Operational Instruction Ref. OI.SSC.2018.01
Official Duty Travel

Authority:

This Operational Instruction (OI) is promulgated by the Director, Shared Services Centre (SSC), under Operational Directive Ref. OD.PCG.2017.01 – Human Resources, Ethics and Culture of 13 July 2017, on the basis of a delegation of authority of the Director, People and Change Group (PCG), under the authority of the Executive Director.

Purpose:

The purpose of this OI is to outline how UNOPS manages Official Duty Travel (ODT). The specific processes describing in detail how to manage ODT shall be included in the Processes and Quality Management System (PQMS).

Effective Date:

This OI shall become effective immediately.

Promulgation Date:

15 Mar 2018

Consequential changes:

This OI shall supersede and replace the following:

- OD No. 11 (rev. 3): Travel Policy
- AI.CSPG.2014.01 (rev. 4): Official Duty Travel: (A) UNOPS staff and (B) nonUNOPS personnel
- AI.CSPG.2014.02 (rev 3): UNOPS Official Duty Travel - Individual Contractors
- AI.CSPG.2013.02: Approval process for visa support letters

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1. Elements of the Official Duty Travel (ODT)

1.1. The OI on ODT consists of 6 elements. The scope of each of these elements is defined in this OI. For each element a number of process maps and mandatory procedures, consistent with the scope definition and boundaries provided herein, shall be included in the Process and Quality Management System (PQMS) (available on the UNOPS intranet). Personnel, practitioners, supervisors, and heads of business units should refer to the PQMS to exercise their rights and responsibilities related to the Policy Management Framework, while complying with this OI and OD.PCG.2017.01 on Human Resources, Ethics and Culture. Each of the elements described below correspond to an individual section in the PQMS.

1.2. Where matters arise that do not fall under one of these elements, the Director, SSC, may provide authoritative interpretations or grant exceptions, as required. The Director, SSC, may develop and update appropriate processes and mandatory procedures in the PQMS where in their opinion general additional guidance is required, and may update this OI, accordingly. Ad-hoc guidance shall be logged for regular evaluation in order to ensure that the processes and mandatory procedures in the PQMS continue to serve the purpose of the organization.

2. Understanding scope and glossary

2.1. The instructions under this OI shall apply to all ODT arranged and covered by UNOPS.

2.2. ODT arranged by UNOPS shall follow the same standards, unless otherwise specified in the PQMS. ODT of UNOPS staff members shall be carried out in accordance with the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules Chapter VII and, to the extent practical, closely aligned with the practice of other entities that are part of the United Nations Common System of Salaries, Allowances, and Benefits.

2.3. As specified in the present OI and PQMS, the entitlements may differ between the following categories:

a. UNOPS Staff Members

b. UNOPS Individual Contract Agreement (ICA) holders, interns and volunteers

c. Partner managed personnel and Non-UNOPS personnel (for example government officials, professors, fellows and workshop participants travelled by UNOPS).

2.4. The terms used for purpose of this OI and the corresponding PQMS sections, shall be as defined in the glossary in the PQMS.

3. Manage authorization of travel and safety

3.1. In the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the primary consideration before approval of ODT should be whether face-to-face contact is necessary for implementation. If not, then alternative methods should be employed. Therefore, budget owners are required to certify that alternative methods, such as videoconference, audioconference or other remote business practices,

such as online meetings, have been carefully reviewed, were found not to be effective and that travel is therefore necessary.

3.2. ODT shall be requested and the request approved in advance. It shall be approved by the personnel's supervisor and by the budget owner of the General Ledger Account (GLA) used to cover the travel expenses as outlined in the PQMS. Under no circumstances shall a UNOPS personnel authorize his/her own travel.

3.3. Prior to departure, UNOPS personnel travelling on mission must complete the relevant security courses and acquaint themselves with the updated UNDSS travel advisory for the route and destination and strictly adhere to UNOPS' policy on safety and security as described in OD.ED.2017.01: Safety and Security.

3.4. Personnel on ODT must obtain security clearance via the Travel Request Information Process (TRIP) from the Designated Official regardless of the destination prior to travel in accordance with the UN Security Policy.

3.5. UNOPS shall reimburse the cost of inoculations and any other prophylaxis required for the duration and place of ODT for the traveller including the cost of the visit to a consultation with a doctor who will administer/prescribe the required medication.

3.6. Depending on the legal status of the traveller, ODT shall be undertaken using official travel documents such as United Nations Laissez-Passer (UNLP) or a National Passport in conjunction with a valid entry visa for which the costs shall be covered by UNOPS. United Nations Certificates and United Nations Family Certificates may also be issued for travel if deemed relevant.

3.7. All proposed visa support letters for UNOPS personnel shall be sent to the corresponding Head of Office (or in that person's absence his/her Officer-in-Charge) for review and signature. Requests for review and signature shall be submitted sufficiently in advance of personnel's travel arrangements, and, unless compelling circumstances exist, no less than three days in advance. All requests shall be accompanied with relevant supporting documentation.

3.8. All eligible personnel on ODT are covered by the Malicious Act Insurance Policy (MAIP) except under special circumstances as outlined in the PQMS.

3.9. It is the responsibility of the traveller to familiarize her/himself with the level of medical insurance coverage provided by the organization under her/his contract during missions and to ensure he/she has the adequate medical/travel insurance required to undertake the travel in a safe manner.

