



The Commonwealth

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

Travel and Expense Policy and Procedures

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1. Scope of the Policy

1.1 This policy applies to all persons travelling on Secretariat business except for those few whose contracts set out terms and conditions that differ from this policy and are not intended to be covered by it. The application of the policy includes:

- All Commonwealth Secretariat employees.
- Families of Commonwealth Secretariat employees (for example in relation to commencement, termination and home leave for overseas recruited employees).
- Temporary workers.
- Consultants and contractors.
- Participants in workshop and other meetings.
- Technical assistance resource personnel.
- Members of specially convened groups (for example election observers and Special Envoys).
- All other persons whose travel is organised or funded by the Commonwealth Secretariat, including those funded by the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation.

2. Definitions

2.1 The lowest logical fare: Travellers are expected to book the lowest restricted fare (air or rail) via the most direct route in the class of travel permitted.

Considerations:

- If significant savings can be obtained by making one additional stop with a stopover of no more than 4 hours' then this should be considered. Class of service will be determined by the travel time of the trip, will be consistent for all sectors if available and in accordance with class of service operated by an airline on the specific route.
- If a destination can be travelled to via a direct flight in under 8 hours and on the day of travel, the direct flight is not available, the travel provider will supply direct flight options at the nearest possible dates for consideration.
- Trips with more than 2 stops with stopovers of more than 4 hours each should be avoided where possible.
- In all cases when the lowest cost option is not selected, a short rationale justifying the choice needs to be provided by the staff member and supported by the Director. This rationale will be reflected in the travel provider's reporting to management.

2.2 The most direct route: This is defined as the line between the point of origin and the point of destination.

2.3 Travel time: This is defined as the combined travel time of all legs of a journey from point of original departure to a specific destination. Travel time only includes scheduled time from departure airport or train station, scheduled stops

for connections and scheduled time of arrival at destination airport or train station. For travel which is entirely by road or rail, travel time must be calculated prior to departing the point of origin using established mileage charts.

- 2.4 Contracted Worker: All references to contracted workers include all persons listed in (1) above who are not permanent employees of the Commonwealth Secretariat.
- 2.5 Events Participant: A person other than an employee of the Commonwealth Secretariat who may be in part or whole sponsored by the Commonwealth Secretariat to attend workshops, training courses, or any other event.

3. Principles and General Guidance

- 3.1 The purpose of the Secretariat's Travel and Expense Policy is to ensure that persons travelling on Secretariat business are properly supported in performing their duties to the best of their abilities in the office and while travelling on business; to mitigate the impact of travel and create conditions which will support them in managing their work and, to the extent appropriate, their personal life.
- 3.2 All Requisitions and Purchase Orders must be completed in accordance with the procedures set up by the Secretariat for the procurement of travel and travel-related services.
- 3.3 The Travel and Expense Policy should ensure that individuals are reimbursed all necessary expenditure reasonably incurred in the performance of their Commonwealth Secretariat duties as approved by the Secretariat. Reasonable expenses are determined to be those that are cost-effective. The basis of expense claims will be reimbursement of actual and reasonable travel costs up to the limits specified in this policy and any subsequent amendments duly authorised.
- 3.4 Persons travelling on Secretariat business are expected to exercise the strictest economy and accountability in relation to publicly funded domestic or overseas travel and to ensure that such expenditure represents value for money. They are expected to exercise the same care in incurring travel expenses that a prudent person would exercise if travelling at their own expense. To this end, persons travelling on Secretariat business and those who approve such travel are expected to consider the following questions before planning travel:
 - Is this journey absolutely necessary?
 - Could this meeting or event be held in any other way, such as by telephone, online discussion or video conferencing to minimise the financial and environmental impact?
 - What method of travel is most appropriate for the destination given the distance?
 - Could this work be conducted by any other colleague already on site, nearby or whose travel to the destination has already been approved?

3.5 In addition, persons travelling on Secretariat business and those who approve such travel are expected to:

- Ensure proper and efficient use of Secretariat funds which should be used solely for the business purposes for which they have authorised.
- Recognise that all official financial transactions must represent value for money and withstand internal and external scrutiny.
- Account accurately and honestly for money with which they are entrusted;
- Be aware that failure to follow procedure and/or provision of false information may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Employee Handbook.
- Take responsibility for their medical and visa requirements including ensuring that they are fit to travel.
- Declare any benefits received or rebates or other contributions provided in relation to the travel.
- Book travel for staff and/or participants, non-staff DSG equivalents persons etc. via the Travel Management Company as defined by the Secretariat.

The Travel Section retains the right to request any further details required in order to ascertain the compliance of employees with this policy. Claims not in compliance with the policy, lacking sufficient justification, or arising as a result of negligence by the employee, will not be paid. Non-compliance with policy and the documented authorisation process may result in disciplinary action.

3.6 The expectation for all travel is that the lowest logical fare will be used. In addition, wherever practicable the Secretariat's audio and video conference facilities should be used as an alternative to travelling. This is not only in keeping with the value for money principle but is also in line with the Commonwealth Secretariat's Environmental Policy which states that as an organisation "we are committed to ensure that environmental best practice permeates all the day-to-day and strategic operations of our headquarters; facilities, procedures and practices".

3.7 It is not possible to set out rules for every conceivable situation. Persons travelling on Secretariat business are accordingly expected not only to adhere to the express terms of this policy, but also to exercise judgement to ensure that all claims made are within the spirit of the policy. The Secretariat reserves the right to reject or reduce claims that are considered to be excessive or claims for items not allowed under the policy. False, exaggerated or duplicate claims intentionally submitted may be treated as fraud and appropriate investigatory action will be taken in line with Secretariat policies. Expenses proven or deemed to have been submitted as a result of misinterpretations or mistakes will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

3.8 The Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General or Senior Director - Corporate may waive the normal travel policies in emergencies as it is accepted that, in extreme circumstances, persons travelling on Secretariat business may need to travel by the most expedient means. Extreme circumstances may include, but not be limited to, severe weather problems, war, civil disruption, acts of

terrorism, earthquake or any incident that has the potential to affect the safety or well-being of an employee or contracted worker.

