

UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARIAT



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ST/AI/257  
12 May 1978

## ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for General Services

Subject: INFORMATION FOR UNITED NATIONS TRAVELLERS

1. Travel and related entitlements of staff members are established in chapter VII of the Staff Regulations and Rules. A list of related administrative circulars is contained in the annex to this document.

2. The purpose of this instruction is to provide information regarding the procedures to be followed in arranging official travel to or from Headquarters or shipment of personal effects and household goods at United Nations expense. It consists of three parts: part I sets out travel arrangements; part II deals with accompanied baggage and unaccompanied shipments; and part III delineates the division of responsibilities for travel and shipping arrangements among certifying officers, the Travel Unit and the Traffic Unit of the Office of General Services and the travel agency.

## I. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

3. Travel authorization form (PT.8) is prepared by the department which is responsible for certifying the charges. Departmental administrative officers at Headquarters who have questions regarding the route, mode, standard or timing of travel should contact the Travel Unit of the Transportation Section before the authorization is prepared in order to ensure that travel is authorized by the most direct route and at the lowest possible cost to the Organization. For this purpose, the authorized official departure and return dates, as well as the requested dates, must be established by the department and shown on the travel authorization form.

4. The travel authorization prepared by the department is sent to the Budget Accounts and Data Preparation Section of the Office of Financial Services, where a record is made of the estimated cost and arrangements are made for payment of cash advances when requested. The form is then sent to the Travel Unit for establishment and authorization of the travel entitlements and for transmittal to

the travel agency. The Travel Unit calculates the fare entitlement on the basis, inter alia, of the travel dates given on the travel authorization form. Whenever the Travel Unit notes that a lower excursion or a seasonal fare may be available by a slight adjustment in the timing or duration of the travel, it may contact the department concerned to ascertain whether the travel can be readjusted to effect a saving.

5. The travel agency is responsible for making travel and hotel reservations and, whenever practical, for issuing tickets at least one week in advance of the departure date. Normally, the travel agency assigns a counsellor to contact the traveller to work out travel details after the travel authorization form is received. However, in order to be sure that confirmed reservations are obtained prior to departure, the traveller is advised to discuss the proposed itinerary with a travel agency counsellor at the earliest possible date, even if the travel authorization has not yet been processed.

6. Any credits obtained by use of a lower applicable rate accrue only to the Organization. Conversely, if any deviation from the authorized mode, route or approved duration of travel is arranged by the traveller for personal reasons which results in costs in excess of the entitlement, the traveller is responsible personally for paying such costs directly to the travel agency before receiving the tickets.

7. Examination of tickets. Before signing the travel agency's required receipt, the traveller should check the tickets to note the departure date, time, place and flight numbers of each leg of the journey and the status of all reservations. ("OK" or "HK" means the reservation is confirmed; "RQ" means that the space has been requested but not yet confirmed; "WL" means the request is on a waiting list.) The traveller should bring any problems to the attention of the travel agency counsellor.

8. Reconfirmation of reservations. The traveller must reconfirm reservations for onward air journeys immediately upon arrival at each stop and provide the airline with a local address and phone number. This is especially important when the journey is interrupted for more than three (3) days at any point, because schedules and flight departure times of airlines are subject to change without notice.

9. Assistance during travel. For assistance required during the course of travel, travellers may contact a local office of the travel agency or a carrier and show the travel authorization and their tickets. In case of emergency, however, the traveller may seek assistance from the nearest United Nations office. The traveller should be aware that Headquarters approval may be necessary for some changes in travel, particularly where deviations from the direct route or other itinerary changes result in added cost. Any additional expenses not authorized by the United Nations must be met by the traveller.

10. Special arrangements for travel to Headquarters. For travel authorized at Headquarters but originating elsewhere, the established entitlement given on the travel authorization is transmitted to the nearest overseas office of the travel agency, with instructions to contact and assist the United Nations traveller in arranging for transportation and related services. If the travel agency has no

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office in the city where travel originates, the instructions are sent by the travel agency to the office of an airline in that city, which will then contact the passenger in order to complete travel arrangements.

11. Hotel accomodation in New York City. The Travel Unit at Headquarters will, upon request, make hotel reservations in New York City. Travellers with G-4 visas who are receiving subsistence allowance on brief official business at Headquarters or staff members receiving an installation grant while staying in hotels are normally eligible for exemption from the New York City hotel tax. Information concerning the procedure to be followed in order to obtain the waiver of this tax is available from the departmental administrative office.

