



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2021/044

Audit of official travel at the United Nations Office at Vienna

**Controls relating to planning and
authorization of travel, processing of travel
claims, and client feedback mechanisms need
to be strengthened**

24 September 2021

Assignment No. AE2020-320-01

Audit of official travel at the United Nations Office at Vienna

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of official travel at the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over official travel at UNOV. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020 and included a review of risk areas relating to: (a) travel planning and authorization; (b) travel claims and expenditures; and (c) management of travel operations.

Arrangements for processing of ticket refunds and for managing the contract with the travel management company were satisfactory. However, UNOV needed to strengthen controls relating to planning and authorization of travel, processing of travel claims, and client feedback mechanisms.

OIOS made six recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNOV needed to:

- Establish a mechanism to ensure that programme managers document prior authorization of travel and staff submit a corresponding absence request in Umoja prior to travel as required;
- Strengthen controls for approving consultants travel days by: (a) establishing requirements to ensure that the estimated travel days are reflected in the terms of reference of consultancy contracts and significant variations between the estimated and authorized travel days are explained in travel requests; and (b) issuing clear guidelines for classifying consultants as international and paying them travel allowances when their place of recruitment is local;
- Remind certifying officers of their role in ensuring that appropriate justification is provided and approved in cases where travel arrangements are not initiated within the required timelines; and instruct programme managers to ensure that the need to comply with the 16-day advance ticket purchase guideline is taken into account when planning contract start dates for consultants;
- Establish appropriate controls and mechanisms to ensure that daily subsistence allowances are accurately processed in situations when consultants travel on short trips while they are on long missions (mission within mission);
- Undertake annual client satisfaction surveys to improve the quality of its travel services; and
- Issue guidance for minimizing carbon emissions caused by official travel as part of integrating environmental sustainability into its activities.

UNOV accepted the recommendations and has initiated action to implement them.

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Audit of official travel at the United Nations Office at Vienna

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of official travel at the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV).
2. The Staff Regulations and Rules (ST/SGB/2018/1) define modes and standards of accommodation for travel by staff members and eligible family members on initial appointment, official business, change of official duty station, separation from service, medical reasons, safety and security reasons, home leave, and family visits. ST/AI/2013/3 and ST/IC/2019/16 on official travel govern the processing of official travel for staff and non-staff, and ST/AI/2014/2 addresses the system of daily subsistence allowance (DSA).
3. UNOV provides travel services to its offices as well as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and five other Vienna-based United Nations entities. The Travel and Transportation Unit (TTU) under the General Support Section in the Division for Management is responsible for handling travel arrangements. TTU was headed by a G-6 staff member, reporting to the Chief of the General Support Section and supported by five G-5 staff. Out of the six posts in TTU, five were funded from the regular budget and one from extrabudgetary resources.
4. TTU processed a total of 35,077 trips from 2018 to 2020, of which 33,910 (97 per cent) were for UNOV/UNODC while the rest were for the other Vienna-based organizations serviced by TTU. The total travel cost of travel handled by TTU was \$25 million in 2018, \$25 million in 2019 and \$6 million in 2020.
5. Comments provided by UNOV are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

6. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over official travel at UNOV.
7. This audit was included in the 2020 internal audit work plan due to the risks associated with travel and their potential impact on the Organization's operations.
8. OIOS conducted this audit from April to June 2021. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered risk areas relating to: (a) travel planning and authorization; (b) travel claims and expenditures; and (c) management of travel operations. The audit focused on travel relating to UNOV and UNODC since this constituted 97 per cent of the travel processed by TTU.
9. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; (c) analytical review of data; and (d) sample testing.
10. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Travel planning and authorization

Need for a clear procedure for pre-authorizing travel

11. ST/AI/2013/3 states that all official travel must be authorized in writing before it is undertaken. In exceptional cases, staff members may be orally authorized to travel. In such cases, written confirmation shall be required as soon as possible, and no later than two calendar weeks after completion of travel. ST/IC/2019/16 reinforces this requirement and states that prior to raising a travel request, staff members must submit a corresponding absence request in Umoja and obtain approval from their programme manager.