- 3.9 Persons travelling on Secretariat business may not benefit from savings, gifts, hotel points or air miles from group bookings or other compensation such as travel vouchers resulting from official travel and, in particular, any savings that result from the use of a lower standard of transport or unused travel cash advances. Benefits accruing through travel paid by the Secretariat, including air miles received from group bookings belong to the organisation. However, employees may utilise personal air miles accrued through individual official travel.
- 3.10 Any unused advances are to be returned to the Secretariat immediately upon return from mission, irrespective of whether the due date for the acquittal has been reached.
- 3.11 If any advance (i.e. DSA, cash or accountable advance) has been provided and the mission has been cancelled or delayed for more than 14 days, all advances (irrespective of type) should immediately be returned to the Secretariat.

4. Authorisation of Travel Requisitions and Expenses Claims

- 4.1 All official travel must be authorised in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation by the traveller's Divisional Approver (or in the case of travel involving the Divisional Approver, his/her line manager), and, where necessary, the Divisional Approver whose budget the travel is to be charged.
- 4.2 All travel expenses claims must be authorised as per the Scheme of Delegation of Financial Authorities and, where necessary, authorised by the Divisional Approver to whose budget the travel is being charged.
- 4.3 By authorising a person's request to travel the Divisional Approver is confirming that the costs will be incurred for the purposes of the business of the Secretariat and that there is adequate budgetary provision to cover the expense.
- 4.4 By authorising a request for travel, the Divisional Approver confirms that the mission does not include unnecessary additional days or weekends and maximises value for the limited budgets of the Secretariat. Only in limited situations where there are specific business reasons should missions include the requirement to stay in country on the weekend.
- 4.5 By authorising a travel claim, the Divisional Approver is confirming that the costs have been necessarily incurred for the purposes of the business of the Secretariat and that supporting documentation such as original receipts, have been presented.
- 4.6 As a matter of good corporate governance and internal control, no employee may authorise their own travel request nor travel claim.

- 4.7 Travel on commencement and termination of employment must be approved by the respective Human Resource personnel as provided for in the Scheme of Delegation of Financial Authority.
- 4.8 Any amendments to the approved trip must be subsequently approved via the Secretariat's documented approval process. Justification may include:
- Cost considerations.
 - Operational purposes.
 - The health and safety of the traveller.
 - Reason(s) why it is otherwise in the best interest of the Secretariat.
- 4.9 In exceptional cases, such as when an employee or contracted worker already travelling overseas is given oral instructions to divert from the approved itinerary authority must subsequently be approved in writing by the Divisional Approver, or in the cases where the Divisional Approver is the traveller, by her/his supervising Approver, and communicated immediately to the Travel Management Company (TMC) and Travel Section.
- 4.10 If flights are cancelled or rescheduled and this results in an increase to the price of the ticket, this must be authorised by the Divisional Approver, or in the cases where the Divisional Approver is the traveller, by her/his supervising Approver. Unless there is an emergency, authorisation should occur before the new tickets are issued. Any reimbursement of costs for changes made in such circumstances will need to be based on clear justification with supporting evidence.
- 4.11 All travel acquittals must be submitted: Within 30 days of return from mission for DSA and Cash Advances; within 60 days of return from mission for Accountable Advances. It is the responsibility of the employee undertaking the travel to ensure that all necessary documentation is provided.

5. Travel Booking

5.1 Making a Travel Reservation

- 5.1.1 It is the responsibility of persons travelling on Secretariat business to ensure that their passports are valid and up-to-date (at least six months before expiration and often with the requirement for three remaining blank pages); that they obtain the relevant visa and obtain the relevant health advice in the course of booking their travel.
- 5.1.2 Travel should be booked via the Secretariat's preferred suppliers. Significant savings can be obtained by booking flights or rail well in advance of the date of travel and persons travelling on Secretariat business should ensure that travel arrangements are made in a timely manner bearing in mind the important principle of value for money.
- 5.1.3 All tickets for official travel are to be purchased in advance by the Secretariat or an authorised representative of the Secretariat, through the Travel Management Company of the Secretariat.

5.1.4 All travel should be booked ideally six weeks in advance but certainly no less than 14 days in advance, including for planned events such as:

- Meetings.
- Training courses.
- Workshops.
- Election observer missions.
- Good offices missions.
- Scoping/planning missions.

Staff who book within 14 days will be recorded as out of policy.

5.1.5 Requests to book tickets outside the timeframe above must be authorised by the Divisional Director, or in the cases where the Divisional Director is the traveller, by her/his supervising Deputy Secretary-General, with clearly documented justification. Travel may be refused or brought to the attention of individuals or Divisions submitting requests outside the time frame if arrangements are deemed to be the result of poor planning or otherwise reasonably avoidable.

5.1.6 The Secretariat will cover surcharges for changes to a non-flexible ticket for official reasons subject to clear justification and prior authorisation.

5.2 Medical and Visa Requirements Before Travel:

5.2.1 All persons travelling on Secretariat business must ensure that vaccinations and visas are valid for any particular country/region.

5.2.2 The Secretariat will reimburse the cost of required vaccinations and visas on production of original receipts.

5.2.3 It is that the responsibility of persons who are likely to travel on Secretariat business to ensure that they are medically fit to do so.

