

**Secretariat**

29 November 1999

Information circular*

To: Members of the staff

From: Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Central Support Services

Subject: **Excess baggage, shipments and insurance****

1. The purpose of this circular is to inform the staff of the procedures to be followed when submitting a claim or request under the provisions of administrative instruction ST/AI/1999/15, "Excess baggage, shipments and insurance" ("the instruction"), relating in particular to:

(a) Claims for reimbursement of excess baggage charges, requests for a cash advance against an excess baggage entitlement, requests for conversion of excess baggage to unaccompanied shipment and for conversion of unaccompanied shipments to excess baggage, under part I of the instruction;

(b) The manner in which staff members make their shipping arrangements and submit claims or requests for conversion of surface entitlements to air shipments, for split shipments, for transportation of privately owned automobiles or for storage, under part II of the instruction; and

(c) The manner in which staff members make their insurance arrangements and submit claims, under part III of the instruction.

2. This circular also provides additional related information which staff members may find useful when exercising their entitlements under the provisions of the instruction.

* The present circular will be in effect until further notice.

** *Personnel Manual* index No. 7195.

I. Excess baggage

Reimbursement of excess baggage charges and cash advance against the excess baggage entitlement

3. For reimbursement of excess baggage charges, the staff member completes an F.10 claim form (voucher for reimbursement of expenses) and, in addition to the other documents required by the form, attaches the receipts from the carrier for excess baggage payments. The completed F.10 form and attached documentation are submitted to the executive or local personnel office.

4. If the staff member needs a cash advance against his/her excess baggage entitlement, a request to that effect is submitted to the executive or local personnel office which will determine the anticipated cost within the authorized limit and indicate the amount of the advance on the travel authorization. The staff member accounts for the use of the advance no later than two weeks after completion of the journey, by attaching the receipts from the carrier for excess baggage costs to the F.10 claim form.

Conversion of excess baggage to unaccompanied shipment

5. When the baggage allowance is calculated by the airline on the basis of weight, a staff member who wishes to convert the excess baggage entitlement to an equivalent weight in unaccompanied shipment submits a written request to the executive or local personnel office in advance of the travel. The approval of the request is indicated in the travel authorization, which will specify the kilos of excess baggage authorized for conversion to unaccompanied shipment and state that no cash advance or reimbursement is to be allowed for that amount of excess baggage entitlement.

Conversion of unaccompanied shipment entitlement to excess baggage

6. Staff members who wish to convert their unaccompanied shipment entitlement on home leave, family visit or education grant travel to excess baggage make a written request to the executive or local personnel office in advance of the travel. Approval of the request is indicated in the travel authorization.

II. Shipments

General shipping arrangements

7. Shipments of personal effects and household goods are arranged in accordance with the procedures established by the United Nations office that authorizes the shipment. Staff members should NOT make arrangements for the shipment of their personal effects and household goods until they receive the necessary prior authorization and related instructions from the Organization. Such authorization is normally given in a travel authorization, which indicates the staff member's entitlements.

8. Shipments of staff members' personal effects and household goods are usually arranged by one of the United Nations offices listed in paragraph 21 below or through

another United Nations or UNDP office, whenever practical, or through a moving company arranged by United Nations Headquarters. Where the staff member is entitled to removal costs under rule 107.27 and the Organization has no arrangement with a particular firm to undertake removal shipments, the staff member may be required to take three bids from local companies of his or her choice to serve as a basis for a decision by the Organization as to which company should be requested to arrange the shipment.

9. Exceptionally, staff members may also, at their request, be authorized to obtain three bids for door-to-door services when they do not wish to use the firm indicated by the United Nations and are prepared to prepay all costs and claim reimbursement through the office which issued the travel authorization. Staff members authorized to use this exceptional procedure are reminded that they may not be reimbursed for amounts in excess of the amount payable by the United Nations for the same weight or volume, within the entitlement, to the packing, moving and shipping companies that generally service the United Nations office where arrangements are being made. All bids should be requested after the staff member has decided which household goods he or she wishes to ship. The United Nations is not responsible for the performance of services by the company selected by the staff member.

10. Staff members are advised NOT to include items such as jewellery, currency or coins in shipments. Insurance companies generally charge higher premiums on articles of special or unusual value, as well as on antiques, jewellery, furs, coin and stamp collections, irrespective of their value. In such cases, any cost above the normal premium for insuring standard items is to be borne by the staff member.

Estimates and packing

11. Packing companies usually send an estimator to look at the goods being shipped so as to provide an estimate of their weight and volume and decide what kind and what amount of packing material will be necessary. The estimate is not binding on the company or the Organization but serves as a guide to the company regarding the packing requirements and to the staff member regarding the amount of goods that may be shipped within his or her entitlement, as well as the personal costs that may be incurred if it appears that the entitlement may be exceeded. The staff member should arrange to obtain the estimate after deciding which household goods are to be shipped and should request a signed copy of the estimate. The staff member should make sure that the estimate is in weight and volume in both gross and net terms.

