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JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Report on the Use of Travel Funds in  
the United Nations

Note by the Advisory Committee on Administrative  
and Budgetary Questions

The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has received the comments of the Secretary-General on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the use of travel funds in the United Nations (A/8900) and transmits them herewith to the General Assembly.

I. Travel and other expenses of representatives and members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations

1. The current system governing the payment by the United Nations of travel and other expenses incurred by persons in this category was determined by the General Assembly in its resolution 1798 (XVII) of 11 December 1962. This resolution was based on a comprehensive review <sup>1/</sup> of previous legislation and practice and a re-examination of the basic principles and conditions involved. The standards of accommodation to which the payment of travel costs are limited are those laid down in resolution 2245 (XXI) of 20 December 1966 and the rates of subsistence allowances in resolution 2491 (XXIII) of 21 December 1968. The various rules and procedures promulgated by the Secretary-General in order to give effect to these decisions by the General Assembly are to be found in a special bulletin (ST/SGB/107/Rev.4).
2. Information is provided in annex I below on expenditures incurred under this heading in 1971, the revised appropriations recommended by the Secretary-General for 1972, and those proposed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for 1973.
3. In chapter I of his report (A/8900), Mr. Ilić of the Joint Inspection Unit has reviewed this body of legislation and has recommended a number of modifications to the rules currently in effect.
4. Two specific recommendations are made.
5. The first relates to the payment, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), paragraph 3 (a) (i), of the travel but not subsistence expenses of up to a maximum of five representatives or alternate representatives per Member State in respect of regular sessions of the General Assembly, and one such representative or alternate representative in respect of special or special emergency sessions. In terms of paragraph 1 of the annex to the resolution, there may be included, within the maximum number of payments so allowed, the travel costs to his or her capital city and return for purposes of consultation or report, of a member of a permanent mission in New York, who is designated as a representative or alternate representative to a session of the General Assembly, provided such travel is certified by the Permanent Representative to be in connexion with the work of the particular session and provided it takes place either during or within three months before or after such a session. In accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 2245 (XXI), the payment by the United Nations of these travel expenses is limited to the cost of economy-class accommodation by air, or its equivalent, by recognized public transport via a direct route, except that the cost of first-class accommodation by air, or its equivalent, by recognized public transport is payable in the case of one representative of each Member State attending regular, special or emergency special sessions.

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<sup>1/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventeenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 62, documents A/C.5/930 (report of the Secretary-General), A/5263 (report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), and A/5386 (report of the Fifth Committee).

6. The inspector recommends in his report (A/8900, paras. 22 and 24) that the General Assembly should approve a new formula for the reimbursement of travel expenses of representatives and alternate representatives attending sessions of the General Assembly as follows:

(a) Member States whose contribution to the regular budget is from 0.04 to 0.30 per cent would be entitled to the reimbursement of four tickets in respect of regular sessions and one ticket in respect of special or special emergency sessions;

(b) Member States whose contribution to the regular budget of the Organization is from 0.31 to 0.50 per cent would be entitled to the reimbursement of three tickets in respect of regular sessions;

(c) Member States whose contribution to the regular budget of the Organization is above 0.50 per cent would not be entitled to any reimbursement of travel expenses of their representatives attending sessions of the General Assembly.

7. The inspector further recommends (paras. 28 and 52) that the reimbursement of these costs should be limited to the cost of economy-class accommodation by air, or its equivalent, by recognized public transport. Prior to 1966, all travel was reimbursable at the first-class level; during 1966, at the economy-class level only; and, since 1967, on the basis of one ticket at the first-class and the balance at the economy-class level.

8. Should the inspector's proposals be adopted, full entitlements, based on the current membership and the average economy-class air fare payable at the present time, would be reduced by \$279,750 from \$727,000 to \$446,250. However, the amount requested for this purpose in the initial estimates for 1973 was only \$540,000 after allowing for a possible non-exercise of full entitlements to the extent of some 25 per cent. The Advisory Committee has recommended a reduction of \$60,000 in respect of the estimates submitted under section 1 of the budget for the travel and other expenses of representatives and members of organs and subsidiary organs in general. Of this proposed reduction, it would have been the Secretary-General's intention to apply at least \$20,000 to the provision for travel to attend sessions of the General Assembly, leaving a balance of \$520,000. In the event that it is decided to restrict the entitlements under this heading in the manner proposed by the inspector, it would seem prudent not to make any allowance for the non-exercise of entitlements until further experience has been gained. Based on full anticipated requirements in the amount of \$446,250, the appropriation of \$520,000 initially recommended by the Advisory Committee could therefore be reduced by \$73,750.

9. The Secretary-General has no particular comments on these proposals. The inspector has indicated the origin and traced the history of the current system. The General Assembly will no doubt wish to consider the proposed new measures on their merits and exercise its own judgement as to whether it wishes to modify the related rules and standards which it had previously decided upon. At the

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same time, the General Assembly might be assisted in arriving at a decision if it were provided with additional background information on certain aspects of the matter.

10. The inspector has recalled with regret the fact that the General Assembly, having decided by its resolution 2128 (XX) that the payment of travel expenses in this category should be limited to the cost of economy-class accommodation by air, or its equivalent, by recognized public transport, one year later, by its resolution 2245 (XXI), reinstated reimbursement at the first-class accommodation standard in the case of one representative of each Member State.

11. In the report of the Secretary-General 2/ on which the latter decision was based, it was conceded that no undue difficulties had been encountered as a result of the Assembly's decision, at its twentieth session, to substitute economy-class for first-class entitlements in respect of travel to sessions of the General Assembly. It was pointed out that this decision did not in any way seek to prescribe the standard of travel accommodation actually to be authorized, as this is a matter entirely within the discretion of Member States themselves. All it sought to do was to lay down the financial limits of the Organization's obligation to reimburse the Governments concerned for the travel expenses incurred by them in being represented. Nevertheless, in suggesting that the General Assembly might wish to consider reverting to the former arrangements to the extent of providing for the reimbursement, on a first-class basis, of the costs of travel of at least one representative of each Member State, the Secretary-General stated that he had not been unaware of the fact that the new rule had posed a problem for some Governments, especially those with limited means, in meeting the cost of adequate attendance at the growing number of meetings and conferences in the international sphere. There was the further consideration that of all the meetings of its principal organs, the United Nations contributed only towards the cost of attendance at sessions of the General Assembly. Accordingly, at that time the Secretary-General felt that his proposal would be consistent with - and, indeed, would modestly promote - the General Assembly's dual purpose of minimizing expenditures on travel of representatives, while ensuring an equal opportunity to all its Members, and particularly in the case of their principal representatives, of attending its sessions, despite wide differences in their financial resources and geographical location.

12. In support of his proposal on the standard of accommodation to be allowed, the inspector states that, in respect of the last three sessions of the General Assembly, not all Member States had submitted all five claims to which they were entitled, nor had all of them requested the reimbursement of one first-class ticket. This, of course, is perfectly true. For that reason the budgetary provisions requested by the Secretary-General for this purpose are not based on maximum entitlements, but take into account that a certain percentage will normally not be exercised. It would not be correct, however, to infer that what

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2/ Ibid., Twenty-first Session, Annexes, agenda item 74, document A/C.5/1074, paras. 12 to 14.

is involved here is necessarily the waiver by Member States of legitimate claims. Depending upon the size and composition of individual delegations, the number of persons actually travelling varies from case to case. Moreover, despite a timely reminder issued by the Secretariat each year, a certain number of Member States, most probably as the result of an administrative oversight, are not able to exercise their entitlements because of the rule whereby claims may not be submitted after the end of the year which follows the closing date of the session to which the claim relates. It is possible that some of the Member States submitting no claims at all (nine in respect of the twenty-fifth session, nine in respect of the twenty-fourth and eight in respect of the twenty-third) have done so purposely. However, since the States involved have varied from year to year, this does not seem very likely. The data provided by the inspector in paragraph 16 of his report with regard to the unexpended balances which have recurred in recent years should be interpreted in this light.