12. OIOS' review of 100 randomly selected trips showed 21 cases where there was inadequate evidence of prior written authorization by programme managers. Certifying officers did not always check whether the staff member had obtained the programme manager's approval, as required. Some certifying officers interviewed by OIOS seemed unaware that it was their responsibility to verify this. Additionally, in 12 out of the 100 trips reviewed, staff did not submit a corresponding absence request in Umoja prior to their travel. Further, when reviewing self-ticketing trips, OIOS noted 20 cases where the trips were approved ex post-facto.

13. These deficiencies were attributed to the fact that prior authorization of travel by programme managers or supervisors was being done outside of Umoja, and UNOV/UNODC had not established a clear process on how the authorizations should be documented. A clear procedure for prior authorization of travel would help assure that all travel is duly authorized.

(1) UNOV should establish a procedure or mechanism to ensure that: (a) programme managers document prior authorization of travel as required by ST/AI/2013/3; and (b) staff submit a corresponding absence request in Umoja prior to travel.

UNOV accepted recommendation 1 and stated that as per clarification by United Nations Headquarters, the approval by the supervisor of the corresponding leave type in the time and attendance module of Umoja is deemed to be the prior written travel authorization as per ST/AI/2003/3. The next upcoming system enhancement in the travel module of Umoja will establish the required link between time and attendance and the travel module. In addition, UNOV has already held one webinar and will hold another webinar in September 2021 to clarify this aspect to staff at large and to reiterate the importance of checking this aspect with all certifying officers in UNOV and UNODC. UNOV will also include information on the procedures on the Vienna Client Support Portal. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of evidence of action taken to clarify and communicate to all staff: (a) the procedures for documenting prior authorization of travel; and (b) the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and certifying officers in overseeing compliance with the established procedures.

Need to strengthen the arrangements for authorization of consultants' travel

14. OIOS reviewed all travel of 50 days or longer per trip. There were 37 such trips, all of which were by consultants. Some anomalies were noted in two cases relating to international consultants recruited by the UNODC Regional Office for Eastern Africa during the period January 2020 to April 2021. The first consultant (Consultant 1) was paid total DSA of \$53,950 for four contracts during the period 27 January 2020 to 30 April 2021 with a total duration of 296 days. The second consultant (Consultant 2) was paid total DSA of \$83,837 for three contracts during the period 2 January 2020 to 28 February 2021 with a total

duration of 416 days. OIOS' review showed that the rationale for payment of DSA in both cases were not clearly explained and justified, as discussed below.

15. Both consultants opted not to return to their home countries after their first contracts ended – on 27 March 2020 for Consultant 1 and 31 March 2020 for Consultant 2 – even though they were afforded the opportunity to do so. Their return tickets were cancelled and the UNODC Regional Office for East Africa did not pay for any ticket costs in subsequent contracts. No DSA was paid to them during the gaps between contracts. This was correct because flights were available after their first contracts ended. Therefore, the provisions of the Administrative Guidelines for Offices on the COVID-19 Pandemic dated 14 April 2020, which allowed payment of DSA where local authorities or United Nations guidelines did not allow departure, were not applicable.

16. However, in both cases, there was no documented justification why the consultants' work from April 2020 needed to be performed in person in Kenya for the full duration of the contracts and not remotely, which was the recommended mode of working because of the COVID-19 related restrictions. Justification in these cases should have been documented and formally approved as part of the prior authorization of each travel request. As stated in ST/AI/2013/3, prior to authorizing any official travel, the primary consideration should be whether direct face-to-face contact is necessary for mandate implementation. If not, alternative methods should be employed.

17. Further, Consultant 1 had breaks of 1.5 months, 3 months and 1 month after the first, second and third contracts, respectively. It was the consultant's choice to remain in Kenya but there was no documented explanation for continuing to classify the consultant as international in the second, third and fourth contracts and paying them DSA for the full duration of the contracts when the place of recruitment was local. The travel requests and related expense reports were raised for each contract with an itinerary of Nairobi-Amsterdam for the sole purpose of paying DSA because the consultant did not travel back to their country of residence after their initial arrival in Kenya in January 2020.