6. Class of Travel

6.1 The classes for which persons travelling on Secretariat business are eligible to travel are set out in the following table:

Table 1: Class of travel by Air and Rail on Official Business

Eligible person	Class of travel	
	Air Travel	Rail Travel
Secretary-General		
Secretary General and Eligible family members when accompanying the Secretary-General on official Secretariat business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Class
Secretary-General and eligible family members when travelling together on home leave, termination and commencement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Class
Eligible family members travelling separately from the Secretary-General on home leave, termination and commencement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Class
Deputy Secretary-General (DSG)		
DSG on official Secretariat business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Class
DSG and eligible family members when travelling together on commencement, home leave and termination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Class
Eligible family members travelling separately from the DSG on commencement, home leave and termination *See 15. Stopovers below	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economy Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard Class

Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) & Senior Directors		
ASG & Senior Directors on official Secretariat business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Class for flights of a duration of 6 hours or more • Economy Class for flights under 6 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Class or First Class where Business Class is not offered for journeys of 6 hours or more • Standard Class for journeys under 6 hours
ASG & Senior Directors and eligible family members when travelling together on commencement, home leave and termination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Class for flights of a duration of 6 hours or more • Economy Class for flights under 6 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Class or First Class where Business Class is not offered for journeys of 6 hours or more • Standard Class for journeys under 6 hours
Eligible family members travelling separately from the ASG & Senior Directors on commencement, home leave and termination *See 15. Stopovers below	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Class

All Other Secretariat Employees		
All other Secretariat employees travelling on official Secretariat business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Class for flights of a duration of 10 hours or more • Economy Class for flights under 10 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Class or First Class where Business Class is not offered for journeys of a duration of 10 hours or more • Standard Class for journeys under 10 hours
Eligible employees and family members travelling with them on commencement and termination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Class for flights of a duration of 10 hours or more • Economy Class for flights under 10 hours duration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Class or First Class where Business Class is not offered for journey of a duration of 10 hours or more • Standard Class for journeys under 10 hours
Family members travelling separately from employees on commencement and termination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Class
Except for the SG, DSG, ASG and Senior Directors as set out above, Home Leave travel for all eligible Secretariat employees and their eligible family members including family members eligible for education travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Class
Non-Secretariat Employees		
Members of specially convened groups who are not Secretariat employees, such Contracted Workers, Keynote Speakers, event participants and interview candidates (with the exception of candidates for posts at DSG level who are permitted to travel Business Class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy Class* <p>*This Class of travel may be upgraded to Business Class at the discretion of the ASG or Senior Director, in very limited and special cases such as in recognition of official status of the individual - e.g. a former Head of State</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Class* <p>*This Class of travel may be upgraded to First Class at the discretion of the ASG or Senior Director, in very limited and special cases such as in recognition of official status of the individual e.g. a former Head of State</p>
Non-staff DSG equivalents, Special Envoys, and interview candidates at DSG level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Class or First Class where Business Class is not offered

7. Derogation

- 7.1 As the Travel and Expense Policy is based on the principle of fair treatment of all persons travelling on Secretariat business, derogations from the class of travel will only be applied in exceptional circumstances. In such cases the justification for such a variation must be properly documented and such derogation will not be taken as a precedent but rather recognised for the exception that it is. Derogations to policy must be approved by the budget-holding ASG, Senior Director, DSG or SG, as per the Scheme of Delegation.
- 7.2 All requests to travel in a higher class on health grounds must be accompanied by a medical certificate. The Secretariat reserves the right to seek confirmation from its own medical adviser on a case-by-case basis. Medical certificates must be sent to the budget-holding ASG, Senior Director, DSG or SG, as per the Scheme of Delegation.

8. Mode of Transport

8.1 Travel by Air

- 8.1.1 Whenever practicable and most cost-effective, persons travelling on Secretariat business should typically use public transport such as the express trains to Gatwick and Heathrow airports, or the free transport often provided by airlines or hotels. Persons travelling on Secretariat business are encouraged to seek the most cost-effective mode of transport (for example, their local taxi service as opposed to the more expensive UK Black Cab service).
- 8.1.2 With very few exceptions that can be fully justified and documented in writing, non-flexible and non-transferable tickets should be the norm.
- 8.1.3 The Secretariat does not permit persons travelling on Secretariat business to volunteer for denied boarding compensation. Itineraries should be arranged to ensure that travellers arrive at their destination at an appropriate time and that they are not away from the office for an undue length of time.
- 8.1.4 Airport lounge access will be provided, where available, through the Secretariat's preferred supplier.

8.2 Travel by Rail

- 8.2.1 The option to travel by rail may be approved if it is the lowest logical fare. A direct air journey should not be broken to facilitate rail travel or cause an overnight stop.
- 8.2.2 The Eurostar should be the preferred means of transportation between London and Brussels or Paris: city centre departure and arrival facilitates quicker and cheaper access to central locations, greater traveller comfort on board the Eurostar and reduction of overall journey time.

8.3 Travel by Car

- 8.3.1 Persons travelling on Secretariat business are encouraged to consider the high environmental impact and the higher risk to the individual when contemplating using a motor vehicle for official purposes.

8.4 Hire Car

- 8.4.1 The only persons authorised to drive hired vehicles are Secretariat employees or properly contracted consultants.
- 8.4.2 Requests to hire vehicles must be authorised in advance of travel by the Divisional Approver.
- 8.4.3 It is the responsibility of individual travellers to ensure that they and any driver they contract during an overseas official visit possess a valid driver's licence and are appropriately insured.
- 8.4.4 Vehicles should only be hired for business purposes where this service is cost-effective and when public transport and taxis are impractical, more expensive or unavailable. Furthermore, the total hire cost including insurance, delivery cost, estimated fuel, mileage and related costs must be less than the rail and taxi cost and/or air fare for the same journey. Costs associated with the rental car, including the cost of full insurance coverage, may be reimbursed by the Secretariat.
- 8.4.5 The type of rental car used will be determined on a case-by-case basis taking into account health and safety considerations, the number of passengers travelling in the vehicle, the requirements of the journey as well as overall cost considerations. Normally, the class of vehicle hired should be the minimum size and specification necessary to allow duties to be performed - generally in a category no higher than a standard size 4-door family saloon e.g. engine capacity between of 1.6 - 2.0 litres.
- 8.4.6 Full insurance must be taken including insurance for Collision Damage Waiver to lower excess payments in the event of an accident.

8.4.7 Cars should generally be hired with a full tank of fuel and returned with a full tank of fuel at the end of the rental period, to avoid the inflated rates for refuelling often charged by hire companies. However, if the hire company operates a different policy, which offers better value for money, then that policy should be followed.