13. The following analysis of recent experience in terms of the number of entitlements not exercised, rather than in terms of appropriations left unspent, may also be of use in examining this question:

	Twenty-fifth session (1970)	Twenty-fourth session (1969)	Twenty-third session (1968)
Number of Member States . . . . .	<u>128</u>	<u>126</u>	<u>125</u>
Maximum number of potential claims . .	640	630	625
Number of claims received . . . . .	<u>543</u>	<u>538</u>	<u>532</u>
Number of entitlements not exercised .	97	92	93
<u>Deduct:</u> Maximum entitlements of Member States submitting no claims at all . . . . .	(45)	(45)	(40)
Balance of entitlements not exercised .	<u>52</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>53</u>

14. A final observation on the inspector's proposals regarding General Assembly travel relates to his question whether or not to discontinue, or limit to Member States contributing from 0.04 to 0.30 per cent to the regular budget, the present entitlement of each Member State to reimbursement in respect of the travel to its capital city and return, for purposes of consultation or report, of a member of its Permanent Mission in New York who was designated as a representative or alternate representative to a session of the General Assembly. The special conditions imposed in this regard are that such travel must be certified by the Permanent Representative to be in connexion with the work of the particular session and must take place either during or within three months before or after such a session. Here again, Member States will be in the best position to assess the value they attach to this entitlement. The Secretary-General merely wishes to point out that the present entitlement is not additional to, but included in, the maximum number of five claims which each Member State is currently allowed. Should it be the Assembly's wish that this provision should be continued, it would presumably also be included within whatever reduced total number of claims may be decided upon.

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15. The second specific proposal made by the inspector in his report (A/8900, paras. 28 and 52) is that in the case of the travel of members of all other organs and subsidiary organs, reimbursement of the related costs by the United Nations, to the extent that such entitlements exist in accordance with the provision of General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), should be restricted to the cost of economy-class accommodation by air. As in the case of the travel of representatives and alternate representatives attending sessions of the General Assembly, all travel in this category was reimbursable at the first-class level prior to 1966, during 1966 at the economy-class level, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 2128 (XX), and, since 1967, following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2245 (XXI), at the first-class level in the case of all persons serving in their individual capacities, as distinct from those serving as representatives of Governments and at the economy-class level in the case of all other entitlements to reimbursement of travel costs.

16. If the inspector's proposal is approved and based on the full number of persons in this category who would have been entitled to reimbursement of first-class travel in 1973, the total appropriation of \$942,700 initially recommended by the Advisory Committee for that year under sections 1 and 15 of the budget for the travel and related costs of members of organs and subsidiary organs in general could be reduced by \$40,000.

17. In this case also, the Secretary-General believes that the question of the standard of accommodation on which the reimbursement of travel costs in this category should be based is primarily a matter to be decided by the General Assembly. It would nevertheless be relevant to the consideration of the inspector's proposal to recall the reasons for which the Assembly, at its twenty-first session, decided to reinstate first-class entitlements for persons serving in their individual capacities, as distinct from those serving as representatives of Governments.

18. In his report on this subject, the Secretary-General indicated that, although the decision taken by the General Assembly the previous year to discontinue reimbursement at the first-class level had not given rise to any undue difficulties in the case of members of organs or subsidiary organs serving as representatives of their Governments, it had been necessary for him to authorize certain exceptions to the approved procedures in the case of certain persons serving in their individual capacity. 3/ These exceptions had been based, in most instances, on genuine personal hardship because of age or health. Once exceptions were made to any rule, the element of personal judgement came into play. As a consequence, it had become increasingly difficult to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all individuals in this category. It was pointed out further that the individuals involved were often persons of eminence and prestige in their special fields who, with certain exceptions, were called upon to serve the United Nations without remuneration of any kind - other than the payment of a daily subsistence allowance at standard rates - indeed not infrequently at considerable personal sacrifice. In the circumstances, it seemed to the Secretary-General at that time that the Organization had an obligation to extend at least the courtesy of first-class air travel accommodation. This was so particularly if

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3/ Ibid., paras. 9 through 12.

consideration were given to the vital role which the organs and subsidiary organs were called upon to play in the formulation, direction and control of United Nations activities as well as to the measure of assistance and expertise voluntarily contributed. A further consideration was that the number of persons in this category was not large and the additional cost involved in reimbursing travel at the first-class level for all, not excessive.

19. The inspector has referred to these arguments in his report (A/8900, para. 48), but does not accept them for the various reasons stated in paragraphs 38, 46, 49 and 50. He takes into account, in particular, that some of the individuals involved serve on a certain body in their individual capacity, but on others as representatives of their Governments. He also considers that persons serving as representatives of Governments are often equally well qualified and may be of higher rank than those serving in their individual capacity. Yet the travel entitlements in the first category, where such entitlements exist at all, are based on economy-class accommodation, whereas in the second they consist not only of first-class accommodation, but of the payment of daily subsistence allowances as well.

20. The Secretary-General does not dispute the fact that these anomalies arise to some extent. However, some weight should also be given to the difficulties which are bound to be encountered once again, as they did in 1966, should the General Assembly decide to reinstate the economy-class standard of accommodation for all persons in this category. A relevant factor is that individuals selected to serve in their personal capacity, unlike those serving in the more general capacity of representative of a Government, cannot be temporarily replaced by others should any private problems arise. On the other hand, the General Assembly in this context may wish to consider whether the advances made since 1966 in respect of the speed and comfort of air travel in all classes of accommodation justify the distinction currently made.

21. Finally, the inspector recommends re-examination of the current provision in paragraph 3 (b) of General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), for the payment of first-class travel and subsistence costs in respect of persons in the following categories:

(a) The chairman or the rapporteur of a subsidiary organ who is called upon to present the report of such subsidiary organ to a parent organ; and

(b) One member of an organ or subsidiary organ serving as its designated representative at meetings of a second organ or subsidiary organ.

22. In his report (A/8900, para. 55), the inspector expresses the view that payments to persons in the first category should be kept to a minimum and authorized only when really necessary and when the presence of the chairman or rapporteur is indispensable; in the case of the second category, he believes that such payments should definitely be discontinued. For purposes of information, the individual cases in these two categories which have been provided for in the initial budget estimates for 1973 are set forth in annex II below.

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23. As regards the inspector's suggestion in respect of the first category (a), and without prejudice to the decision the General Assembly may wish to take on the maintenance or discontinuance of the present procedure, the Secretary-General would stress the importance of imposing a rule which would be of general application rather than one which calls for judgement to be exercised in regard to individual instances on their merits, as the inspector seems to suggest. In the Secretary-General's view, not only should the very small number of persons travelling in this capacity receive equal treatment, as a matter of principle, but the administrative complications inherent in a more selective system should be avoided.

24. In re-examining the current entitlements in both categories (a) and (b), it may be useful to recall that the original rationale <sup>4/</sup> for paying both travel and subsistence in these cases was that inasmuch as the persons involved are required by a decision of the organ or subsidiary organ on which they serve to undertake a specific task, they could be considered as travelling in an individual capacity on United Nations business rather than as representatives of their Governments.

25. Attention is also drawn to the fact that, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 3 (b) of General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), a similar principle applies in the case of a third category of travel, namely, representatives of Member States participating in a subsidiary organ, instituted by the General Assembly or the Security Council, which is required, by a decision of the parent organ, to work away from United Nations Headquarters in the performance of a special task. The only difference is that in these cases travel is reimbursed at the economy-class rather than the first-class level. Examples are travel to meetings in Africa of the United Nations Council for Namibia and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

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<sup>4/</sup> Ibid., Seventeenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 62, document A/C.5/930, annex II, paras. 27, 28 and 33.



## II. Travel of staff on mission

26. In chapter II of his report, (A/8900), the inspector deals with the travel of staff to meetings and on other official business (other than travel on initial appointment, transfer and repatriation). As pointed out by the inspector in his report (paras. 58 and 59) the General Assembly, in adopting staff regulation 7.1, has delegated to the Secretary-General the authority to prescribe the conditions under which the travel expenses of staff members are met by the Organization and has, by the same token, vested in him the responsibility for the control of the related expenditures. This being the case, the various observations and recommendations made by the inspector in this respect have been studied with great care and call for special comments.

27. The inspector has subjected to critical examination both the procedures by which the relevant travel programmes are determined and the level of total expenditures incurred. He has concluded that the planning mechanism could be considerably improved and that to date the credits requested and approved for the travel of staff on mission have been excessive.