12. Immigration and customs clearance on arrival in the United States. On request, Travel Unit staff meet officials with the rank of Assistant Secretary-General or above at airports to provide assistance with immigration and customs clearance formalities. However, exceptions may be made in the cases of other officials when special circumstances warrant (e.g., medical or emergency cases).

#### Travel documents

13. Passports and visas. The traveller should ensure that essential travel documents, such as the national passport and the United Nations laissez-passer are valid, so that required visas may be obtained. Application forms and information regarding visa requirements for countries to be visited may be obtained from the Visa Office of the Travel Unit and, whenever possible, should be requested at least five weeks before the estimated departure date. Application forms for the United Nations laissez-passer, United Nations certificates and United Nations family certificates are available from departmental administrative offices.

14. United States re-entry visas. Holders of United States G-4 visas should make certain their G-4 visa will be valid on the date of their scheduled return to the United States. If a new United States G-4 visa is needed, the visa application (forms PT.61 and PT.61A) and national passport should be submitted to the Visa Office of the Travel Unit at least two weeks before the departure date to allow sufficient time to obtain the visa from the United States Department of State in Washington, D.C. Otherwise, the traveller will have to obtain a letter signed by the Chief, Transportation Section, at Headquarters for presentation to a United States consulate or embassy abroad.

15. United Nations laissez-passer. The laissez-passer is a legal travel document issued to staff members for use during official travel. For safekeeping purposes, staff members stationed at Headquarters are expected to return the laissez-passer to the Visa Office through their departmental administrative officers immediately upon completion of their official travel. The loss of a laissez-passer should be reported immediately to the local police or other appropriate government authority and a copy of the report submitted immediately to the Travel Unit, United Nations, New York, through the departmental administrative officer.

16. United Nations certificate. This certificate is not a legal travel document. It is issued to individuals other than staff members to facilitate travel on official business for the United Nations (e.g., consultants or experts).

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17. United Nations family certificate. The family certificate is not a legal travel document but serves to identify the persons named therein as being family members of the United Nations official mentioned in the certificate. Family certificates are not normally issued to family members when they will be travelling with a staff member. They may be issued on the request of a staff member for family members undertaking a journey when all of the following three conditions are met: (a) the travel is authorized at United Nations expense, (b) separate travel from that of the staff member has been duly authorized, except for education grant travel, and (c) there is cause to believe that the absence of this certificate may give rise to significant hardship. In cases when family certificates are issuable and two or more family members travel together, relevant particulars of each are inscribed in the same certificate, and a joint photograph is required.

18. International vaccination certificate. The international vaccination certificate is issued by the Medical Service on request. Travellers are generally required to have a valid international vaccination certificate showing that certain vaccinations and inoculations have been obtained. The traveller, therefore, should contact the United Nations Medical Service to find out what inoculations, if any, are required or recommended for entry into the countries to be visited. Such inoculations will be given free of charge by the Medical Service for official travel of staff, their spouses and dependent children over the age of 10 years. The cost of inoculations for younger children should be included for reimbursement on the F.10 form (see para. 19 below).

#### Reimbursements and refunds

19. Travel reimbursement claims (F.10). The traveller is required to submit a travel expense reimbursement claim on form F.10 to the departmental executive or administrative office within two (2) weeks after completion of travel. It should indicate whether accommodation during any stopovers or any transportation was provided by the carrier or by a government agency free of charge. Travel expenses subject to reimbursement include terminal expenses in accordance with the provision of ST/AI/206/Rev.1, expenses incurred in obtaining passports and visas, expenses incurred for inoculations not available from the Medical Service, expenses incurred for accompanied excess baggage within the limits of the entitlement etc. The F.10 form should be accompanied by the original of the travel authorization form (PT.8), ticket stubs and all receipts for transportation and excess baggage expenses, as well as receipts for other expenses for which reimbursement is claimed.