8.5 Personal Vehicles for Official Business

8.5.1 An individual may elect to use their own vehicle to travel to/from the airport if this is the most practical method of transport and the aggregate of mileage allowance and airport parking fees does not exceed the rail or taxi allowance.

8.5.2 In such cases, it is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that they possess a valid driving licence and that their vehicle is insured (at his/her own cost) for business use.

8.5.3 When an employee is authorised to travel by private car, the employee will be reimbursed at the mileage rate as published by The British Government department, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), or local applicable rate. The travel distance used in the reimbursement will be calculated on the basis of published road maps used by the Secretariat.

8.5.4 With prior approval, reasonable receipted parking fees, congestion charges and tolls while on official business will be reimbursed.

8.5.5 It is the responsibility of individual travellers to ensure that they hold a valid driver's licence and they abide by the rules and regulations of the issuing Government. It is also the responsibility of the individual traveller to carry an international driver's licence, if required, and to abide by the rules and regulations in the country in which they will be driving. Staff should not be using their mobile phones whilst driving.

8.5.6 The Commonwealth Secretariat accepts no liability for loss of, or damage to, private vehicles or their contents including where used on Secretariat business.

8.5.7 Fines for illegal parking and motoring offences will not be reimbursed.

8.5.8 Claims will only be reimbursed where the employee provides the relevant documentation and supporting original receipts.

8.5.9 No reimbursement is available for travel between home and one's normal place of work.

8.6 Travel by Taxi

8.6.1 Persons travelling on Secretariat business are expected to use public transport to and from meetings and social events wherever appropriate.

8.6.2 Travel by taxis or minicabs while on official duty overseas is included in the subsistence allowance and will not be reimbursed with the following exceptions:

- For transport from the airport on arrival and travel to the airport on departure.
- There is no suitable public transport available.
- Public transport is infrequent.
- It is the safest and/or most cost-effective means of transport.

8.6.3 In the interest of safety, persons travelling on Secretariat business should ensure that they only use licensed taxis and registered minicabs.

8.6.4 Travel by minicabs or taxis for airport or rail transfers in the United Kingdom may be reimbursed for journeys costing no more than £95 each way. These should be booked and paid for by the traveller and will be reimbursed to the policy limit above on the basis of original receipts produced.

8.6.5 In exceptional cases the ASG/Senior Director or DSG, or in the cases where the ASG/Senior Director or DSG is the traveller, her/his line manager, may approve an increased taxi fare. Except in emergencies, a written justification needs to be provided prior to travel.

9. Official Travel

9.1 Duty Travel

9.1.1 Duty travel is travel undertaken for Secretariat business-related purposes from the normal place of work to another place of work for a short period of time. Duty travel may be to, from or between the Secretariat Headquarters in the UK, Secretariat offices in New York and Geneva, member countries or other destinations as dictated by business needs. Duty travel may be undertaken by an individual employee or contracted worker or in groups of two or more persons.

9.2 Group Travel

9.2.1 Group travel should be limited to the number of staff that are absolutely necessary for the event/mission and would not critically affect the continuity of the operation of the Division or the Secretariat in the event of an incident. For this reason, no more than eight members of staff may travel together on the same means of transport e.g. train, plane, coach etc. Should it not be possible to adhere to a maximum of eight members of staff on the same means of transport, approval must be requested from Senior Director - Corporate prior to booking and committing Secretariat funds. All members of the Secretariat's Management Committee may not travel on the same means of transport e.g. flight, train, coach etc.

9.2.2 The organisation of group travel and travel-related services should be completed a minimum of 14 days in advance of departure and/or requirement. For further reference, please see Guidelines available on Compass.

9.2.3 All contracts for hotel accommodation and event venues for groups should comply with the Guidelines for the Management of Contracts for Group Reservations at Hotels and Venue Providers for Events which is available on Compass. All contracts and any other legal instruments should be sent to Legal Counsel for review and approval prior to any commitment or signed document being provided to the supplier.

9.2.4 Persons travelling in groups on Secretariat business are expected to share ground transport wherever practicable.

9.3 Travel with Spouse, Partner, Dependant Child or Other Companion

9.3.1 Other than where authorised as part of an employee's commencement, termination or home leave arrangements, an employee accompanied on Secretariat business by a spouse, partner, dependent child or other companion who is not involved in such business, will not be reimbursed for any costs of the companion.

9.3.2 It is not permitted to downgrade travel or accommodation class in order to fund travel costs for a companion.

9.3.3 Similarly, it is not permitted to downgrade the class of official travel to sit with family or friends in a lower class of travel as this can be expected to impact on the ability of the officer to conduct his/her duties on arrival at the place of work.

9.3.4 Spouses, partners, dependent children or other companions not engaged in the business of the organisation or employed by the Secretariat are not covered by Secretariat insurance policy except where agreed as part of an employee's contractual arrangements with the Secretariat.

9.3.5 Persons travelling on Secretariat business will not be reimbursed any additional surcharges for multiple room occupancy and other services used at hotels by their accompanying spouse, partner, dependent child or other companion.

9.3.6 For further information on Travel on Appointment, Home Leave and Termination, please refer to the Employee Handbook.

10. Personal Travel While on Official Travel

10.1 The Secretariat's Travel Management Company (TMC) is contracted to provide travel for official purposes only. Leisure travel can be booked separately via the TMC's dedicated leisure team.

10.2 Travellers may extend their stay at the destination of their official travel, provided the extension does not increase the cost of the ticket, deviate from the

in-policy mission itinerary nor increase the processing time required to arrange the travel.