28. The Secretary-General accepts without reservation the proposition that travel of staff to meetings and on other official business should be kept under strict control. He is convinced, at the same time, that the principal objective of such control should be to confirm the need for such travel in relation to the work programmes and activities involved rather than to keep expenditures within an arbitrary limit determined in advance. He does not agree that no serious effort has been made to date to keep travel within reasonable bounds. It is true that, in the absence of a full system of programme budgeting of the type which has been recommended by the Secretary-General in a report to the General Assembly at its current session (A/C.5/1429 and Corr.1 and 2), these control procedures have not always been as scientific as they might otherwise have been. The Secretary-General trusts that the proposed new programme budgeting system will not only solve current administrative difficulties to a large extent, but will provide Member States with clearer and more detailed justification, by programme, of the credits requested for related travel by the staff.

29. In practice, the control over potential travel expenditures is exercised in the first instance when the annual budget estimates are prepared. The provisions requested by the various units of the Secretariat have been submitted in varying degrees of detail depending upon the particular circumstances. Travel of staff to meetings is governed largely by the calendar of conferences approved for the financial year involved and full particulars can normally be provided in respect of the number and nature of staff to be detailed for purposes of servicing individual meetings in either a substantive or a technical manner. In the case of travel on other official business, actual requirements cannot in all cases be determined with the same precision. This has applied especially to units engaged in economic and social activities, such as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the regional economic commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which are of a particularly complex and varied character.

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Here the tendency has been for units to base their submissions on the level of expenditures incurred during preceding periods, adjusted to take into account new responsibilities. This is therefore the main area in which the proposed improved planning and programming procedures should result in a more effective determination of the related requirements, project by project, including the travel needs involved. Other units, with more limited travel programmes, are usually in a position to indicate in detail the individual travel items for which they consider provision should be made.

30. It follows that, in its examination of these submissions, the Budget Division is able in some cases to exercise its judgement item by item, but in others it has to rely on an assessment of the order of magnitude of the total request submitted in relation to previous experience taking into account any general expansion of activity which may have occurred. In most cases the total amounts actually included in the Secretary-General's budget estimates have been at levels lower than those initially requested by the various units of the Secretariat. These reductions have been applied either after discussion of questionable items with the units involved or as a matter of over-all budgetary policy. By these means, travel needs have been stabilized to a great degree in recent years in spite of expanding responsibilities and increases in travel fares and subsistence rates. This statement is borne out by the statistics given in annex IV below, which indicates the expenditures in 1971, the revised appropriations recommended by the Secretary-General for 1972 and the appropriations recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for 1973. To achieve this result, it was necessary to some extent to take arbitrary action. Taking as an example chapter II of section 5, which covers the needs of the majority of offices and departments in respect of travel of staff on official business other than for the servicing of meetings, the estimates in the amount of \$839,400 submitted by the Secretary-General for 1972 reflected an over-all reduction by the Office of Financial Services of \$225,200 or 21 per cent of the total level of \$1,064,600 requested by the units involved. The policy followed for that year was to restrict the estimates to the amount of \$771,800 appropriated for 1971, adding \$67,600 to take account of the average increase of 5 per cent in air fares, which had occurred in the interim, as well as to make some limited allowance for additional needs of an unavoidable nature which had arisen in the case of certain individual units. The initial estimates in the amount of \$796,400 submitted under this chapter for 1973 were \$20,000, or some 2.5 per cent lower than the amount of \$816,400 ultimately appropriated for 1972 in spite of a further increase of some 5 per cent in fares and subsistence rates which had occurred since those credits were approved. In real terms, therefore, the volume of travel which could be financed under this chapter in 1973 would have been some 7.5 per cent lower than that provided for in the original appropriations for 1972.

31. In addition to the controls applied at the time of the preparation of the estimates, there is currently a close and continuing scrutiny of all travel actually undertaken in the course of the financial year. Thus, in accordance with the Secretary-General's Bulletin issued on 15 February 1972 (ST/SGB/139), a system of control has been established which is both tighter and more extensive than that applied before. The Bulletin provides that, at the beginning of each financial year, all credits available under the regular budget are allotted in full

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by the Assistant Secretary-General, Financial Services, to the offices and departments concerned, in order that each unit may be aware from the outset of the total limits within which they will be required to plan their annual travel programmes. Similar action is taken to advise these units of the travel credits available to them under the various extra-budgetary accounts administered by the Organization. Within these predetermined financial limits, each unit prepares detailed quarterly travel programmes which, while presenting separately the various categories of travel under each individual account, is expected to constitute a total, properly co-ordinated plan. In the case of all offices and departments at Headquarters, the quarterly travel programmes are submitted for prior approval as follows:

(a) The proposals are considered in the first instance by the Director of the Budget Division and his staff;

(b) At the same time, they are referred to the Assistant Secretary-General, Personnel Services, for his comments and observations;

(c) The recommendations of the Budget Division and the Office of Personnel Services are referred by the Director of the Budget Division to the Director of Policy Co-ordination, Office of Financial Services;

(d) The authority to grant final approval of all travel involving staff at the D-2 level and below rests with the Director of Policy Co-ordination;

(e) Where the latter feels that the travel proposed is not justified, he seeks the instructions of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, whose decision is subject to reconsideration only by the Secretary-General;

(f) Proposals involving travel by Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General are referred by the Director of Policy Co-ordination to the Secretary-General for his personal approval.

32. In the case of offices away from Headquarters, the authority to grant final approval in respect of individual travel proposals is delegated, for practical reasons, to the heads of the offices concerned. However, each quarterly programme is transmitted to the Director of the Budget Division, Office of Financial Services, at least one month before the quarter commences, in order that the Director of Policy Co-ordination, on the advice of the Budget Division and the Office of Personnel Services, may have the opportunity of providing his comments and observations.

33. The advantage of this system has been that it has not only imposed general restraint in the use of travel credits, but that it has impressed upon the various units of the Secretariat the need for improved planning within the framework of a total co-ordinated programme taking all categories of travel and all sources of funds into account. Although considered necessary in present circumstances, the system nevertheless has certain disadvantages. As indicated in the preceding paragraph, each quarterly programme must be considered at a number of different

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levels before it is finally approved. This process is not only somewhat complicated from an administrative point of view, but it consumes a disproportionate measure of time and effort on the part of all concerned before it is brought to a conclusion. It is also completely centralized, the final decisions being taken at the highest administrative level. It is at least open to question whether persons in the latter category are always in the best position to assess the value of a particular item of travel from a substantive point of view and its relevancy either to a specific work programme or to the exercise of a unit's more general responsibilities. Under the proposed system of programme budgeting, work programmes and activities would be developed in greater detail and all significant expenditure components, including travel, more clearly identified. Once the work programmes and activities presented on this basis are approved, it should be feasible to delegate to the heads of units, and within units to individual managers, a greater degree of authority to approve travel. Taking into consideration these procedures and in the light of the experience gained, the present system of prior approval at non-programme levels could be reconsidered. Ex post facto review and control, based on the evaluation of performance, which will be an integral feature of the proposed new programming and budgeting procedures, could continue to be exercised both within the Secretariat and at the intergovernmental level.

34. The same considerations apply in the case of the proposals made by the inspector in paragraph 62 to 65 of his report (A/8900) to the effect that (a) direct control over all travel programmes should be exercised by a committee composed of all Under-Secretaries-General, Assistant Secretaries-General and Directors of Divisions, and (b) periodic reports should be made available to Member States providing complete information on travel undertaken by the Secretariat, including names, dates, duration, destination, itinerary, purpose and cost in respect of all travel items. The senior officials mentioned under (a) above will be seized of the problem at the time of the preparation of the total work programme and budget presentation. Once the General Assembly has approved such a work programme and budget, it should be prepared to leave its administration to the Secretary-General, subject, in the case of travel, to such general policies as it may see fit to impose. Furthermore, in view of the greater opportunities which would be given to Member States in the future to evaluate performance on a programme by programme basis, including the degree of staff travel undertaken in these contexts, it is doubtful whether the special reports recommended by the inspector under (b) above would have any real utility. There are also technical reasons for deciding against such a course of action. In the case of many units of the Secretariat, which have relatively restricted travel programmes, the list of items would be manageable. On the other hand, the travel programmes of, for instance, the regional economic commissions are composed of a large number of short trips within each region. For this reason alone, a complete compilation of individual trips undertaken by the Secretariat as a whole would result in a voluminous document of doubtful utility, which would add unnecessarily to the large volume of documentation which the technical services of the Secretariat are already called upon to process.

