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### JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

#### PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1982-1983

##### Organization and methods for official travel

##### Sixteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on organization and methods for official travel, transmitted by the Secretary-General's note (A/37/357) and the comments of the Secretary-General thereon (A/37/357/Add.1).
2. As shown in section VII of the JIU report, the Inspectors have made 11 main recommendations for the United Nations. However, the report has been sent to all the participating organizations of JIU (see para. 5 of the report). The Advisory Committee considers the report to be both timely and useful, especially since Member States have expressed increasing concern about the cost of travel.
3. Recommendations 1, 2, and 4 of JIU concern arrangements for travel agency services. In paragraph 9 of document A/37/357/Add.1, the Secretary-General states that it has been considered desirable to proceed "with steps leading to a revision in the current arrangements for travel", and in paragraph 10 he indicates that "given the ramifications of this project and its financial implications, it is anticipated that the review of proposals and negotiations for a new arrangement will not be completed before January 1983".
4. The Advisory Committee has been informed that new arrangements for travel services are not likely to be in place until some time after January 1983. In this connection, the Committee requests that it be informed at its spring 1983 session of the outcome of efforts to revise and improve current arrangements for travel services. The information to be provided should include the administrative and financial consequences of any new arrangements as well as an analysis of the advantages of the new system as compared with what is now in place.

5. As for the possibility of establishing a United Nations-owned travel agency (JIU recommendation 4), the Secretary-General points out, in paragraph 11 of his comments, that "it is agreed that there are difficulties to such an approach at this time". His representatives informed the Advisory Committee that the matter would be kept under review.

6. Recommendation 3 concerns negotiation of favourable rates with airlines. The Secretary-General appears to be in general agreement with this recommendation, but in paragraph 14 of his comments he also points to a number of practical questions that would have to be considered.

7. Recommendation 5, on efforts to obtain the lowest suitable fares, is discussed by the Secretary-General in paragraph 13 of his comments, where he states that "for the future, it is intended that any new contractual agreement should include a provision under which the agent would guarantee the lowest fare - a guarantee that would be subject to spot-check audit to assure compliance". The Advisory Committee trusts that the information to be provided in accordance with its request in paragraph 4 above will include confirmation that such a provision has indeed been negotiated.

8. Recommendations 6 and 7 relate to the standard of accommodation for travel of United Nations staff on official business, travel of delegates to meetings and travel of consultants. The Secretary-General discusses these recommendations in paragraphs 17 to 28 of his comments. In paragraph 26, he states his opinion that "some improvement in the current arrangements should be made" and, in paragraph 28, he suggests arrangements that might apply regarding the standard of travel.

9. Recommendation 8 deals with procedures for the control of travel. The Secretary-General, in paragraph 29 of his comments, states his intention to review these procedures in the light of the recommendations contained in the JIU report.

10. In recommendations 9 and 10 of its report, JIU calls for the simplification of travel claim procedures. According to the Secretary-General "these recommendations would involve a major departure from the current financial and administrative practices of the Organization" (A/37/357/Add.1, para. 30). The Secretary-General indicates that a detailed analysis will be undertaken of the difference between the estimated costs of travel and the amounts actually reimbursed in the past for each of the various types of travel under consideration to determine whether the simplified procedures recommended can be adopted for some or all of the types of travel suggested.

11. Recommendation 11 states, inter alia, that the Secretary-General should call the attention of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to problems raised in the JIU report with the aim of adopting a co-ordinated approach to solutions, and report thereon to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session. In paragraph 31 of his comments, the Secretary-General indicates that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination has requested the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions to pursue the matters of inter-agency concern contained in the JIU report. As for those matters which can be pursued by the United Nations on its own, the Advisory Committee recommends that, in his next report on travel, to be submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/198, the Secretary-General should include a special section on the implementation of the JIU recommendations.