- 10.3 An employee taking personal leave in conjunction with official travel requires the authorisation of the Divisional Approver, or in the cases where the Divisional Approver is the traveller, by her/his supervising Approver, and relevant authorisation of annual leave.
- 10.4 Itineraries for official mission travel may not be altered to accommodate additional cities/countries to facilitate personal travel.
- 10.5 Should a traveller wish to add personal travel to an official mission, they may extend the start or return date but may not change either the point of origin or the official mission location for the purpose of return flights. A comparison of pricing must be attained from the TMC showing the cost for the official return date versus the return date allowing personal travel. If there is additional cost to allow for personal travel, the traveller will need to pay for the additional cost either directly to the TMC or to the Travel Section.
- 10.6 Where a traveller wishes to add personal travel i.e. an additional location to their official travel, this should be procured separately and personally from their official travel.
- 10.7 Travellers should exercise care when booking tickets to additional locations to ensure that any changes will not affect their official travel that would necessitate a change to their tickets. Travellers will be personally financially liable for any additional cost to their official ticket as a result of the impact of their personal travel.
- 10.8 Persons travelling on Secretariat business would not be expected to select the route or mode of transport for personal convenience. Personal travel should not impact on the resources of the Secretariat and there must be no detriment to service.
- 10.9 Additional journey time as a result of personal travel shall be taken as annual leave to be booked and authorised at the time of travel request.
- 10.10 Personal travel that makes a journey longer than that which would be required through a direct route to meet the timescales or attendance for duty at the place of work should be taken as annual leave. Thus, any travel that requires an individual to depart their place of residence (either at home or abroad at a hotel) more than one day prior to, or return more than 1 day after, an event should be considered in this respect and leave taken for the extra day(s).

11. Hotel Booking Policy

11.1 General principles

11.1.1 The Secretariat has negotiated discounted rates with a number of hotels in London with the aim of ensuring a safe and satisfactory level of hotel accommodation. Please refer to Compass for further information.

11.1.2 Travel arrangers are required to book accommodation at the Secretariat preferred hotels in the first instance using the discounted tariffs.

11.1.3 In exceptional circumstances, where accommodation cannot be found at the Secretariat preferred hotel or at another hotel within the daily subsistence allowance as set by the United Nations, travel organisers are required to consult the Travel Section for guidance before making any arrangements.

11.1.4 The Secretariat will not reimburse employees for accommodation booked above the daily subsistence allowance for the city as set by the United Nations (UN city rate) without prior consideration by the Travel Section based on clear justification and authorisation by the Divisional Director, or in the cases where the Divisional Director is the traveller, by her/his supervising Deputy Secretary-General.

11.1.5 Employees are required to state the name of the hotel and the agreed tariff on the Acquittal Form and attach a copy of the original receipt on the submitted acquittal.

11.1.6 Staff staying in one location for more than 7 days should consider serviced apartments rather than hotels. Where available, the serviced apartments should be safe and practical.

11.2 Standard of Hotel Accommodation

11.2.1 The prescribed class of accommodation on official travel is as follows:

Table 2: Standard Hotel of Hotel Accommodation

Secretary-General	Suite
Deputy Secretaries-General	Executive Room
All other Staff Members and contracted workers* <small>*Section 2 - Definitions</small>	Standard Room
NB: The ASG/Senior Director, in very limited and special cases, may approve a higher level of accommodation for non-staff DSG equivalents in recognition of the official status of the individual e.g. Head of Government or former Head of Government.	

11.3 Special Rate Hotels

11.3.1 Every effort should be made to select hotels within the city rate DSA or as provided in the list of corporate negotiated hotels. In situations where the

hotel tariff falls outside this provision, travellers should request out of policy approval prior to departing on the mission from the Divisional Approver, or in the cases where the Divisional Approver is the traveller, to her/his supervising Approver. In such cases, staff would receive the hotel rates approved plus the non-accommodation portion of City UNDSA as set out in Section 12.

11.3.2 In situations where the hotel tariff falls outside of the UN DSA city rate, the out of policy hotel costs will only be paid if Purchase Orders are received 14 days or more from departure. The out of policy hotel costs will not be paid or reimbursed if the hotel is booked within 14 days from departure unless good business justification is provided to the Traveller's Divisional Director prior to request being approved (or in the case of travel involving a Director or DSG, his/her line manager).

11.3.3 In situations where a hotel is selected for safety or security reasons, the full UN Special Hotel DSA rate will be paid on the condition that a security report is provided by the security provider, as advised by HRD, and the request is approved by the Traveller's ASG/Senior Director or DSG (or in the case of travel involving the ASG/Senior Director or DSG, his/her line manager) prior to departure of the mission.

11.4 Early Check In and Late Check Out

11.4.1 If early check-in and/or extended check-out times are required, travellers/travel arrangers are encouraged to negotiate cost-free terms with hotels. An additional night of accommodation may be booked if staff are arriving before 08:00 from an overnight flight or departing after 22:00 in the evening. The Secretariat will usually only consider reimbursement of these costs where this has been approved prior to travel by the Traveller's Divisional Approver (or in the case of travel involving a Divisional Approver, his/her line manager).

12. Subsistence and Incidental Allowances

12.1 Subsistence Payable on Official Business Travel

12.1.1 A maximum subsistence allowance of one night's per diem as set out below may be claimed for each night that is spent related to Secretariat business away from a person's normal place of work. Subsistence allowance will not be paid for any element of personal travel during a business-related trip.

12.1.2 For overnight absences on official duty the full 100% rate of the applicable city rate of the daily subsistence allowance will be as set by the United Nations for the applicable city of travel. This allowance is intended to cover accommodation, meals and incidental expenses such as personal porter services, gratuities, laundry, newspapers, snacks, personal internet usage, drinks, gym access, toiletries, clothing, books, personal entertainment, personal telephone calls, local taxis (see section 8.4) and other miscellaneous personal expenses. Additional reimbursement will only be allowable in exceptional circumstances and on production of original receipts. Where meals

and/or accommodation are provided, special rates of subsistence apply (see below).