35. There remains for consideration the basic conclusion reached by the inspector in paragraph 105 of his report that the level of credits made available for travel to date has been too high, enabling excessive and multiple travel by staff for official purposes. In paragraph 106, he recommends that, in comparison with the appropriations for 1971, the credits to be made available for travel of staff to meetings in 1973 should reflect a reduction of 25 to 30 per cent, but not less than 25 per cent, and those for travel of staff on other official business 35 to 50 per cent, but not less than 35 per cent.

36. Details are provided in annexes III and IV, respectively, on actual expenditures under these two categories in 1971, revised appropriations recommended by the Secretary-General for 1972 and appropriations recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for 1973. There follows a comparison between the appropriations recommended by the Advisory Committee for 1973 and the minimum which would be approved if the inspector's formula, as set out in the preceding paragraph, were to be applied:

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Appropriations recommended by the Advisory Committee . . .	\$1,539,500
Appropriations recommended by the inspector (1971 expenditures reduced by 25 per cent in the case of travel of staff to meetings and by 35 per cent in the case of travel of staff on other official business) . . . . .	1,046,200
Potential reduction . . . . .	<u>493,300</u>

37. The basis on which the Secretary-General's estimates for 1973 were prepared have been explained in paragraph 30 above. Although these estimates were conservative, he has not contested the total reduction of some 11 per cent subsequently recommended by the Advisory Committee under all relevant sections of the budget. The Secretary-General is also prepared to take into account the results of the special economy measures taken in the course of the current year, which have enabled him to propose revised appropriations for 1972 in the amount of \$275,100 for travel of staff to meetings (a reduction of \$7,900) and \$1,268,500 for travel of staff on other official business (a reduction of \$75,900), for a total of \$1,543,600. The latter estimate represents an increase of some \$55,257 above the total expenditures in the amount of \$1,488,343 actually incurred for these purposes in 1971. On the other hand, it exceeds by no more than \$4,100 the total appropriations recommended by the Advisory Committee for 1973 after having reduced the Secretary-General's estimates by \$165,300. In view, particularly, of experience during the current year and in spite of the increased cost of fares and subsistence payments, which have come into effect in the course of 1971 and 1972, the Secretary-General takes no issue with the Advisory Committee's recommendations. He would be reluctant, however, to accept any further reductions of the order of magnitude proposed by the inspector at the present juncture.

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Firstly, the distribution among the various units of any such global reduction would be extremely difficult to apply with any degree of fairness. It could certainly not be done on a uniform basis, as the inspector acknowledges. The majority of units operate on relatively restricted travel budgets, especially as far as official travel other than travel to meetings is concerned. The analysis provided in annex IV below clearly demonstrates this fact. To achieve the proposed reduction, the bulk of the economies will have to be applied to the organizational units mainly involved, which happen to be those engaged in economic and social activities, that is, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the regional economic commissions, UNCTAD and UNIDO. These are precisely the areas where, it has been admitted, improved work programme development may be expected to facilitate a more precise determination of actual minimum requirements in the future. Thus, as indicated above, it is envisaged that henceforth travel requirements will be established in close relation to individual functions and programmes of work. The total credits required for this purpose will therefore be arrived at in the first instance on a programmatic basis. This will not preclude the application of such general policy considerations as the Secretary-General may determine. However, these considerations should be based on principles, which may vary from programme to programme, rather than on arbitrary financial grounds. For these general reasons, the Secretary-General would also have difficulty in accepting the inspector's proposal that travel funds should be frozen for three years at the reduced level he has recommended for 1973.

38. Whatever general principles are to be applied, the situation will always be governed by certain basic circumstances in which the Organization finds itself. There is in the first instance the increasingly decentralized basis on which it operates. Thus, at the present time, its activities are dispersed between six main office locations in different parts of the world (New York, Geneva, Vienna, Bangkok, Addis Ababa and Santiago). In addition, 57 minor offices are maintained (including the United Nations Economic and Social Office at Beirut, branch offices of the regional economic commissions, special political missions and information centres). For purposes of co-ordination and management, both substantive and administrative, a certain measure of travel will always be required. In the second place, for reasons of both necessity and policy, meetings of organs and subsidiary organs do not always take place at their established headquarters. Thus, in accordance with the pattern approved by the General Assembly each year, there is a considerable degree of interchangeability between New York and Geneva and among the capital cities of the various regions as far as the regional economic commissions are concerned. The fact that the United Nations forms part of a family of international organizations also requires that close and continuing contact be maintained for purposes of substantive as well as administrative co-ordination. Finally, to the extent that the Organization becomes involved in operational activities throughout the world, a certain degree of personal contact and participation is indispensable.

39. The heads of all units of the Secretariat have been given the opportunity to comment on the report of the inspector, with special reference to the examples

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given by him of past travel which he considers to have been excessive or unnecessary. The Secretary-General believes that the inspector's intent was to support, by reference to particular instances selected at random, his view that much more restrictive travel policies should be applied. Since the Secretary-General has not disputed the need for a re-evaluation of future travel requirements and has indicated the new procedures he intends to follow in this respect, he hopes the General Assembly will agree that little purpose would be served by any further examination of the merits of individual travel undertaken in the past.

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### III. Travel of staff on home leave

40. In chapter III of his report, the inspector has reviewed the current regulations and rules governing the payment by the Organization of the costs incurred by staff and their dependants travelling on home leave. In this regard, the only change he recommends relates to the standard of accommodation to which, in his view, the reimbursement of transportation costs should be limited.

41. In accordance with the administrative instructions currently in effect (ST/AI/150, ST/AI/150/Add.1 and ST/AI/150/Amend.1 and 2), air transportation, by the most direct and economical route, shall be regarded as the normal mode for all official travel. Notwithstanding this provision, the Secretary-General may authorize an alternative mode of transportation for travel on initial appointment, change of official duty station, separation from service or home leave. All types of travel at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant-Secretary-General levels and travel on official business at the D-2 level (excluding travel on appointment, transfer, separation and home leave) shall normally be authorized by first class. In all other cases, the standard of accommodation by air shall normally be by economy or tourist class; when travel by sea is authorized, the standard applied is that next below first class. However, in the event that an appropriate standard next below first class is not available on the approved route, minimum first-class sea accommodation shall be permitted. Notwithstanding this provision, the Secretary-General may authorize a higher standard when, in his opinion, this is in the best interest of the Organization. Whatever the mode of transportation or route authorized, the amount of travel time, not chargeable to annual leave, which may be granted is confined to that which would have been necessary if the transportation had been by air and by the most direct and economical route.

42. The inspector proposes that, in the case of home leave, staff could still be authorized to travel by sea if they so desired, but that the payment by the Organization of the related transportation costs should be limited to the cost of economy class by air. In the case of travel on appointment, change of duty station or separation from service, the Secretary-General might still be permitted a certain degree of flexibility.

43. In support of his proposal, the inspector quotes the following factors: (a) the improvements in the quality and cost of air transportation facilities which have occurred since the rules in question were laid down; (b) the tendency to discontinue regular passenger service by sea, leaving only cruise facilities, which are normally at more expensive rates; and (c) the fact that, in many instances, travel by sea is undertaken by freight ships which offer limited passenger service, but only at cost standards equal to first class and higher than the equivalent cost of economy class by air. The inspector also considers that staff members travelling on home leave should not be entitled to more expensive accommodation than when travelling on official business other than on appointment, transfer or separation.

44. The Secretary-General would recall that the policy presently in effect was originally based on the reasoning that, taking into account the slower and less

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convenient travel facilities available at that time, the Organization should enable staff members to exercise, for personal reasons, a preference for travel by sea, especially when they have small children in their family.

45. It is a fact that air travel has become considerably more expeditious and comfortable and is now the most common and most accepted means of transportation. As a result, except in isolated cases where medical or related considerations may apply, the case for the sea travel benefit is less cogent than it formerly was. At the same time, in most cases the difference in the cost of available sea accommodation compared to that of travel by air in the economy or tourist class is now considerably greater than in earlier years and is likely to increase rather than decrease as time goes by.

46. The difference in the fares by sea and by air is least pronounced on the North Atlantic route, especially because of the availability of cabin class accommodation. Staff travelling on other routes would therefore be at a disadvantage inasmuch as the difference they would be meeting at their own expense would in most cases be much higher. In many cases it is precisely staff stationed at the more remote locations who are most likely to prefer a journey by sea rather than the relatively arduous journey by air.