18. For Consultant 2, the breaks in between the contracts were 3 to 4 days. Therefore, the rationale for not returning to their country of residence in between the contracts was justifiable. However, according to the terms of reference of the first contract, the consultancy was meant to be a home-based consultancy, with travel to Kenya. However, the estimated travel was not stated in the terms of reference, as required by ST/AI/2013/4. Except for seven days in the first contract, the rest of the contract days in the first contract and the whole duration of the second and third contracts were spent in Kenya. There was no documented justification in the travel authorization of why the consultancy, which was meant to be home-based, needed to be performed fully at the duty station.

19. Additionally, in determining the DSA, the "after 60 days DSA rate" was not correctly applied. According to Section 2 of ST/AI/2014/2, the "after 60 days DSA rate" should be applied once the first 60 days have elapsed (whether consecutive or cumulative), and the period starts when the traveller first arrives at the place of assignment and ends on his/her departure. For Consultant 1, who had already accumulated 60 days by the end of the first contract on 27 March 2020, DSA for each new contract was paid as if the consultant had just arrived at the duty station. This led to a total overpayment of \$17,030. For Consultant 2, the "after 60-day DSA rate" was correctly applied for the first two contracts, but was not applied in the third contract, leading to an overpayment of \$10,309.

20. UNOV initiated action to record the overpayments in Umoja for recovery in accordance with established procedures, by offset against any future amounts due to the consultants. Nevertheless, these two cases indicate gaps in controls in approval of consultant's travel days that need to be addressed to ensure that the need to travel and pay DSA is adequately assessed as required by ST/AI/2014/2, and the "after 60 day DSA rate" is correctly applied.

- (2) UNOV should strengthen controls for approving consultants travel days by: (a) requiring the estimated travel days to be reflected in the terms of reference of consultancy contracts; (b) requiring programme managers to ensure that authorized travel is aligned to the terms of reference, and any significant variations are explained in the travel requests; and (c) issuing clear guidelines for classifying consultants as international or local and paying them appropriate travel allowances accordingly depending on their place of recruitment.**

UNOV accepted recommendation 2 and stated that part (a) has been implemented; the issue was addressed in the UNOV-UNODC Human Resources Management Service (HRMS) August 2021 Newsletter. Part (b) will be covered in the webinar and online refresher training for staff and managers; UNOV will issue guidelines for classifying local and international consultants. The guidelines will include information on travel allowances in respect of consultants engaged at the duty station. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of evidence that: (a) the estimated travel days are reflected in consultancy contracts, and significant variations between the estimated and authorized travel days are explained in travel requests; and (b) the criteria for classifying consultants as international or local for appropriate payment of DSA have been clarified.

Need to ensure compliance with the 16-day advance ticket purchase requirement

21. The price of air tickets tends to be costlier if they are purchased too close to the travel date. Because of this, the United Nations Secretariat's travel policy requires tickets to be bought at least 16 days in advance of commencement of travel, and justification should be provided in cases where the 16-day advance ticket purchase requirement could not be complied with.

22. Data from Umoja showed that 11,778 of the 33,910 trips (35 per cent) that took place between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2020 in UNOV/UNODC did not comply with the 16-day advance ticket purchase requirement; for 8,423 trips (72 per cent), no justification was recorded. This included 121 tickets bought by staff members themselves under the self-ticketing arrangement. In addition, the ticket purchase for 102 out of 2,828 trips relating to consultants was significantly delayed, sometimes approved hours before travel, because their contracts were finalized late.

- (3) UNOV should: (a) remind certifying officers of their role in ensuring that appropriate justification is provided and approved in cases where travel arrangements are not initiated within the required timelines; and (b) instruct programme managers to ensure that the need to comply with the 16-day advance ticket purchase is taken into account when planning contract start dates for consultants.**

UNOV accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it has already held one webinar and will hold another webinar in September 2021 to clarify these aspects to staff at large, including managers and to reiterate the importance of checking this aspect with all certifying officers in UNOV and UNODC. UNOV will also include information on the procedures on the United Nations Vienna Client Support Portal. Part (b) of the recommendation has been implemented; the issue was addressed in the UNOV-UNODC HRMS August 2021 Newsletter. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of evidence that certifying officers have been reminded to ensure compliance with the 16-day advance ticket purchase requirement.