- 12.1.3 Subsistence allowance is not paid for flying time. However, persons on Secretariat business travelling in economy class in transit at an airport for more than 5 hours may claim an allowance of up to £20 for a meal on production of a receipt.
- 12.1.4 Prior to travel, the traveller will be paid the published UN City DSA rate in GBP. The Foreign Exchange (FX) Rate will be sourced from Oanda and published on Compass at the beginning of each month. This rate will be applicable for all DSA payments processed during that month. For purposes of calculating the acquittal on the return from mission, the member of staff should use the UN City DSA rate for the dates of travel in conjunction with the published FX Rate for the month of processing.
- 12.1.5 Expenses incurred for the use of the internet on-board any aircraft will not be eligible for reimbursement under any circumstances.
- 12.1.6 Persons on Secretariat business travelling in business class in transit at an airport for more than 5 hours are expected to use the Airline Lounge facilities. Where this is not available, they may claim an allowance of up to £20 for a meal on production of a receipt.
- 12.1.7 Actual and reasonable incidental expenses on official duty that may be claimed on production of a receipt include taxi fares to/and from the airport to the hotel (or place of work if required to go directly from the airport - see Section 8.4 above) as set out in this policy, official telephone calls itemised on the hotel invoice, internet use for official purposes, recommended medical vaccinations, prophylactics and visas for official travel. For employees who travel frequently on Secretariat business, the Secretariat will also reimburse the cost of renewing passports where the pages have been exhausted as a result of official travel.
- 12.1.8 Items such as commission charges, currency exchange charges or transaction fees cannot be reimbursed as the UN DSA rate covers any foreign currency or fees charged.
- 12.1.9 Items such as commission charges on currency exchange either at a bank or at a hotel will not be paid to individuals who request and are given their subsistence allowance in advance.
- 12.1.10 Subsistence allowance will not be paid for any period of leave.
- 12.1.11 Where a meal is provided by the Secretariat, by the host Government or another party, as part of a meeting or included in the rate for accommodation, the applicable rate of subsistence allowance will be reduced by the component for that free meal as follows:
- If accommodation is provided, then only the non-accommodation part of the UNDSA city rate is payable.

- If meals only are provided, then the UN city hotel rate plus 50% of the non-accommodation part of UNDSA city rate is payable.
- If both accommodation and meals are provided, then 50% of the non-accommodation part of the UNDSA city rate is payable.
- If the approved hotel rates (including levies) are more than the city rate UNDSA, the full hotel rate will be paid directly by the Secretariat or host government and the non-accommodation part of UNDSA city rate is payable in accordance with provisions on “Special Rate Hotels”.

NB: Non-accommodation part of UNDSA city rate is UNDSA city rate less the UN city hotel rate.

12.1.12 Where a free meal, including hotel breakfast, is provided by the Secretariat, by the host Government or another party, the applicable rate of subsistence allowance will be reduced by the component for that free meal as follows:

- 25% of the non-accommodation part of UNDSA if dinner provided.
- 15% of the non-accommodation part of UNDSA if lunch provided.
- 10% of the non-accommodation part of UNDSA if breakfast provided.

NB: For example, if all meals are provided then the individual gets 50% of the non-accommodation part of the UNDSA as above).

12.1.13 When an employee or contracted worker becomes sick while travelling on official business, subsistence allowance will usually continue to be paid. If, however, the employee is admitted to hospital, only 50% of the non-accommodation part of the applicable rate of subsistence allowance will be paid.

12.1.14 When a traveller chooses not to stay in paid accommodation, only the non-accommodation part of UNDSA city rate will be paid, unless an original hotel bill is submitted with the travel acquittal. Reimbursement of the hotel bill will be paid up to the maximum of the accommodation part of the UN city rate.

12.1.15 Employees or contracted workers staying with family or friends may only claim the non-accommodation part of the UNDSA city rate.

12.2 Subsistence Payments for Interview Candidates

12.2.1 Candidates attending interview boards may be provided with accommodation and/or air travel in line with the provision in the class of travel Table 1 (at section 6 above). An allowance to cover airport transfers, meals and incidental expenses based on the prevailing non-accommodation element of the UNDSA London city rate may also be paid.

12.2.2 Candidates for interview may be granted a stopover or an additional night in London (at the applicable UNDSA City rate) if travelling for 16 hours or more.

13. Cash and Accountable Advances

- 13.1 All Advances should be managed in accordance with Cash & Accountable Advance Policy on Compass.
- 13.2 All requests for Advances should be received by the Travel Section 14 days or more prior to travel. If the request falls outside of this period, please refer to “Time-Frames for the Processing of DSA and Cash & Accountable Advances” on Compass.
- 13.3 Accountable Advances are payments made to third parties such as Government Ministries, Departments or Agencies (MDAs), consultants, public agencies and companies to cover anticipated business or reasonable expenses incurred in facilitating or organising events such as meetings, workshops, election observer missions, seminars and conferences (including DSA payments for delegates).
- 13.4 Contracts for Accountable Advances for hotel and venue providers must be reviewed and approved by the Legal Counsel prior to signature and prior to confirming a venue. A minimum of 10 days prior to the event are required for review and approval. Please refer to the Guidelines for the management of contracts for group hotel accommodation and venue providers which is available on Compass.
- 13.5 Cash Advances are payments made to staff and consultants in order for them to pay Daily Subsistence Allowance to participants or to cover reasonable expenses incurred in facilitating or organising events such as meetings, workshops, election observer missions, seminars and conferences.
- 13.6 Funding options for Cash Advances should be agreed by the Travel Section prior to completing the workflow Travel Requisition for approval via the Scheme of Delegation.
- 13.7 Individual cash advances must not exceed £2,000 and total cash advances carried collectively by a group at any one time must not exceed £10,000.