47. It should also be noted that the question of the mode and standard of travel of staff on official business, including travel on home leave, was examined recently by the Special Committee for the Review of the United Nations Salary System. In its report, 5/ the Committee took into account the various considerations to which the inspector has independently drawn attention. Nevertheless, the Committee has recommended 6/ that:

"While the normal mode of official travel should be by air, the executive head of an organization may authorize travel by sea on appointment, transfer, home leave and separation, provided that the allowable travel time is limited to the time required for travel by air."

48. On the face of it, it would appear to be difficult to reconcile the recommendation of the Special Committee with the inspector's recommendation that the payment of extra costs of sea travel on home leave be discontinued. In addition, since acceptance of the inspector's recommendation would involve the elimination of a staff benefit of long standing, this could, in the absence of full and adequate staff consultation, have adverse effects on the morale of staff affected. Under chapter VIII of the staff regulations and rules, the Secretary-General is required to consult the elected representatives of the staff in regard to any changes in their conditions of service. In the consultations which he has

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5/ Ibid., Twenty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 28 (A/8728 and Corr.1), vol. I, para. 371.

6/ Ibid., para. 372 (ii).

initiated, but not yet completed, for the purpose of obtaining the views of the Staff Council on this matter, staff representatives have made it clear that they regard the privilege of sea travel on home leave as an important element in their conditions of service, and that this privilege cannot be withdrawn without adequate prior consultation. Accordingly, the Secretary-General suggests that a decision on the inspector's recommendation should be deferred until he has been able to complete the required staff consultations and to submit his considered views to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session.

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#### IV. Standards of accommodation

49. In chapter IV of his report, the inspector deals with the standards of accommodation to which staff travelling on official business should be entitled. The inspector, taking into account the differences in cost between first-class and economy-class travel, considers that important savings could be achieved if all staff travel, except in the case of the Secretary-General and those who have to accompany him, were to be limited to economy class and recommends accordingly. In addition, although not convinced that the best interests of the Organization are necessarily served merely because a staff member travels in first class, the inspector would allow the Secretary-General, at his discretion, to authorize exceptions to the general rule in the cases of missions of special importance.

50. The current practice, as promulgated in the relevant administrative instruction (ST/AI/150/Amend.2), derives from a decision 7/ taken by the General Assembly at its twenty-first session, based on recommendations submitted by the Secretary-General 8/ and by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. 9/ Thus, at present, first-class accommodation by air is normally provided only in the following cases:

(a) All types of travel by the Secretary-General and persons who accompany him;

(b) All types of travel by Under-Secretaries-General, Assistant Secretaries-General and officials of equivalent rank;

(c) Official travel, excluding travel on initial appointment, change of official duty station, extended mission assignment, separation from service or home leave, by staff at the D-2 level.

Whenever feasible, travel of staff in categories (b) and (c) above is authorized at the economy or tourist level only, for example, in the case of flights of short duration within Europe and comparable flights elsewhere, including travel within North America.

51. The Secretary-General agrees that, in the interests of economy, first-class travel by members of the Secretariat should be restricted to a minimum. Nevertheless, while accepting the obligation to remain, to the fullest extent possible, within any budgetary limits the General Assembly may decide to impose, he believes that, in his capacity as chief administrative officer of the United Nations, it is essential that he should continue to exercise the discretionary authority, vested in him by staff regulation 7.1, to prescribe the terms and conditions governing the payment by the Organization of travel expenses incurred by members of the Secretariat in the exercise of their official function. In this

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7/ Ibid., Twenty-first Session, Annexes, agenda item 74, document A/6631, para. 50.

8/ Ibid., document A/C.5/1074, paras. 15-24.

9/ Ibid., document A/6502, paras. 6-13.

regard, he considers that it is not only a matter of deciding on such arrangements as are, in his judgement, in the best interest of the United Nations, but to arrive at a set of criteria which would be assured of general acceptance and uniform application by the various international organizations in the common system. He would recall that the practices currently in effect were agreed upon by the various executive heads in the context of a decision taken in 1965 by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. In concluding at that time that first-class accommodation should be restricted to officials at the D-2 level and above, the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination considered that the appropriate criterion to be applied was the standard of accommodation normally authorized by national Governments to officials of comparable rank and responsibilities. The Secretary-General continues to believe that a valid case can be made for a comparison with national standards at least in so far as an executive head and his most senior colleagues are concerned. In deciding on appropriate standards of accommodation, it is relevant to take into account that duty travel by Under-Secretaries-General and, for the most part, by officials at the D-2 level, is normally undertaken in their capacity as representatives of the Secretary-General. The adoption of a general rule based on this assumption has the advantage of lending itself to uncomplicated and reasonably economical implementation. These considerations would lose none of their validity as far as staff travel is concerned if the General Assembly were to decide that reimbursement by the Organization of the travel expenses incurred by representatives of Member States should be limited to the cost of economy class by air. By such action, the General Assembly would merely be imposing a budgetary limitation for reimbursement without seeking to prescribe to Governments the standards of accommodation to be actually authorized in the case of their officials.

52. There remains the question of the possible extent of the economies which could be achieved if the Secretary-General were to apply more restrictive criteria than those currently in effect. In present circumstances, it is not possible to provide any reasonably accurate information on this point. Everything would depend on the number 10/ of officials at the D-2 level and above actually travelling, if at all, as well as on their particular itineraries. No matter what assumptions and average cost differentials are employed in the absence of more precise information, it seems unlikely that the economies to be achieved by discontinuance of first-class travel entitlements would be in excess of some \$30,000. On balance, therefore, the Secretary-General is not convinced that a case has been made for a change in the arrangements agreed to by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination in 1965.

53. In the general context of his review of the standards of travel accommodation, the inspector has also recommended (A/8900, para. 133) that the Secretary-General should make obligatory the use of excursion fares or group travel rates whenever it is possible to do so. It has, in fact, been the standard practice to take advantage of special rates of this description to the fullest extent feasible. In the case of travel of staff to service certain of the larger conferences and meetings, recourse has also been had to charter flights.

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10/ At present the Secretariat contains 14 Under-Secretaries-General, 15 Assistant Secretaries-General and 75 officials at the D-2 level.

V. Excess baggage

54. In chapter V of his report, the inspector reviews, in conclusion, the current arrangement whereby staff and their dependants who are authorized to travel by air in the economy or tourist class only, are nevertheless entitled, at the expense of the Organization, to the first-class baggage allowance.

55. In the interest of administrative simplicity, travellers are normally provided with excess baggage vouchers covering the full first-class entitlement. To the extent these are not utilized, the vouchers are returned upon completion of travel and the Organization obtains a refund from the travel agent. Whereas the budget estimates are normally based on the assumption that these entitlements will be exercised in full, in practice approximately half the vouchers are returned unused, no doubt reflecting either the personal preference of staff to travel with a minimum of luggage or because airlines are not uniformly strict in the enforcement of the maximum weight allowances.

56. The inspector recommends the discontinuance of the first-class excess baggage entitlement in the case of all types of staff travel, except for travel on initial appointment, transfer or repatriation, when exceptions could be authorized upon separate consideration of the actual requirements in each case.

57. The Secretary-General acknowledges that the justification for this entitlement varies from case to case. It is strongest (a) when a staff member and his dependants travel on initial appointment, transfer or repatriation, (b) when a staff member travels to a meeting or on other official business and needs to include a minimum of documents or other papers in his baggage for purpose of reference and (c) when a staff member, accompanied in the case of home leave by his dependants, travels from one climate to another for visits of relatively long duration, and therefore requires different types of clothing. For these reasons alone, the Secretary-General considers that the present entitlement should stand. As pointed out above, there is no evidence that the benefit is being abused. At the same time, there is no simple administrative method whereby it could be accorded on a more selective basis. At most, a substantial percentage deduction could be applied to the estimates submitted for this general purpose, taking into account the experience to date with respect to the non-exercise of these entitlements. Since the travel estimates submitted by the various units of the Secretariat have not always indicated the extent to which excess baggage entitlements were taken into account, it is not possible to segregate the precise amount included for this purpose in the budget estimates for 1973. Based on an analysis of travel claims submitted at Headquarters during the first half of 1972, pro-rates in respect of offices at other locations, it is estimated that an amount of some \$450,000 might be involved. Basing itself on the likely non-exercise of full excess baggage entitlements, the Advisory Committee has already recommended a reduction of \$100,000 in the total travel estimates submitted by the Secretary-General under section 5 for 1973; the reductions it has recommended in respect of the travel credits requested by UNCTAD and UNIDO, in the amounts of \$20,000 and \$25,000, respectively, have been motivated in part by the same consideration. The Secretary-General believes that, in the absence of reliable

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statistics, any further reduction for this reason would not be justified. He would undertake, in the course of preparing the budget estimates for the next ensuing financial period, to have excess baggage requirements identified more clearly and to apply an appropriate reduction for non-exercise of entitlements at that time.

