



Secretariat

17 March 2021

Information circular

To: Members of the staff
From: The Secretary-General
Subject: **Official travel**

1. The purpose of the present information circular is to provide staff members with detailed information on official travel, which is governed by the provisions of administrative instruction [ISBA/ST/AI/2020/6](#) on official travel.

A. Authorization of official travel

2. Prior authorization of official travel continues to be required, as explained in section 3.1 of the instruction. Travel authorization is recorded in the Travel Request and Authorization (TRA) form and establishes the traveller's entitlements under appendix B to the Staff Rules of the International Seabed Authority ([ISBA/ST/SGB/2020/1](#)) in the event of death, injury or illness attributable to the performance of official duties. Travel undertaken without a valid TRA form will be recorded as an absence while on leave, for which the traveller may not be covered under appendix B.

3. Travel may be authorized only by the Secretary-General or the relevant head of office. Travel by heads of offices must be authorized by the Secretary-General. Before the authorization of any official travel, the primary consideration should be whether direct, face-to-face contact is necessary for the implementation of the mandate. If not, alternative methods should be employed. Heads of offices are therefore required to certify in the travel authorization that alternative methods, including videoconference, audio conference or other remote business practices, such as online meetings, have been carefully reviewed and found not to be effective and that travel is therefore necessary.

4. Externally funded travel under section 4.8 of the instruction also requires authorization, in line with the instruction.

B. Procedures for the approval of official travel

5. In accordance with section 3.2 of the instruction, all travel arrangements for individuals travelling at the expense of the Authority, including advance booking and



purchase of tickets, should be finalized not less than 16 calendar days in advance of the commencement of official travel. The relevant head of office will be required to provide justification for all official travel arrangements that could not be finalized 16 calendar days in advance of the commencement of travel. Any changes to an approved travel authorization shall require justification and certification by the relevant head of office or the Director of the Office for Administrative Services.

6. Before travel is undertaken by any staff member or other individual authorized to travel at the Authority's expense, the relevant head of office should ensure that adequate funds are available and that the requested travel is justified within the work programme. To that end, consultations should be held with the Office for Administrative Services to confirm the availability of funds on the relevant budget line to cover all aspects of the travel, including registration fees for seminars and training courses, when applicable.

7. For entitlement-related official travel (home leave travel, family visit travel, education grant travel or travel on assignment, repatriation or separation from service), eligibility for the entitlement must be confirmed by the Office for Administrative Services.

8. Except for the travel arrangements for the Secretary-General, which are coordinated by the Executive Office, and subject to the provisions of the present circular, travel bookings and tickets must be arranged through the Office for Administrative Services. As specified in section 4.4 of the instruction, air travel shall be undertaken at the most economical rate appropriate for the class of accommodation, including discounted airfares. Every effort must be made to ensure that tickets are sourced at the most competitive rates available, including through online booking options. Normally, three alternative quotes should be obtained and the approving officer for travel should verify that the most economical rate was offered by the travel agent. For example, self-ticketing through online booking may be permitted where it is demonstrably more economical than using the official travel agent of the Authority.

C. Terminal expenses

9. Staff members are reimbursed terminal expenses for each required trip by means of public conveyance between the airport or other point of arrival or departure and the hotel or other place of dwelling in accordance with section 8 of the instruction. The amounts to be reimbursed for each such trip are \$63 in respect of the staff member and \$21 for each family member authorized to travel at the Authority's expense.

10. When an official Authority or government vehicle is made available for the trip, the amounts to be reimbursed shall be reduced to \$21 in respect of the staff member and \$11 for each family member.

11. The Authority has no responsibility to provide staff members with transportation to and from any airport in Jamaica; however, on occasions where official transportation is provided to staff members travelling on official business, transportation will be provided only during working hours. At all other times, staff members must make their own arrangements.

D. Miscellaneous expenses

12. Section 10 of the instruction contains a list of the categories of miscellaneous travel expenses under \$40 that may be reimbursed, where authorized. Furthermore, a

flat fee of \$15 is reimbursed as a non-receipted expense in cases in which the airline does not provide meals free of charge on a flight that is longer than six hours.

E. Procedures for the exercise of the lump-sum option for travel by air on home leave, family visit or education grant travel or travel on assignment, repatriation or separation from service

13. Section 13 of the instruction establishes the lump-sum option for travel by air on home leave, family visit, education grant travel or travel on assignment, repatriation or separation from service and the terms and conditions for the exercise of that option. Section 14 sets out the requirements to be complied with after the completion of such travel.