4. Manage route, mode and standards of travel

4.1. The standard route and mode of transportation for all ODT is by the most direct and economical route and mode is by air. An alternative route and mode of transportation may be approved when, in the opinion of the budget owner it is in the best interests of UNOPS. In order for UNOPS to obtain better pricing on tickets, the traveller should aim for booking of the ticket 7 days in advance of departure.

4.2. For travellers undertaking ODT using UNOPS vehicles, please refer to the PQMS guidance on the use of UNOPS vehicles.

4.3. Travel time shall be determined on the basis of the most direct and economical route, either by air or by the fastest available surface mode of transportation when air travel is not feasible. If it is

necessary to specify the “hour of departure” and the “hour of arrival”, these shall be considered as the time when the airplane, train, vessel or vehicle used by the traveller actually leaves from the departure terminal or arrives at the destination terminal.

4.4. When missions are planned and flights are booked, security and work/life balance shall be considered.

4.5. Under special circumstances rest stopovers may be authorized as described in the PQMS.

4.6. For all ODT by air, subject to the entitlements and exceptions as provided in the PQMS, the personnel shall be provided with economy class transportation in accordance with the least costly airfare structure, including discounted fares.

4.7. The air ticket shall be purchased by UNOPS in consultation with the traveller, through an authorized travel agency. Only under special circumstances as outlined in the PQMS may the ticket be purchased directly by the traveller and then reimbursed by UNOPS.

4.8. In case compensation is received from an airline due to denied boarding, the traveller must declare this to the budget owner upon return. Travellers on ODT shall not voluntarily give up their seats in exchange for compensations.

4.9. If personnel is permitted, for reasons of personal convenience, to travel by a route, mode of transportation or standard of travel other than the official one, their entitlement in respect of journey time and expenses covered shall be limited to the maximum they would have been entitled had the travel been undertaken by the official route.

5. Manage Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) and other entitlements

5.1. DSA is paid in advance, according to the length of the journey, at the rate established for the part of the month and year in which the travel occurs, in accordance with the schedule of rates established and periodically reviewed by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). In case a traveller is assigned to another duty station for less than one year or is provided free overnight accommodation and/or meals during the ODT, reduced DSA rates will apply.

5.2. Notwithstanding the above, it is recognized that under special circumstances there may be a need to establish special, ad-hoc or supplementary DSA rates. The circumstances and processes which shall be followed to authorize this are included in the PQMS.

5.3. If the UNOPS personnel member on annual leave or home leave is requested to carry out official duties, he/she may be entitled to 50% or 100% of the applicable DSA rate at the authorized travel location and the time spent shall be recorded as official duty.

5.4. UNOPS shall, in advance, pay terminal expenses with respect to each authorized journey for each trip to and from the airport or other point of arrival or departure to the hotel or other place of dwelling at the schedule of rates established and periodically reviewed by the Under-Secretary-General for Management. In cases where transport has been provided free of charge, a reduced rate will apply.

5.5. UNOPS shall not pay terminal expenses in respect of:

a. An intermediate stop which is not authorized; an intermediate stop of less than six hours, which does not involve leaving the terminal, or is exclusively for the purpose of making an onward connection; and

b. An STPC (stopover paid by carrier or airline).

5.6. Danger pay to eligible personnel going on ODT shall be paid in advance and as per OI.PCG.2017.01: Personnel Management Framework and the relevant PQMS section.

5.7. In support of UNOPS' ongoing effort to improve the work and life balance, the UNOPS personnel member who is a parent shall be entitled to the reimbursement of up to 10% of the cost of his/her ticket, should the personnel in that category choose to take his/her child along on ODT to a family duty station.

5.8. UNOPS shall pay a lump sum to help cover the travel costs for infants (children who are under two years of age and as such normally do not require a separate seat on a plane) and who accompany parents on ODT to a family duty station.

6. Manage deviations to entitlements awarded in advance

6.1. A Travel Expense Claim (TEC) shall be submitted by the traveller upon return from the ODT if the amounts paid were less than the entitled amounts, if the UNOPS personnel member, incurred reimbursable expenses or was overpaid by a minimum amount as specified in the PQMS.

6.2. If it has been determined that the UNOPS personnel member has been advanced an amount greater than his/her entitlements, the difference shall be promptly returned by the UNOPS personnel member to UNOPS. Failure to do so may lead to the imposition of disciplinary measures.

6.3. While every effort should be made by the personnel to submit a travel claim within two weeks of completion of travel, such travel claims shall be deemed receivable for the period of one year following the UNOPS personnel's return from travel. Travel claims shall be deemed time-barred and rejected, if received by the Authorising Unit more than one year from completion of travel. In such cases, no reimbursement shall be made to the traveller.

7. Manage special considerations for non-UNOPS and partner personnel

7.1. If defined in the project agreement and/or through written instructions, the ODT of nonUNOPS personnel and partner personnel shall be authorized and arranged in accordance with the provisions of the relevant project agreement (i.e. the project that will fund the travel) and/or written instructions from the funding source. The written instructions shall be valid only if signed by an official of the same rank as the official who signed the project agreement.

7.2. In the absence of specific/detailed provisions in the project agreement and/or written instructions from the funding source with regards to the travel of non-UNOPS personnel and partner personnel, the provisions in Part 1-6 of this OI shall be applicable, *mutatis mutandis.*