## ANNEX I

Travel of representatives and members of organs and subsidiary organs

Section	Title	1973 estimates as recommended by ACABQ	1972 revised estimates	1971 expenses
1	(i) Travel of representative to the General Assembly . . .	520 000	513 000	520 000
	(ii) Travel of members of commissions, committees and other subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly . . . . .	559 300	559 400	512 649
	(iii) Travel of members of commissions and committees of the Economic and Social Council . . . . .	337 400	294 000	255 652
	(iv) Travel of members of the visiting missions of the Trusteeship Council . . . . .	31 000	34 000	44 929
	Total, section 1 . . . 1 447 700 <sup>a/</sup>	1 447 700 <sup>a/</sup>	1 400 400	1 333 230
15	Travel of members of the Advisory Committee to the Trade and Development Board and to the Committee on Commodities . . . .	15 000	30 000	11 074
	Total, annex I . . .	1 462 700	1 430 400	1 344 304

a/ Reflects reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in the amount of \$60,000.

ANNEX II

A. Chairmen or rapporteurs of subsidiary organs who will be called upon in 1973 to present the report of such subsidiary organ to the parent organ

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(i) International Law Commission

Chairman of the International Law Commission to attend the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly (General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), paragraph 3 (b) (i)):

Travel . . . . .	2,200
Subsistence - one week . . . . .	<u>300</u>
	<u>2,500</u>

(ii) United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

(a) The Chairman to attend the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly in order to present the report of the Commission (General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), paragraph 3 (b) (i)):

Travel . . . . .	2,100
Subsistence - three weeks . . . . .	<u>900</u>
	<u>3,000</u>

(b) The Chairman of the Working Group on International Legislation on Shipping to attend the UNCTAD Working Group on International Shipping Legislation in Geneva (General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), paragraph 3 (b) (ii)):

Travel . . . . .	2,100
Subsistence - two weeks . . . . .	<u>400</u>
	<u>2,500</u>

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B. Members of organs or subsidiary organs who will be called upon in 1973 to act as designated representatives at meetings of other organs or subsidiary organs

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(i) International Law Commission

An observer of the International Law Commission to attend meetings of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, the European Committee on Legal Co-operation and the Inter-American Juridical Committee (General Assembly resolution 174 (II) and article 26, paragraph 1, of the Statute of the International Law Commission):

Travel . . . . .	3,800
Subsistence - one week each meeting	<u>700</u>
	<u>4,500</u>

(ii) United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

One representative to attend two meetings of the International Chamber of Commerce for a period of one week (General Assembly resolution 2205 (XXI), section II, paragraphs 11 and 12):

Travel . . . . .	1,800
Subsistence - one week each meeting	<u>500</u>
	<u>2,300</u>

(iii) Commission on Human Rights

(a) A representative of the Commission on the Status of Women to attend the meeting of the Commission on Human Rights (Economic and Social Council resolution 566 (XIX) and General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), paragraph 3 (b) (ii)):

Travel . . . . .	1,000
Subsistence - 10 days . . . . .	<u>300</u>
	<u>1,300</u>

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(iii) Commission on Human Rights (continued)

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- (b) Three special rapporteurs to attend the meeting should the Commission on Human Rights discuss their respective reports:

Mr. Ganji (Iran), Rapporteur on economic, social and cultural rights (Economic and Social Council resolution 1502 (XLVIII) and Commission resolution 11 (XXVI)):

Travel . . . . .	790
Subsistence - 10 days . . . . .	<u>340</u>
	<u>1,130</u>

Mr. Saario (Finland), Rapporteur on discrimination against persons born out of wedlock (Commission decisions 10 (XXIV) and 19 (XXV) endorsed by the Council in the context of the Commission's report):

Travel . . . . .	400
Subsistence - 10 days . . . . .	<u>340</u>
	<u>740</u>

Mr. Ingles (Philippines), Rapporteur on discrimination in respect of the right of everyone to leave any country (Commission decision 19 (XXV) endorsed by the Council in the context of the Commission's report):

Travel . . . . .	2,150
Subsistence - 10 days . . . . .	<u>340</u>
	<u>2,490</u>

(iv) Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

- (a) Representative of the Commission on the Status of Women to attend the meeting of the Sub-Commission (Economic and Social Council resolution 48 (IV) and General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), paragraph 3 (b) (ii)):

Travel . . . . .	1,000
Subsistence - 10 days . . . . .	<u>340</u>
	<u>1,340</u>

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(iv) Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (continued)

## (b) Three special rapporteurs to attend the meeting of the Sub-Commission:

Mr. Capotorti (Italy), Rapporteur for the study of the implementation of principles set out in article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Sub-Commission resolution 6 (XXIV) and Economic and Social Council resolution 1418 (XLVI)):

Travel . . . . .	968
Subsistence - three weeks . . . . .	<u>882</u>
	<u>1,850</u>

Mr. Ruhashyankiko (Rwanda), Rapporteur for the study on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide (Sub-Commission resolution 7 (XXIV) and Economic and Social Council resolution 1420 (XLVI)):

Travel . . . . .	1,660
Subsistence - three weeks . . . . .	<u>882</u>
	<u>2,542</u>

Mr. Martinez Cobo (Ecuador), Rapporteur for the study of the problem of discrimination against indigenous populations (Sub-Commission resolution 8 (XXIV) and Economic and Social Council resolution 1589 (L)):

Travel . . . . .	598
Subsistence - three weeks . . . . .	<u>882</u>
	<u>1,480</u>

Note: The financial implications in the report of the Sub-Commission to the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1070 and Corr.1, annex II, paras. 12-20) indicated that the Special Rapporteur will be required to travel to Headquarters twice in 1973, the first time for approximately three weeks to prepare their reports and subsequently to present those reports to the Sub-Commission at its session in August. The above estimates cover only one trip for the preparation of reports on the assumption that the Special Rapporteurs will be re-elected as members of the Sub-Commission and that expenses for their second trip will therefore be covered by the estimates of the Sub-Commission.

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## ANNEX III

Travel of staff to meetings

Section	Title	1973 estimates as recommended by ACABQ	1972 revised estimates	1971 expenses
5	Travel of staff to meetings . . . . .	286 100 <sup>a/</sup>	235 100	221 715
15	Travel of staff to UNCTAD meetings and for purposes of representation at meetings of other bodies . . . . .	37 000 <sup>b/</sup>	40 000	54 045
	Total, annex III	323 100	275 100	275 760

<sup>a/</sup> Reflects a reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in the amount of \$40,000.

<sup>b/</sup> Idem., \$3,000 pro-rated.

## ANNEX IV

Travel of staff on official business other than travel to meetings

Section	Title	1973			1971 expenses
		estimates as recommended by ACABQ	revised estimates		
5	(i) <u>Headquarters</u>				
	Secretary-General . . . . .	50 000	50 100	21 751	
	Executive Office of the Secretary-General . . . . .	10 000	10 400	5 629	
	Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs . . . . .	2 000	200	-	
	Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs . . . . .	6 300	5 200	3 607	
	Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Inter-Agency Affairs . . . . .	12 000	13 300	13 277	
	Office of Legal Affairs . . . . .	12 000	8 900	11 281	
	Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management . . . . .	5 000	2 200	5 687	
	Administrative Management Service . . . . .	20 000	10 000	10 000	
	Electronic Data Processing and Information Systems Office . . . . .	5 000	1 000	-	
	Office of Financial Services . . . . .	14 100	5 400	13 500	
	Internal Audit Service . . . . .	8 400	7 000	8 105	
	Office of Personnel Services . . . . .	16 000	15 900	16 819	
	Department of Political and Security Council Affairs . . . . .	15 800	25 900	28 063	

ANNEX IV (continued)