B. Travel claims and expenditures

Need to prevent paying DSA twice for short trips undertaken by consultants while on longer missions

23. Eight of the 100 travel claims reviewed had double payments of DSA, as a result of which \$4,400 was overpaid. These duplications occurred when consultants on long missions travelled on shorter trips within the duration of the original trip (i.e. mission within mission). For example, a consultant was paid DSA for Nairobi for trip No. 691019, from 23 December 2018 to 30 June 2019. Within the course of this mission, the consultant travelled to Asmara and Kigali and was paid DSA of \$1,692. UNOV indicated that Umoja does not detect and flag such overlaps in travel days and the related double payments of DSA. In addition, since consultants did not have access to Umoja, their travel expense reports and claims were prepared for them by administrative assistants. Neither the administrative assistants nor the certifying officers who certified the trips took note of the overlap in travel days as they may not have been clearly informed about the overlaps. Also, additional DSA advances should not be authorized in travel requests relating to missions within mission if DSA advances have already been paid for the same days under the original longer mission.

- (4) UNOV should establish appropriate controls and mechanisms to ensure that daily subsistence allowances are accurately processed and are not paid twice for overlapping travel days in situations when consultants travel on short trips while they are on long missions (mission within mission).**

UNOV accepted recommendation 4 and stated that United Nations Headquarters has tested Umoja and there is a hard stop to avoid double payments which indicates that the instance observed may have been an aberration. UNOV has also asked Headquarters to create a job aid for missions within a mission to inform all staff accordingly. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of evidence that travel allowances are accurately processed and not paid twice in situations when consultants travel on missions within a mission.

C. Management of travel operations

Need to strengthen client feedback mechanism

24. The contract between UNOV and the travel management company had several key performance indicators which were regularly monitored, and performance evaluations were prepared as required. The contract also included data protection clauses for personal data handled by the contractor. From 28 February 2019, UNOV established a secure link for staff to upload credit card information for processing the costs related to personal deviations. UNOV also had a client support portal where it clarified its roles and responsibilities and those of its clients, and arrangements were in place for cost recovery for travel services rendered to client entities. However, UNOV had not undertaken any client satisfaction survey since 2018, even though the contract with the travel contractor indicated that a client satisfaction survey would be undertaken once every year. OIOS' survey of 32 frequent travellers showed that some staff had useful feedback; for example, 25 per cent of the staff surveyed either had no knowledge of self-ticketing or said that the travel office discouraged them from using it. Systematic surveys would help in improving the overall quality of travel services provided by UNOV.

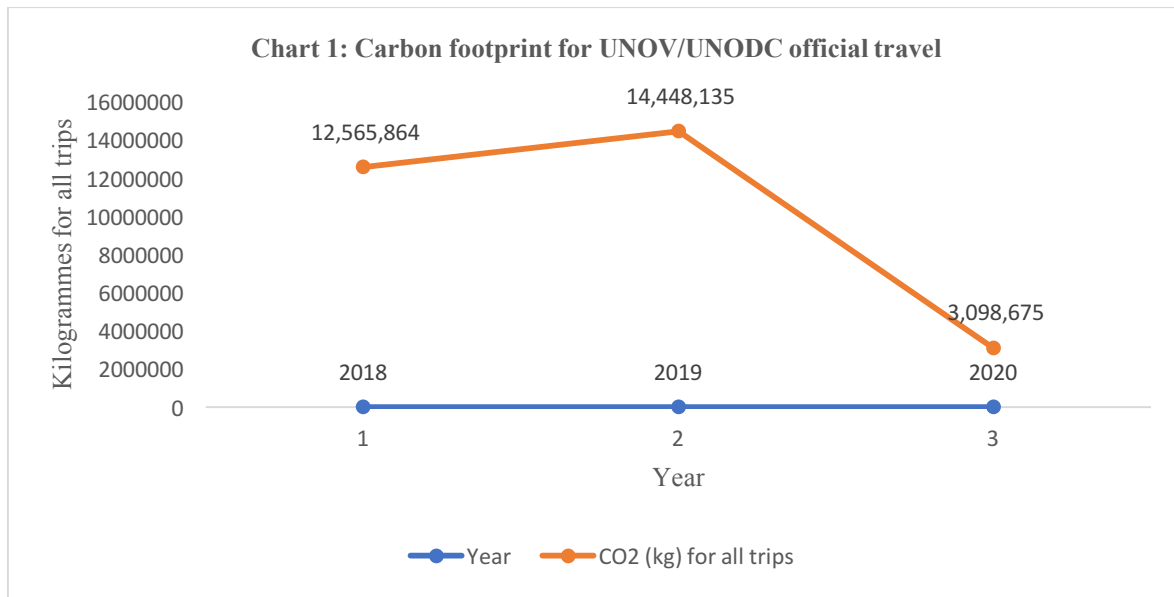
- (5) UNOV should undertake annual client satisfaction surveys to improve the quality of its travel services.**