12. The staff member or his or her representative should be present during packing to make certain that all the goods are packed. The workmen from the packing company will normally make up a packing list and note the condition of the goods on this list, usually in an abbreviated form. For example, if a piece of furniture is “marred” or “gouged”, the workman may enter “M” or “G” on the packing list. The staff member should be aware of the meaning of all abbreviations and make certain that the condition of the goods is described accurately. A statement to this effect should be written on the packing list before it is signed, and a copy of the signed packing list should be retained by the staff member.

Forwarding arrangements

13. If the staff member is proceeding to a new duty station, the shipment should be sent care of the United Nations office there, unless the United Nations advises the staff member

otherwise. Shipments to New York should be addressed to the staff member c/o United Nations Transportation Operations Section (room S-2012), New York, NY 10017, USA.

14. If the shipment is not consigned to a United Nations office (e.g., upon separation) and the United Nations has not made arrangements with an agent at the destination to provide necessary services with regard to customs clearance and delivery from the seaport or airport to the residence or a commercial warehouse, the agent's invoice for these services should be paid by the staff member after careful review of the required supporting documents, including rated airway bills or bills of lading and weigh master certificates. The delivery receipt, signed by the staff member or his or her authorized representative, the agent's receipted invoice, and all supporting documents should be submitted, together with an F.10 claim form, for reimbursement of expenses. Approved costs within the limits of the entitlement are reimbursed to the staff member after deduction of any amounts that may be due to the Organization from the staff member for excess shipping, insurance or other related costs.

Arrangements at destination

15. Staff members should acquaint themselves with import procedures, as well as with possible customs restrictions or limitations at the destination, through the embassy or consular office concerned in the country of departure. Import procedures may require presentation of an inventory certified by a consular officer or may involve presentation of evidence regarding the staff member's previous country of residence. Copies of invoices may also be required for any recent purchases.

16. It is important for the staff member to be present when the shipment arrives at the destination in order to attend to customs clearance formalities and arrange for delivery to the residence. This factor should be taken into account in making the shipping arrangements, even though the scheduling of the shipments may be difficult and unpredictable. If the staff member is not present at the destination, the shipment may be retained pending clearance, and demurrage charges payable by the staff member may be incurred.

17. Upon delivery to the residence, the staff member or the person duly authorized by him or her to receive the shipment should check the shipping documents to note whether any cases are missing and should examine the packing cases carefully for any external damage such as water marks, dents or holes. If damage or loss is noted or even suspected, the recipient should make a notation on the receipt, which should not be signed until the required notation of actual or suspected loss or damage has been made. A copy of the receipt should be retained, since it is an essential supporting document for any claim that may arise.

Transportation of privately owned automobiles

18. Under staff rules 107.27 (d) (iv) and 207.20 (l) and section 12 of administrative instruction ST/AI/1999/15, "Excess baggage, shipments and insurance", one of the conditions for the partial reimbursement of the cost of transportation of privately owned automobiles is that the duty station to which the automobile is being transported be in a country or territory designated as one to which the United Nations may accept responsibility for such cost. The list of these countries and territories is communicated

to the staff by the information circular on transportation of privately owned automobiles issued by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management.

III. Insurance

19. Insurance arrangements may be made by the Organization or by the staff member.

Insurance arrangements made by the Organization

20. If the staff member elects to have the United Nations arrange for insurance against all risks of physical loss or damage from any external cause on unaccompanied shipments authorized to be shipped and insured at United Nations expense, he or she must provide, prior to shipment, an itemized inventory of all articles in the shipment, including containers such as suitcases, and the replacement value in United States dollars of each article in the shipment. Form PT.78, entitled "Itemized valued inventory of household goods and personal effects", should be used for this purpose. All articles of special value, such as antiques, jewellery, furs, and coin and stamp collections, should be listed separately (see para. 10 above). If the staff member has more than one shipment, an itemized valued inventory for each must be prepared separately.

21. Requests for insurance arrangements by the United Nations, and the itemized valued inventory are to be submitted to the office indicated below:

(a) New York: Transportation Operations Section, Travel and Transportation Service, OCSS, for shipments:

- (i) To New York from all places, except Vienna;
- (ii) From New York to all places, except Geneva and Vienna;
- (iii) To or from any other place, except Geneva and Vienna.

(b) Geneva: Transportation, Travel and Housing Unit, UNOG, for shipments:

- (i) To Geneva from all places;
- (ii) From Geneva to all places, except New York.

(c) Vienna: Travel and Transportation Unit, General Support Section, UNOV, for shipments:

- (i) To Vienna from all places, except Geneva;
- (ii) From Vienna to all places, except Geneva;
- (iii) To or from any other place, except Geneva, for staff administered by UNOV.

Insurance company liability

22. Staff members are reminded that, if they do not request insurance for the total value shown on the inventory, the insurance company's liability is reduced and any resulting insurance claim will be settled on a reduced pro rata basis. For example, if an unaccompanied shipment valued at \$50,000 is insured for only \$25,000, the staff member will not receive more than 50 per cent of the value listed in the inventory for any goods lost or damaged.