Section	Title	1973			1971 expenses
		estimates as recommended by ACABQ	revised estimates	1972	
5	Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization . . . . .	3 200	6 500	1 963	
	Office of Public Information . . . . .	23 000	17 200	20 567	
	Department of Economic and Social Affairs . . . . .	121 000	102 400	120 508	
	Division of Human Rights . . . . .	6 800	5 600	6 640	
	Office of Conference Services . . . . .	9 500	7 900	5 156	
	Office of General Services . . . . .	4 000	1 000	3 608	
	Total, Headquarters . . . . .	344 100	296 100	296 161	
	(ii) United Nations Office at Geneva . . . . .	91 000 <sup>a/</sup>	92 400 <sup>a/</sup>	75 800 <sup>a/</sup>	
	(iii) Information centres . . . . .	31 500	26 500	27 655	
	(iv) Economic Commission for Europe . . . . .	38 800	35 000	33 431	
	(v) Economic Commission for Asia and the East East . . . . .	90 000	86 000	94 136	
	(vi) Economic Commission for Latin America . . . . .	91 000	91 000	93 255	
	(vii) Economic Commission for Africa . . . . .	100 000	106 000	98 144	
	(viii) United Nations Economic and Social Office at Beirut . . . . .	10 000	8 500	8 834	
	Total, section 5 . . . . .	701 400 <sup>b/</sup>	740 500	727 416	

ANNEX IV (continued)

Section	Title	1973 estimates as recommended by ACABQ	1972 revised estimates	1971 expenses
15	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development . . . . .	78 000 <sup>c/</sup>	85 000	89 551
16	United Nations Industrial Development Organization (including industrial field advisers) . . . . .	244 000 <sup>d/</sup>	247 000	213 187
18	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees . . . . .	193 000 <sup>e/</sup>	196 000	182 429
	Total, annex IV . . . . .	1 216 400	1 268 500	1 212 583

a/ Includes \$22,000 for Technical Assistance Recruitment Services at Geneva.

b/ Reflects a reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee in the amount of \$95,000, in total only, breakdown by office not having been decided.

c/ Idem., \$7,000, pro-rated.

d/ Idem., \$15,300, pro-rated.

e/ Idem., \$5,000, pro-rated.

## Travel of staff on home leave

Section	Title	1973 estimates as recommended by ACABQ	1972 revised estimates	1971 expenses
5	(i) Headquarters . . . . .	1 314 000	1 357 000	1 331 760
	(ii) Geneva Office . . . . .	85 000	83 000	69 966
	(iii) Information Centres . . . . .	35 000	28 500	27 760
	(iv) Economic Commission for Europe . . . . .	28 000	32 000	24 838
	(v) Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East . . . . .	80 000	90 500	79 365
	(vi) Economic Commission for Latin America . . . . .	90 000	71 000	78 305
	(vii) Economic Commission for Africa . . . . .	130 000	179 200	108 763
	(viii) United Nations Economic and Social Office at Beirut . . . . .	5 000	5 400	2 722
	Total, section 5 . . . . .	1 652 000 <sup>a/</sup>	1 846 600	1 723 479
15	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development . . . . .	120 000 <sup>b/</sup>	120 900	108 857
16	United Nations Industrial Development Organization . . . . .	155 500 <sup>c/</sup>	204 000	178 657
18	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees . . . . .	65 000 <sup>d/</sup>	69 500	49 645
	Total, annex V . . . . .	1 992 500	2 241 000	2 060 638

<sup>a/</sup> Reflects reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee in the amount of \$115,000, in total only, breakdown by office not having been decided.

<sup>b/</sup> Idem., \$10,000, pro-rated.

<sup>c/</sup> Idem., \$9,700, pro-rated.

<sup>d/</sup> Idem., \$2,000, pro-rated.





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JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Report on the use of travel funds in  
the United Nations

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary  
Questions to the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions submits herewith to the General Assembly its observations on the report by Inspector S. Ilić of the Joint Inspection Unit on the use of travel funds in the United Nations (A/8900).
2. The Inspector has summarized his main conclusions in a separate chapter (chapter VII), and the comments of the Secretary-General (A/8900/Add.1) address themselves to each recommendation in turn; consideration of the report by the Advisory Committee has thus been greatly facilitated. In its own observations below, the Committee has dealt separately with each main recommendation, except recommendations 6 and 7, which are similar in content and have been considered together.
3. The conclusions of the Inspector, presented in chapter VI of his report, deal mainly with the volume of travel on official business by staff of the United Nations Secretariat, which is the subject of chapter II. However, the body of the report and the resulting recommendations cover a wider area, which embraces the reimbursement payable to representatives to the General Assembly and members of subsidiary bodies (chapter I) and various aspects of travel standards for staff members (chapters III, IV and V). The main recommendations summarized in chapter VII address themselves to all the above subjects.

Recommendation 1

4. The Inspector recommends a new formula, described in paragraphs 21 and 22 of his report, for the reimbursement of travel expenses to representatives of Member States attending sessions of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General has

limited his comments on this proposal to the probable financial implications, since he considers that the Assembly itself is in the best position to decide whether it wishes to modify the existing formula, which has been in effect since 1966.

5. The Inspector's recommendation would establish a link between the reimbursement of travel expenses to representatives attending General Assembly sessions and their countries' rates of assessment. However, the capacity of Member States to contribute to the regular budget of the Organization as a whole is one of the major factors taken into account by the Committee on Contributions when it recommends the scale of assessments, and it would be undesirable to select one particular item of expenditure under the budget and apply to it the same criteria all over again. Moreover the selection of three classes of Member States along the lines proposed by the Inspector would necessarily be an arbitrary one which would almost inevitably introduce anomalies and might also call into question the equal sovereign rights of all Member States. In arriving at its conclusion that the present arrangements should continue, the Advisory Committee has also borne in mind that introduction of the formula suggested by the Inspector would probably not result in very large budgetary savings. <sup>1/</sup> More substantial savings would accrue were the United Nations to follow the practice of most of the specialized agencies (A/8900, para. 18).

#### Recommendation 2

6. The Inspector recommends that reimbursement of travel claims to representatives of Member States and to members of subsidiary bodies be limited in all cases to the cost of air economy fares. Without explicitly taking a position on this recommendation, the Secretary-General has provided information on the reasons which led to the adoption of the existing rules. The Inspector has rightly pointed out that those rules are rather complex and do not appear to be fully consistent. For example, there seems to be little difference between the nature of membership in certain of the bodies listed in annex 1 of the Inspector's report, yet in some cases the United Nations reimburses travel and subsistence costs, and in others travel costs only; most members of group B in that annex are reimbursed up to the cost of first-class travel and the rest up to the cost of economy-class only.

7. In its examination of this recommendation, the Advisory Committee bore in mind that, as recently as 1966, the General Assembly reversed its own decision and reintroduced the present entitlement to first-class travel. It also took into account that withdrawal of the first-class entitlement would, in monetary terms, place a relatively greater burden on Member States situated furthest from New York.

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<sup>1/</sup> The estimate of \$73,750 provided by the Secretary-General for 1973 (A/8900/Add.1, para. 8) includes also the effect of the Inspector's recommendation to limit reimbursement in all cases to the cost of economy class air travel or its equivalent (see recommendation 2).

Like the Inspector (A/8900, paras. 30 and 53), the Committee believes that the travel standards applied as a basis for calculating reimbursement to Member States and members of subsidiary organs cannot be judged in isolation from the travel standards applied to the staff of the Secretariat. The latter are the subject of the Inspector's recommendation 8 and, in its related observations (para. 15 below), the Advisory Committee has proposed that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination recommend uniform standards for the organizations in the United Nations system. On the basis of such standards as may emerge, the Advisory Committee would propose to return to recommendation 2 of the Inspector, taking account of the practices applied in other organizations, when it next reports to the General Assembly on administrative and budgetary co-ordination in the United Nations system.

8. However the apparent inconsistencies referred to in paragraph 6 above are not confined to travel standards alone. Accordingly, in its next report on administrative and budgetary co-ordination in the United Nations system, the Advisory Committee will also review carefully the nature of the bodies whose members are at present entitled to reimbursement of their travel expenses, whether first-class or economy-class, and submit recommendations, bearing in mind the guidelines adopted by the General Assembly in the past and relevant practice in the United Nations system, on whether that entitlement should in all cases be maintained and whether any changes seem justified in the present entitlements to the payment of subsistence allowance. The General Assembly could consider concurrently the Committee's recommendations on these aspects and on travel standards.

