



UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL

A/C.5/788  
14 October 1959

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fourteenth session  
FIFTH COMMITTEE  
Agenda item 44

BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1960

Standards of travel accommodation for staff members

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In October 1958, the Fifth Committee agreed (A/4061, paragraph 9)<sup>1/</sup> that the question of standards of travel accommodation for staff members should be reviewed at the fourteenth session of the General Assembly, on the basis of reports to be submitted by the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.
2. All travel undertaken by staff members at the expense of the United Nations falls within one of the following three categories, for which budget provision (for 1960) has been made in the sections indicated:

Budget estimates for 1960

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (a) Travel on duty                                | Section 8, chapter I (Travel of staff to meetings); chapter II (Travel on other official business) |
| (b) Travel on home leave                          | Section 8, chapter III   |
| (c) Travel on appointment, transfer or separation | Section 7, chapter III (i)   |

3. The following are the standards of accommodation currently authorized:
  - (a) Travel on Duty
    - (i) Travel by air: Staff members at all grades are entitled (subject to the exceptions listed below) to standard first-class accommodation

<sup>1/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 43.

when travelling on official business. Sleeping berths may be authorized, depending on circumstances, for officials at the Under-Secretary level. Use of jet flights on a standard first-class (but not de luxe) basis has recently been authorized, for trans-Atlantic journeys. Travel within Europe is normally limited to tourist class. In the case of groups of staff members travelling to conferences, and provided that circumstances so warrant, either charter arrangements or other arrangements of a standard lower than first-class are made, to the extent feasible. This was done in connexion with the 1959 sessions of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East in Broadbeach (Australia), the Economic and Social Council in Mexico City, and the Economic Commission for Latin-America in Panama City.

- (ii) Travel by sea: Travel by sea is normally not authorized. Particular cases may be approved on an exceptional basis. In such cases, minimum first-class accommodation is allowed. Subject to the exigencies of the service, staff members may, however, elect to travel by sea provided that any extra costs involved are reimbursed to the Organization, and that the difference in travel time between air and sea travel is charged to annual leave.
  - (iii) Travel by rail: As a general rule, first-class accommodation is allowed for all personnel. Sleeping accommodation is authorized as follows: For travel in North America: Under-Secretary level, compartment; D-2 and D-1 levels, single bedroom; P-5 level and below, roomettes. For travel in Europe: D-1 and above, single occupancy; P-5 and below, double occupancy.
- (b) Travel on Home Leave
- (i) Travel by air: For staff members at the D-1 level and above, standard first-class accommodations. For staff members at the P-5 level and below, tourist class (or economy class when tourist class is not available) for flights of less than sixteen hours - and first-class for flights of more than sixteen hours. Staff members travelling by tourist or economy class are granted an excess baggage allowance equivalent to that applying to first-class flights.

- (ii) Travel by sea: Minimum first-class accommodation for staff members at D-1 level and above. Cabin-class or equivalent for those at the P-5 level and below.
- (iii) Travel by rail: As for duty travel.
- (c) Travel on appointment, transfer or separation
  - (i) Travel by air: Standard first-class accommodation for all staff.
  - (ii) Travel by sea: Minimum first-class accommodation for all staff.
  - (iii) Travel by rail: As for duty travel.

While the Staff Regulations of the United Nations provide that the conditions and definitions for the payment of the travel expenses of staff members shall be described by the Secretary-General, the question of travel standards has been studied on two occasions by expert committees of the General Assembly. In 1949, the Committee of Experts on Salary, Allowances and Leave Systems expressed the opinion (A/C.5/331, paragraph 100) that "it would be more compatible with the dignity and position of the Organization for such officials [senior and intermediate officials] to travel first-class when on official business than to be restricted to cabin (or equivalent) class accommodation, as is now the practice whenever such accommodation is available". The Fifth Committee decided, however, on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee (A/1313, paragraphs 59, 60), <sup>2/</sup> that discretion in meeting the needs of the Organization should continue to be left to the Secretary-General. The second occasion arose in 1956, when the Salary Review Committee suggested (A/3209, paragraph 277) that "the practice of the various organizations is in some respects unduly expensive, and that worthwhile economies could be found without introducing undue complexity into the rules", and that for many journeys in certain parts of the world, staff below the Director and Principal Officer level might well travel by second-class. The Fifth Committee concurred in that suggestion (A/3558, paragraph 121)<sup>3/</sup> and in a parallel recommendation of the Advisory Committee (A/3505, annex)<sup>3/</sup> that the Secretary-General should prepare revised travel rules calculated to produce savings in 1957 in over-all travel costs.

<sup>2/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifth Session, Supplement No. 7A.

<sup>3/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Eleventh Session, Annexes, agenda item 51.

5. The Secretary-General took the position, both in 1956<sup>4/</sup> and 1957,<sup>5/</sup> that the setting of travel standards, as one of the elements of the common system of salaries and allowances, was a matter for prior consultation among the participating organizations, with a view to attaining the maximum possible uniformity of standards. There was, in his opinion, little scope for appreciable savings through a further lowering of the standards applied to international officials.

6. Consultations have accordingly been held, since that time, with the specialized agencies. The specific question of standards of accommodation and mode of travel of staff members of the United Nations and the specialized agencies was considered at the 1959 session of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions on the basis of a report submitted by the International Civil Aviation Organization on the practices of the organizations and of certain foreign services in respect of cost standards, allowable travel time, and level of accommodation. This shows that the standards of accommodation authorized by the United Nations for its staff, either on official travel or on home leave travel, are in no case more generous, and in many cases appreciably lower, than those provided by most Member Governments for their foreign service officers.

7. It is to be noted in this connexion that the standards of travel accommodation now authorized for home leave represent a progressive lowering of standards since the early days of the United Nations - a fact which is of increasing concern to the staff. In 1946, staff members, irrespective of grade, were authorized to travel first-class by sea or air. In 1947, these standards were revised to allow, in the case of staff members below the level of Principal Officer, for sea travel at cabin-class standard or its equivalent, and for air travel between New York and Western Europe, at tourist-class standard. The standards of air travel are being further lowered in many cases as a result of the reduction of tourist-class accommodations.

---

4/ Ibid., Fifth Committee, 585th meeting.

5/ Ibid., Twelfth Session, Fifth Committee, 638th meeting.

8. The CCAQ also paid special attention to problems created by the introduction of jet-plane travel and the trend for commercial airlines to replace existing first and tourist classes by "de luxe" and "economy" classes. The Committee recognized that each organization had to meet these problems in the light of its own particular pattern of travel requirements either on duty or on home leave, and concluded that it was hardly feasible to attempt a reconciliation of practices under the prevailing conditions. It agreed to revert to this question at a later date when developments in the field of jet-travel and the pricing policies of the airlines might be seen in clearer perspective.

9. The travel costs financed under sections 8 and 7 include amounts in respect of per diem allowances payable during periods of absence from a duty station. For the purpose of a comparative analysis of travel standards, such payments may reasonably be brought into account. In so far as perhaps 90 per cent of the staff are concerned, the rates of per diem are substantially below those authorized for independent members of expert committees travelling at United Nations expense, the difference in most cases being between 30 and 40 per cent, and in some cases reaching as high as 50 per cent.

10. In the light of the foregoing, the Secretary-General believes that further review of the standards of accommodation should await a time when the major changeover to jet travel will have taken place and basic adjustments in the different classes of service and fares have been more firmly and uniformly established by the airlines. It would seem reasonable to anticipate this occurring within the next two years.

-----