14. Staff members who wish to exercise that option must indicate their preference when completing the TRA form. After receiving the notification, the staff member will have seven calendar days in which to notify the Office for Administrative Services of their agreement to accept the lump sum. If notice of agreement is not received within that time, the lump-sum option will not be granted. In accordance with section 3.2 of the instruction, the lump-sum option for travel should be finalized at the earliest opportunity but not less than 16 calendar days in advance of the commencement of official travel.

F. Self-ticketing

15. Staff members and other individuals authorized to travel at the Authority's expense, if applicable, may be authorized to purchase their own tickets ("self-ticket") pursuant to staff rule 7.11. A self-ticketing option may be approved when deemed to be in the best interest of the Authority and subject to a maximum reimbursement amount established by the Office for Administrative Services.

16. The following self-ticketing process is to be adhered to:

(a) A duly completed TRA form must be submitted, with detailed justification of the request for self-ticketing;

(b) The Office for Administrative Services will evaluate the request for self-ticketing and approve the request, if it is deemed advantageous to the Authority;

(c) The Office for Administrative Services will communicate the maximum reimbursable amount calculated as the ticket portion of the amount authorized for the journey on the approved dates and by the approved mode, route and standard of travel to the staff member and other travellers, if applicable, so as to avoid any misunderstandings during the reimbursement process;

(d) In purchasing their tickets, staff members and other individuals authorized to travel at the Authority's expense must comply with the approved dates, mode, route and standard of travel;

(e) Upon return from travel, the staff member and other individuals authorized to travel at the Authority's expense, if applicable, must submit evidence of travel (i.e. a copy of boarding passes and/or of stamps in travel documents) to the Office for Administrative Services.

17. All requests for self-ticketing must be submitted well in advance, to ensure compliance with the 16-day advance purchase policy.

18. It is important to note that staff members and other individuals authorized to travel at the Authority's expense, if applicable, who purchase tickets without an approved travel request risk not being reimbursed or only receiving partial reimbursement.
19. All claims for reimbursement must be supported by a scanned copy of the invoice paid by the traveller, and the proof of travel should be retained by the traveller, if applicable, for a period of five years.
20. Charges for additional value-added services (e.g. premium seat selection or priority boarding) are the financial responsibility of the traveller and are not reimbursable, unless covered by section 10 (f) of the instruction.
21. In the event of any changes to the planned travel, the traveller is responsible for managing any associated change and refund requests directly with the ticket provider.
22. Travellers must also request and obtain security and medical clearances for their approved travel, where applicable, and ensure that visa and United Nations laissez-passer requirements are in order prior to travel.

G. Early check-in to and late check-out from hotels

23. In exceptional circumstances in which travel arranged or approved by the Authority results in a traveller incurring charges for having to check in early to or check out late from a hotel, the traveller may claim reimbursement, assuming the travel request is duly approved and scanned receipts are attached to the travel claim. The traveller will be reimbursed the actual accommodation cost, not to exceed the accommodation portion of the standard daily subsistence allowance (DSA) rate.

H. Travel documents

24. *United Nations laissez-passer.* The laissez-passer is a legal travel document issued for official travel during a period of employment. Application forms for a laissez-passer are available from the Office for Administrative Services. Nationally recruited staff members who have been granted a laissez-passer for official travel are required, upon completion of travel, to return the laissez-passer to the Office for Administrative Services for safekeeping. The loss of a laissez-passer should be reported immediately to the local police and a written report explaining the circumstances of the loss should be submitted to the Authority.
25. *United Nations family certificate.* The family certificate is not a legal travel document but serves to identify the bearer as a family member of the Authority staff member indicated therein. Family certificates are not normally issued to family members who will be travelling with the staff member. They may, however, be issued at the request of the staff member when the following conditions are met:
 - (a) The travel is authorized at the Authority's expense;
 - (b) If the travel is other than education grant travel, the separate travel of the eligible family member has been authorized;
 - (c) There is reason to believe that the absence of the certificate may cause significant hardship.

26. The present circular shall take effect on the date of its issuance.
27. Information circular [ISBA/ST/IC/2017/10](#) is hereby replaced.

(Signed) Michael Lodge
Secretary-General