9. Recommendations 3 to 7 of the Inspector deal with the volume of travel by staff on official business. In support of his recommendations, the Inspector cites a number of specific examples where, in his view, travel was excessive; the Advisory Committee feels that the Secretary-General has given insufficient attention to this matter in his comments. The Secretary-General does suggest (A/8900/Add.1, para. 39) that, in future, similar cases are less likely to occur. The Advisory Committee welcomes this assurance and, when examining future budget estimates, it will devote particular attention to the provisions for this type of travel so as to ensure that due weight is given to the Inspector's findings.

### Recommendation 3

10. The Inspector recommends that, every two years, the Secretary-General present the General Assembly with a report providing detailed information on staff travel. While the Advisory Committee appreciates the concerns underlying this recommendation, it shares the Secretary-General's doubts that the usefulness of such a compilation to Member States would be commensurate with the time and money required to produce it. Moreover, the Committee believes that the new procedures referred to in paragraph 13 below will ensure that travel appropriations will, in future, be closely related to the needs of the work programme, which will henceforth be considered by Member States concurrently with the budget.

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Recommendation 4

11. The Advisory Committee fully agrees with this recommendation, to the effect that attendance of staff at meetings be limited to the minimum required. Indeed, the Committee has made similar recommendations on many occasions in the past when reporting to the General Assembly on the Secretary-General's estimates for staff travel to meetings.

Recommendation 5

12. The Inspector recommends that staff participation in seminars be limited, where possible, to a Director or the senior staff member of the division concerned, and a technical secretary. The recommendation is based on his conclusion that in the past attendance by staff members at seminars has been excessive. In the Advisory Committee's view the presence of five or six staff members at a seminar (A/8900, para. 103) hardly seems necessary; however, since the size and nature of seminars differ widely, it would, in the Committee's view, be difficult to devise and administer a rigid uniform rule. Nevertheless, the Secretary-General should apply such internal controls as will ensure that all staff members authorized to attend seminars are in fact needed.

Recommendations 6 and 7

13. The Advisory Committee has considered these recommendations together since both propose percentage reductions in the appropriations for staff travel: a reduction of 25-30 per cent for travel of staff to meetings, and a reduction of 35-50 per cent for travel on other official business. Neither recommendation is supported by the Secretary-General, who comments that (a) a tighter and more extensive system of control has recently been established within the Secretariat; (b) under the new system of budget preparation and presentation to be introduced for the 1974-75 biennium, all significant expenditure components, including travel, will be more clearly identified; and (c) the total appropriations recommended for 1973 by the Advisory Committee for travel of staff on official business are only slightly more than actual costs in 1971 and are less than the revised appropriations for 1972, in spite of increases in fares and subsistence rates (A/8900/Add.1, paras. 31-33 and 37).

14. The savings achieved in 1972 have proved the validity of the Inspector's basic thesis that, in the past, not all travel on official business has been necessary. <sup>2/</sup> Those savings have been largely due to the control procedures referred to in paragraph 13 (a) above, which will be maintained. However, the Advisory Committee has already recommended reductions of about 12 per cent in the Secretary-General's initial estimates for 1973 and, without compromising the execution of

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<sup>2/</sup> For the savings in chapter II of section 5, see the Secretary-General's report on supplementary estimates for the financial year 1972 (A/8834, annex II, para. 5.2).

the work programme, it might be unrealistic to expect further reductions of the size proposed by the Inspector. As far as 1973 is concerned, the Advisory Committee will bear in mind the Inspector's findings when considering any additional requests for travel on official business which the Secretary-General might make at the current session of the General Assembly in connexion with the administrative and financial implications of proposals approved by Main Committees. In its review of the programme and budget for 1974-75 and future binnia, the Committee will examine carefully the estimates for staff travel in terms of the programme components to which they relate.

#### Recommendation 8

15. The Inspector's recommendation is that travel reimbursements to staff members be limited to the cost of economy class except for the Secretary-General and those accompanying him, it being understood that the Secretary-General may use his discretionary authority in cases of especially important missions. As the Inspector points out, this was basically the decision reached by the General Assembly in 1965, and reversed by it the following year. In his comments on the Inspector's report, the Secretary-General has recalled that the 1966 decision of the Assembly was based on an agreement reached in ACC following consultations among the organizations in the United Nations system. During its discussions this year with representatives of the organizations, the Advisory Committee inquired into the practices which they follow, from which it emerged that, despite the earlier agreement in ACC, some differences remain. The Committee believes that it is important that uniform standards be applied throughout the system; this can best be achieved by further interagency consultation. In this connexion, the Committee notes that travel standards for staff were discussed at the recent session of the FAO Council. The Committee therefore recommends that, in 1973, ACC study and submit recommendations on standards of travel accommodation for staff members travelling on official business, bearing in mind the Inspector's recommendation and current practice in national Governments and, where appropriate, distinguishing between short and long journeys. In its study, ACC should give particular attention to whether justification exists for according first class privileges to staff members at the D-2 level, and should define those cases where travel by a staff member in his capacity as representative of his executive head might justify higher standards than those otherwise applicable. As Chairman of ACC, the Secretary-General could then report the Committee's recommendations to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session. At that time, the General Assembly may wish to consider whether staff regulation 7.1 of the United Nations, which vests in the Secretary-General the authority to prescribe the terms and conditions governing the payment of travel expenses to Secretariat members on official business, need be amended.

16. In paragraph 124 of his report, the Inspector recommends that reimbursement to staff wishing to travel on home leave by sea should be limited to the cost of air-economy class. The Advisory Committee agrees with this recommendation. Since the existing entitlements were granted, air transport has become the commonly accepted method of travel for long journeys, while the cost of sea travel has

risen steadily and, in many cases, exceeds that of air economy by a factor of 50 per cent or more (A/8900, annex 4). Moreover, the staff rules provide staff members travelling long distances on home leave with travel time and subsistence entitlements, which enable them to break their journeys without extra cost to themselves. In its first report on the budget estimates for 1972 the Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General review whether the maintenance of the sea travel entitlement was justified. 3/ Having considered the Secretary-General's comments on the Inspector's report, the Committee believes that the entitlement should be discontinued as from 1973, except where travel by air is not advisable on medical grounds. Staff members wishing to travel on home leave by sea could naturally continue to do so, but would have to bear any cost above that of air economy. Such a procedure would be consistent with those already applied by certain organizations in the United Nations system. 4/ The Advisory Committee accordingly recommends that the General Assembly reduce the related appropriations for 1973 under sections 5, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 of the budget by \$90,000 (A/8900, para. 116, table 2). The Committee recommends no change in the present entitlement for reimbursement of the cost of sea travel on appointment, transfer and separation. 5/

#### Recommendation 9

17. The Inspector recommends that the refund of excess baggage charges be discontinued, subject to exceptions in the case of initial appointment, transfer or repatriation, each case being considered on its merits. While the Advisory Committee agrees with the Inspector that in many cases staff members do not need to carry excess baggage - as shown by the large number of vouchers which are returned unused - it believes that, in certain cases, discontinuance of this right would constitute a hardship. 6/ For this reason, and since there is no evidence that the benefit is being abused, the Advisory Committee recommends that it be retained. However, the Inspector's report lends weight to the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee in its First Report on the budget estimates for 1973 to reduce the estimates for section 5 (travel of staff) by \$100,000 to reflect the probability that many excess baggage entitlements provided for in the initial estimates will not in fact be exercised. 7/ The Advisory Committee trusts that, in presenting his estimates for 1974-75 and future biennia, the Secretary-General will himself apply a reduction to take account of this factor.

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3/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/8408 and Corr.1 and 2), para. 155.

4/ For example, UNESCO, cf. rule 107.4, Route and mode of travel.

5/ However, the standards of accommodation for sea travel should be among the matters studied by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (see para. 15 above).

6/ Such a case might arise when a staff member and dependents travel on home leave from one climate to another for a long visit, an example cited by the Secretary-General (A/8900/Add.1, para. 57).

7/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/8708 and Corr.1), para. 31 (c).

Recommendation 10

18. The recommendation is that travel funds be frozen for three years at their reduced level (that is, the level that would apply should the Inspector's other recommendations be adopted), after which a new review would be made. The Advisory Committee believes that the control procedures initiated in 1972 for staff travel, along with the new budgetary procedures that will be introduced in 1973, should ensure that appropriations for travel in future years are limited to what are strictly necessary for the efficient execution of the Organization's responsibilities. For its part, the Advisory Committee will examine critically all requests by the Secretary-General for travel appropriations, in order to secure that the unquestionable leit-motiv of the Inspector's report is fully respected.

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