20. Ticket refunds. All tickets issued by the travel agency or by any transportation carrier at the request of the travel agency for United Nations travellers normally contain an indication that any refund resulting from lack of use of such tickets or a change in route, mode or standard is payable to the United Nations and not to the traveller and cannot be applied against rerouting. Refunds are generally claimed by the United Nations upon receipt of an unused or partially used ticket. However, in cases where a refund entitlement arises as a result of the reissue of a ticket during the course of travel, the traveller should request a refund payable to the United Nations. This voucher should be submitted with the travel reimbursement claim (F.10). If personal costs have been paid for personal travel deviations and a refund is due to the traveller, appropriate adjustment will be made by the United Nations when the travel reimbursement claim (F.10) is processed. The traveller should attach a copy of the invoice covering such expenditures.

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## II. BAGGAGE AND UNACCOMPANIED SHIPMENTS

21. Accompanied baggage. The traveller is responsible for arranging delivery of accompanied baggage to and from terminals. All baggage should be tagged with labels showing the traveller's name and home address. Upon request, the travel agency provides labels for this purpose. Travellers are advised to check each airline used to find out the applicable regulations governing the free baggage allowance in order to avoid charges for excess baggage whenever possible. Travellers purchasing suitcases for their travel are advised to bear in mind the current limits established by airlines relating to the dimensions of accompanied excess baggage which is allowed in certain sectors without charge in order to take maximum advantage of the current rule (see administrative instruction ST/AI/229/Add.2).

22. Loss or damage to accompanied baggage. In cases of loss or damage of accompanied baggage, the traveller should file a written claim with the carrier immediately upon noting the loss or damage and before leaving the airport. The traveller should retain a copy of the claim for follow-up purposes. This procedure should be observed by all travellers, including those who have insured their accompanied baggage at their own expense.

23. Unaccompanied shipments. Arrangements for an authorized shipment of unaccompanied baggage or household goods from Headquarters are made by the Traffic Unit of the Transportation Section as outlined in administrative instruction ST/AI/238, and staff members should familiarize themselves with this instruction before contacting the Traffic Unit.

24. Home leave, family visit or education grant shipments. Personal baggage relating to home leave, family visit or education grant travel to be sent as an unaccompanied shipment by sea or air should be packed by the staff member and, where possible, delivered to the Traffic Unit. If a particularly large shipment is authorized because of the size of the family, or if there are special circumstances, arrangements may be made by the Traffic Unit for pick up and delivery from a residence in the metropolitan area. The United Nations does not provide insurance coverage for such shipments.

25. Loss or damage to unaccompanied shipments. The procedures to be followed in case of loss, damage or non-delivery of unaccompanied shipments of household goods and personal effects are outlined in administrative instruction ST/AI/238 and on the reverse side of the shipping advice form (PT.27) prepared by the Traffic Unit.

26. Duty and tax-free entry of baggage and effects into the United States. Upon return from official travel, baggage and effects of staff members holding G-4 visas may be permitted into the United States free of customs duties and internal revenue taxes. Newly acquired effects may be entered in reasonable quantities only upon submission of proof that they were in the staff member's possession abroad and are for the personal use of the staff member or his/her family members. Mail-order purchases, purchases of items which are not available for immediate possession, as well as items left for repairs which were not completed while the staff member was abroad, may be subject to duty on arrival. It is, therefore, important for staff

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members to have evidence of possession abroad if duty and tax-free entry is requested (see administrative instruction ST/AI/254 for details regarding these requirements, including the limits on free entry of certain items, e.g., automobiles, alcohol and tobacco products).

27. Holders of G-4 visas arriving in the United Nations on travel paid for by the Organization who wish to receive duty and tax-free entry privileges on accompanied baggage should inform the Travel Unit of their arrival schedule and related details (i.e., date of arrival, name of carrier, flight number and names of accompanying non-United States family members) at least 10 days prior to the date of arrival, so that the Travel Unit may transmit this information to the United States Immigration and Customs authorities through the United States Mission to the United Nations.

### III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SECRETARIAT UNITS CONCERNED AND THE TRAVEL AGENCY

The main responsibilities of the Secretariat units and the travel agency involved in making travel and shipping arrangements are described in paragraphs 28-31 below:

28. Certifying officers of the departmental administrative offices are required to:

(a) Indicate clearly under section 11 (a) of the travel authorization form (PT.8) the authorized itinerary (excluding reference to any rest stopover entitlement), and, under section 11 (b), the requested itinerary, showing all intermediate stopovers whether for official or personal reasons. All items relating to unaccompanied shipments and related insurance entitlements should also be clearly specified.