Information on premium and insurance company's representative at destination

23. Information on the premium chargeable under the United Nations insurance policy is available upon request from the office that is responsible for arranging the insurance of the shipment. Normally, the staff member receives a notice from the United Nations indicating the amount of extra premium costs payable some time after delivery of the shipment. However, in cases such as separation from service or extension of insurance (see para. 26 below), prepayment is required.

24. Staff members should request from the United Nations office that arranged the insurance the name and address of the representative of the insurance company agent at destination.

Insurance arrangements made by staff member

25. A staff member may arrange his or her own insurance and claim reimbursement for the premium paid, within the limits specified in section 16 of administrative instruction ST/AI/1999/15, "Excess baggage, shipments and insurance". In those cases, the staff member must submit an itemized valued inventory with a reimbursement claim supported by a receipted invoice showing the rate and amount of premium paid. The maximum amount of premium reimbursable cannot exceed the premium payable by the United Nations under its worldwide policy for equivalent coverage of the items listed on the inventory, within the limits of the entitlement.

Insurance of goods in storage before shipment

26. If goods are stored at a commercial warehouse prior to shipment without being insured while in storage, an insurance company will not normally insure them afterwards unless they are unpacked and examined for possible loss or damage before being shipped. Since unpacking and inspection at that stage would be impractical and also costly to the staff member, it is advisable for staff members who find it necessary to store their goods at a commercial warehouse prior to shipment to request the United Nations to obtain insurance coverage for the period that the goods are to remain in storage. Such coverage would be obtained at the staff member's own expense unless an entitlement to goods in storage exists under staff rule 107.21 (e) or 207.20 (f).

27. If a staff member has insured goods in storage with an insurance company other than the company which the United Nations uses, the staff member is advised to arrange in-transit insurance coverage with the same company to ensure continuity and follow the procedures outlined in paragraph 25 above to claim reimbursement within the limits of the entitlement.

Extension of insurance to cover goods placed in storage after shipment

28. Insurance coverage obtained by the United Nations for goods in transit ends upon arrival at the destination (i.e., the staff member's residence or a storage warehouse). If

staff members are unable to take possession of their belongings upon arrival at seaport/airport and the goods are to be stored, the staff members should request an extension of insurance at their own expense from the company that insured the shipment. In this way, the belongings would be protected in the event of an insurance claim. For shipments insured by the United Nations, staff members should request an extension of insurance from the appropriate office mentioned in paragraph 21 above and enclose the insurance premium payment for the expected duration of the storage. Insurance ceases automatically upon expiration of the period for which a premium to have the belongings insured has been paid. If a staff member does not provide the necessary information and prepay the premium, the United Nations will not arrange for extension of insurance, and the insurance coverage will lapse. Information on the premium chargeable for extension of insurance is available from the office that arranged the insurance.

Insurance claims

29. Insofar as possible, staff members should arrange to have their belongings unpacked and examined immediately upon delivery. If damage or loss is noted or even suspected, the staff member should immediately file a claim against all carriers that handled the shipment. In the case of an air shipment, the claim against the airline for loss or damage should be filed within seven days from the date of release of the goods by the airline.

30. If a sea shipment is to be delivered to a storage warehouse and is to remain in storage for one year or longer before it is delivered to the staff member's residence, the staff member or his/her representative should file a preliminary claim for possible damage against the steamship company at the time the shipment is released by the steamship company. In addition, before the end of one year, the staff member or his/her representative, should make a written request to the steamship company for an "extension of suit time", since the normal period of suit time is limited to one year. Any further extension should similarly be requested from the steamship company. These preliminary steps are required to preserve the right to file a subsequent detailed claim if damage or loss is noted when the shipment is finally delivered to the residence.

31. In the event that a carrier appears to have lost part of a shipment, the staff member should, in the written claim against the carrier, request that a "short-landing" certificate be issued. If it appears that a whole shipment has been lost, a "non-delivery" certificate should be requested in writing if an arrival notification is not received from the carrier within 14 days from the shipment's expected arrival.

32. If the shipment was insured through the United Nations, either in New York, Geneva or Vienna, the staff member should follow the instructions received from the corresponding office regarding claim procedures.

33. If the staff member's shipment was not insured through the United Nations, the staff member should contact the insurance company that insured the shipment.

Settlement of claims

34. Irrespective of whether or not insurance has been arranged through the United Nations, it is the staff member's personal responsibility to make sure that all documents required for an insurance claim are obtained and submitted to the insurance company. Failure to follow the procedures described in paragraphs 28, 29, 30 and the instructions

referred to in paragraph 31 in a timely manner may render a claim unacceptable. Inquiries regarding the status of a claim should be addressed by the staff member directly to the insurance company or its local agent. However, in cases where the insurance has been arranged by the United Nations and settlements appear to have been unduly delayed or other difficulties are experienced with the insurance company, the United Nations will render assistance to the staff member upon request.

35. Claims are payable at the rate of exchange in effect at the time of settlement. Payments in connection with an insurance claim may be received from the carrier or the insurance company. In all cases where payments are received from a carrier, the insurance company must be notified through the United Nations office or the insurance company's agent that processed the claim, so that the amount of the insurance settlement may be adjusted to reflect the payment received and avoid duplication. If duplicate payments are received, reimbursement must be made to the insurance company.