14. Rest Periods

- 14.1 The provision of rest periods is to ensure that employees are fit to resume their duties on return to work. The rest periods are to be taken immediately after travel. Rest periods not taken at the due time are forfeited and cannot be utilised at a later date.
- 14.2 Time taken as Rest Period cannot be accumulated or included as part of the annual leave entitlement or claimed as TOIL.
- 14.3 For travel by air on official business, as far as possible given the exigencies of service, employees will be allowed rest periods as follows:

Table 3: Rest Periods

Duration of Journey	Provision	Class of Travel	
		Business	Economy
Up to 6 hours travel	No rest period		
6-9 hours travel	Employee not required to commence duty within 10 hours of arriving at their final destination or before the morning of the day after arrival, whichever is earlier.	No	Yes
10 hours or more	Employee not required to commence duty within 12 hours of arriving at his/her destination, or before the morning of the day after arrival, whichever is earlier.	Yes	Yes

15. Stopovers

15.1 Home Leave

15.1.1 If direct air travel time exceeds 16 hours and the employee is travelling in economy class, the employee may claim one night's UN daily subsistence allowance each way on a reimbursement basis per family.

15.1.2 In such cases reimbursement will be subject to the destination being agreed and documented on file on commencement of employment as the home leave destination when assuming his/her post.

15.1.3 No accommodation or subsistence allowance will be paid for travel time under 16 hours, or if the travel is in a class other than economy.

15.1.4 Claims cannot be made for ground transportation on home leave travel except where an employee has identified a home leave destination on commencement of their employment to which onward travel by road or rail is essential. In such cases funded onward travel must be by the most economic means and must be agreed in advance by the Human Resources Division.

15.1.5 At the discretion of the ASG/Senior Director, or in the cases where the ASG/Senior Director is the traveller, her/his supervising DSG or SG, an employee may be allowed to take home leave in a country other than their home country providing that the cost does not exceed the most economic and most direct fare to their home country.

15.1.6 The Secretariat will not provide any subsistence or accommodation allowance for transit stops or overnight stops for employees who choose to take home leave in a country other than their home country.

15.1.7 Family members need not travel on home leave on the same flight as the employee but in order to be eligible for reimbursement for flights some period of their home leave must correspond with that of the employee. No stopover is

granted for family members unless they are travelling on the same flight as the employee.

15.2 Family Visit Travel and Education Grant Travel

15.2.1 No stopover is granted for staff or family members travelling on education travel.

16. Non-Secretariat Staff

16.1 Mindful of the corporate image of the Secretariat and the concept of value for money, it is not considered appropriate that events such as seminars and workshops should be held in 5-star hotels. Where there is no alternative meeting venue than a 5-star facility, accommodation for delegates and the Secretariat team should be provided at a less expensive hotel nearby.

16.2 Non-employees of the Secretariat i.e. event participants/Guests/DSG equivalents who wish to deviate from the official trip that has been booked by the Secretariat must not change the tickets issued by the TMC (Travel Management Company). They must book and pay for the additional sectors with their own form of payment. This can be facilitated via the TMC's leisure service or with another vendor. Class of Travel/Airline Upgrade - Economy ticket is booked via TMC and paid for by the Secretariat. The difference between the economy fare and business fare/other airline fare is paid for by the participant via personal credit card. Class of Travel Upgrade (no personal credit card)-Economy quote is provided by TMC. Participant does not have a personal credit card. The Secretariat will reimburse the traveller for the cost of the TMC's quote for economy fare only. Participant can then book via an alternative travel agency.

16.3 Class of Travel

16.3.1 The class of travel for all Event Participants whose travel is financed by the Secretariat shall be Economy (as set out in Table 1).

16.4 Accommodation

16.4.1 Divisions may arrange suitable accommodation for Event Participants. This should cost no more than the applicable UN City Hotel Rate.

16.5 Overnight Stopover

16.5.1 Where event participants travelling for more than 16 hours are required to have a stopover due to flight schedules, they will be permitted to claim reimbursement for accommodation and meal allowances as outlined in Section 16.

16.6 Meal Allowances

16.6.1 Divisions may also provide meals for event participants. Divisions may also decide to contribute towards the cost of meals of event participants but whatever the circumstances the **maximum** allowable contribution towards this cost, **where meals are not otherwise provided**, is:

- Dinner - £30.
- Lunch - £15.
- Breakfast - £10 (where this is not part of the negotiated accommodation rate).

16.7 Transport and Incidental Allowances

16.7.1 In the interests of cost effectiveness and efficient use of Commonwealth member country resources, no daily allowance will be paid to event participants. With the exception of those mentioned below, no other allowances, stipends or gratuities will be provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat for event participants.

16.7.2 Divisions may provide a one-off transport allowance of £50 to each event participant towards the cost of airport transfers and any other travel costs. Taxis should not be booked for event participants to be provided at the Secretariat's expense.

16.7.3 An additional incidental allowance of £10.00 per day may also be offered to event participants, if considered necessary.

16.7.4 Participants will be responsible for any additional expenses e.g. mini-bar expenses, telephone calls, newspapers and tips, incurred during their stay. Event participants should be asked to declare any other benefits which they may be receiving in order to attend such events and these should be taken into account by Divisions in deciding what would be an appropriate contribution by the Commonwealth Secretariat towards their attendance within the limits stated above.

16.7.5 Where events are located in the Greater London area, Commonwealth Secretariat staff will not be eligible for accommodation or daily subsistence allowance. However, at the discretion of the ASG/Senior Director, light refreshments may be provided for a team of staff required to work after 8 pm. For events located elsewhere in the UK, the provisions for meals, accommodation, transport and incidental allowances in Section 16 above apply.

17. Non-Staff DSG Equivalent

17.1 Non-staff DSG equivalents may claim the DSA rate applicable for that country as per the regulations in Section 12. If DSA, under Section 12, is paid, then no other allowances are payable.

18. Frequent Traveller and Other Loyalty Schemes and Personal Incentives

- 18.1 Selection of an airline, or ticket type, for official travel is not to be made on the basis of frequent flyer points or other personal incentive or loyalty schemes ('loyalty points') and must be based strictly on the most cost-effective option presented by the Secretariat's preferred supplier(s).
- 18.2 Where loyalty points are provided for group bookings (such as hotel bookings or airfares) these should if possible be used to reduce the costs of accommodation at and/or travel to the particular event, or if that is not possible, be used for a future event. Loyalty points so accumulated remain the property of the Secretariat and are to be sent to the Conference Section for corporate use.
- 18.3 Employees may use personal loyalty points during travel on official business to upgrade to a class of travel beyond that in which they would normally be travelling, provided there is no additional cost to the Secretariat; employees should exercise judgement on this matter, bearing in mind public visibility and perception and possible reputational damage to the Secretariat.
- 18.4 Persons travelling on Secretariat business may not downgrade the class of travel for personal benefit.