(b) Prepare travel authorizations as far in advance of the departure date as possible to allow sufficient time to obtain confirmed reservations.

(c) Prepare, certify and submit to the Travel Unit, all applications for laissez-passers, United Nations certificates and United Nations family certificates.

(d) Certify and submit to the Travel Unit all requests for United States visas.

(e) Submit to the Travel Unit all requests for New York City hotel occupancy tax exemption forms in respect of the officials entitled to the exemption.

(f) Certify the voucher for reimbursement of expenses form (F.10).

(g) Collect and return laissez-passers to the Travel Unit for safekeeping upon completion of travel.

(h) Maintain a record of home leave, family visit and education grant travel.

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(i) Maintain a record of shipping and insurance entitlements in cases where an advance partial shipment of personal effects and household goods has previously been authorized for the purpose of determining the balance available at the time of separation.

29. The Travel Unit, Transportation Section, Office of General Services, is required to:

(a) Review requisitions for travel (travel authorizations) to ensure conformity with applicable rules and procedures regarding route, mode and standard of travel; establish entitlements and authorize the travel agency to issue tickets; maintain liaison with the official travel agency; and investigate any complaints received on travel arrangements.

(b) Issue laissez-passers, United Nations certificates and family certificates; monitor and supervise the renewal of blue laissez-passers by overseas offices; retain laissez-passers which are returned following official travel.

(c) Process requests for United States G-4 visas for all officials of the United Nations anywhere in the world; process requests for visas to other countries for travel from Headquarters.

(d) Make hotel reservations in New York City and issue New York City hotel occupancy tax exemption forms.

(e) Request customs clearance from the United States Mission for holders of G-4 visas prior to their arrival on official travel and facilitate entry of United Nations officials into the United States.

(f) On request, meet and assist senior United Nations officials (Assistant Secretaries-General and above) at airports and piers.

30. The Traffic Unit, Transportation Section, Office of General Services, is required to:

(a) Arrange for shipment and insurance of unaccompanied personal effects and household goods authorized at United Nations expense.

(b) Arrange for United States customs clearance and delivery from the arrival terminal of personal effects and household goods imported in connexion with official travel by staff members holding United States G-4 visas.

(c) Process insurance claims for loss or damage to personal effects and household goods insured through the United Nations and, when necessary, assist staff members in dealing with the insurance company.

(d) Maintain liaison with packing, moving, shipping and insurance companies and investigate any complaints received on shipping or unaccompanied baggage insurance arrangements.

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31. The travel agency is required to:

- (a) Provide information concerning travel fares, schedules and routes.
- (b) Issue air, sea or rail tickets on request from the United Nations.
- (c) Assist United Nations travellers at Headquarters or abroad with the reissuance of tickets.
- (d) Reserve hotel space throughout the world, on request by the staff member, except in New York City. (For hotel reservation procedures in New York City see paras. 11 and 29 (d) above.)
- (e) Render assistance to any United Nations passengers in case of sickness, injury or death, or loss or damage of baggage.
- (f) Provide other services and assistance as may be requested at Headquarters or abroad (e.g., arrange for insurance of accompanied baggage at staff member's expense, assist in obtaining visas other than the United States that may be needed during the course of travel).

32. Comments on travel, shipping or baggage insurance arrangements. Travellers are encouraged to submit to the Transportation Section as soon as possible after completion of the travel any written comments or suggestions that they may have concerning travel, shipping or baggage insurance arrangements made by the United Nations. In order to permit the investigation of any complaints, as much detail as possible should be furnished.

33. Information circular ST/ADM/SER.A/892/Rev.1 of 29 November 1966 is hereby superseded.

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Annex

## LIST OF RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

<u>Document symbol</u>	<u>Subject</u>
ST/AI/206/Rev.1 (15 July 1977)	Terminal expenses
ST/AI/229 (29 September 1975)	Reimbursement of the cost of accompanied excess baggage
ST/AI/229/Add.1 (14 February 1977)	Reimbursement of the cost of accompanied baggage
ST/AI/229/Add.2 (8 July 1977)	Reimbursement of the cost of accompanied baggage
ST/AI/238 (18 May 1976)	Shipping and insurance for shipments of personal effects and household goods
ST/AI/249 (10 August 1977)	Mode and standards of travel
ST/AI/254 (3 February 1978)	Duty and tax-free entry of baggage or effects into the United States

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