throughout the organization, as well as recurring over-expenditures in travel budgets. In addition, we look forward to discussing the SG's proposal on a single-threshold total-travel-time model.

We also welcome the continual expansion in the implementation of Umoja and its travel module and the sharing of comprehensive information on air travel activities with the General Assembly, but we believe that more progress can be made in its widespread use and implementation. We therefore support further streamlining of the air travel policies and practices in the UN.

Mr. Chair,

The Member States of the European Union welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation regarding the elimination of first class entitlements. We would like to reiterate our position that first class should be eliminated as a whole across the organization. It is not fitting nor in the spirit for the modern, accountable, effective and efficient UN we aspire towards to retain first class as a standard of accommodation. Business class is the first class of yesterday.

Finally, Mr. Chair, we would like to highlight the useful information contained in the JIU report on air travel policies and practices across the UN system organizations. While this report highlights many examples of best practice in air travel management, we also note with regret the level of fragmentation that still exists across the system, as well as the continued application of some quite generous travel policies in parts of the system. In this respect, we welcome JIU's recommendation to enhance harmonization of air travel policies, rules and practices. We would like to request the Secretary-General and the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to harmonize standards for accommodation for air travel and related expenses across the UN system.

In addition, we would invite the Secretary-General to undertake a long overdue comprehensive review of the policy for air travel also for members of organs, subsidiary organs, committees, councils, commissions and conferences of the United Nations.

We look forward to an open and constructive dialogue on this important agenda item.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.