19. Sponsored Travel

- 19.1 Sponsored travel may be approved by the Divisional Approver, or in the cases where the Divisional Approver is the traveller, by her/his supervising Approver, where the offer is considered to be beneficial to the work of the Secretariat and/or to the professional development of the individual. In considering such offers, the purpose of travel overall must be shown to support the work of the Secretariat.

20. Official Entertainment on Duty Travel

- 20.1 Employees must obtain prior authorisation for official entertainment from the ASG/Senior Director and the relevant member of the Management Committee, in advance of travel, wherever possible, and such official entertainment must be shown to be directly related to and in the interests of the work of the Secretariat. Full justification must be given in writing on claiming reimbursement including:
- Names of those entertained.
 - Business benefit to be gained.
 - Dates, location and original receipts.
- 20.2 Official entertainment must be of a level appropriate to the guests entertained as agreed with the ASG/Senior Director and the relevant member of the Management Committee with the emphasis on public perception, cost consciousness and reasonableness.

20.3 With the exception of the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General, there is no provision for employees to claim for entertainment or meals for other Secretariat colleagues under the Travel and Expenses Policy. The only exception to this provision is where prior approval has been obtained. Such entertainment should be authorised and claimed in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation and divisional procedures.

21. Excess Baggage

21.1 It is sometimes necessary for material relating to workshops/conferences to be carried in excess of the personal baggage allowance.

21.2 Persons travelling on Secretariat business should use the most cost-effective means for shipment of meeting equipment and documents or personal and household effects.

21.3 Significant amounts of excess baggage (e.g. for meetings, workshops, observer missions) must be pre-booked. Where the Secretariat has specially negotiated arrangements with preferred suppliers, these should be used.

21.4 Persons travelling on Secretariat business may not claim reimbursement of excess baggage related to any personal leave during a business trip.

21.5 The Secretariat will reimburse the cost of accompanied baggage for official travel, subject to prior authorisation from the Travel Section, providing that the items are for official purposes and cannot be sent by any cheaper means.

21.6 Employees and contracted workers should use the Secretariat's preferred freight-forwarding companies through the Facilities Management Section.

21.7 It is the responsibility of an employee to ensure that shipments overseas comply with all relevant customs and excise regulations.

21.8 Reimbursement of VAT, Customs and Excise Fees for excess, accompanied or unaccompanied baggage will require documented justification and original receipts, which should be attached to travel claims. Employees are expected to use the good offices of the host government or their strategic partners in the host country to minimise such taxes and to facilitate timely clearance of shipments.

21.9 When travelling on home leave, if staff take more than one flight and one of those flights has a lower luggage allowance, staff should adhere to the lowest luggage allowance for the entire journey. Staff will not be reimbursed for the additional weight.

22. Operational Equipment

- 22.1 If required, employees should take their work laptops on official mission travel.
- 22.2 Employees are able to borrow IT equipment for official mission travel. ITS equipment is loaned to members of staff in accordance with the (ITS) Equipment Loan Policy.
- 22.3 Employees should avoid the high costs of “roaming” on mobile devices when overseas. Employees using issued or loaned mobile devices need to comply with the (ITS) Mobile Device Policy. Travellers will be required to pay for all personal calls in accordance with the (ITS) Mobile Device Policy.
- 22.4 The Secretariat will only reimburse the cost of local SIM cards purchased on overseas trips.

23. Insurance for Employees and Dependents on Official Travel

- 23.1 Employees and contracted staff travelling on official business and employees on authorised home leave are covered by the Secretariat’s Group Personal Accident and Travel Insurance Policy for medical and emergency expenses, personal baggage and loss or theft of money (subject to the insurance policy maximum limits see link below). The coverage will, subject to underwriters’ conditions, include the spouse/partner and any dependent child of the employee when travelling outside the UK on authorised home leave up to a maximum of three months’ duration.
- 23.2 Persons travelling on Secretariat business requiring details of the insurance cover and claim procedures should contact Help Desk of the Facilities Management Section.

24. Emergency Contact Information

- 24.1 Travellers on official travel are required to provide contact details to the Divisional Approver for the period of their official travel including their mobile phone number and contact details for the hotel.
- 24.2 All members of staff travelling on official Secretariat business should complete a Traveller Profile held by the Travel Management Company (TMC) as per the guidelines on Compass. Information required includes Advanced Passenger Information (APIS) requirements as well as email and mobile phone number which will allow for contact during an emergency situation.

References:

Authorisation and approval:

Reviewed by: Senior Management Committee
Date: April 2025

Approved by: Senior Management Committee
Date: April 2025

Revision History:

Timing of revision and outline of frequency of revision required

Version	Date	Description of Changes	Reason	Prepared By	Approval From
1.0	December 2013	Initial Release	Provide the Secretariat with a Travel & Expense Policy	Marilyn Benjamin	SMC
2.0	September 2014	Review after Initial Release	Clarifying Policy after initial release	Nicole Wilcock	SMC
3.0	September 2016	Review and Update	Ensure Policy is relevant for efficient and cost effective travel and expenses	Peri Powell	CAC/SMC
4.0	February 2019	Update to Class of Travel for ASG & Senior Directors & Alignment with Organogram	ASG and Senior Directors have taken on additional duties with the amalgamation of Directorates and are undertaking more frequent long-distant travel	Peri Powell	SMC
5.0	April 2025	Operational updates including increased taxi limit of £95	Operational updates including increased taxi limit of £95	Peri Powell	SMC

Policy Owner

Travel Manager