UNOV accepted recommendation 5 and stated that regular surveys are being planned going forward. Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of evidence that annual client satisfaction surveys are being conducted.

Need for guidance on lowering the carbon footprint caused by travel

25. The United Nations Climate Neutral Strategy resulted in United Nations entities committing themselves to reduce their environmental footprint by measuring their greenhouse gas emissions and undertaking efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the greatest extent possible, among other commitments. Additionally, in 2018, United Nations system entities agreed to align with the recommendations of the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, published in the same year. This requires them to make improvements in travel and transport management and maintain climate neutrality.

26. UNOV/UNODC kept data of carbon emissions caused by travel since 1 January 2018. The average footprint in 2018 and 2019 was 13.5 million kg per year. In 2020, the footprint was only 3.1 million kg due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see Chart 1 below).



27. As a way of lowering of the carbon footprint, some travellers volunteered to downgrade their travel from business class to economy, since travelling by economy class contributes relatively less to the carbon footprint. Between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2020, business class travellers for 208 trips out of 2,464 business class trips volunteered for a downgrade. However, apart from the voluntary action by some travellers, there was no clear indication as to what action UNOV intended to take, beyond the data collection exercise. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an opportunity for UNOV to encourage programmes to aim at lowering the carbon footprint by seriously considering alternatives to travel when normal travel resumes after the pandemic. Other efforts such as establishing targets, sharing status reports on carbon emissions, and encouraging staff to downgrade some of their travel or offset the carbon footprint could be explored.

(6) UNOV should issue guidance for minimizing carbon emissions caused by official travel as part of integrating environmental sustainability into the activities of UNOV/UNODC.

UNOV accepted recommendation 6 and stated that in the context of the “Greening the Blue” reporting, all annual carbon emissions are consolidated and then centrally offset by United Nations Headquarters. Nevertheless, UNOV will emphasize the importance to staff at large of minimizing official travel wherever feasible. Recommendation 6 remains open pending receipt of evidence that UNOV/UNODC has issued guidance communicating its vision and goals, as well as the efforts it would pursue to help minimize carbon emissions caused by official travel in accordance with the United Nations Climate Neutral Strategy.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

28. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNOV/UNODC for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

(Signed) Eleanor T. Burns
Director, Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of official travel at the United Nations Office at Vienna

| Rec. no. | Recommendation | Critical ¹ / Important ² | C/ O ³ | Actions needed to close recommendation | Implementation date ⁴ |
|----------|--|---|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1 | UNOV should establish a procedure or mechanism to ensure that: (a) programme managers document prior authorization of travel as required by ST/AI/2013/3; and (b) staff submit a corresponding absence request in Umoja prior to travel. | Important | O | Receipt of evidence of actions taken to clarify and communicate to all staff: (a) the procedures for documenting prior authorization of travel; and (b) the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and certifying officers in overseeing compliance with the established procedures. | 31 December 2021 |
| 2 | UNOV should strengthen controls for approving consultants travel days by: (a) requiring the estimated travel days to be reflected in the terms of reference of consultancy contracts; (b) requiring programme managers to ensure that authorized travel is aligned to the terms of reference, and any significant variations are explained in the travel requests; and (c) issuing clear guidelines for classifying consultants as international or local and paying them appropriate travel allowances accordingly depending on their place of recruitment. | Important | O | Receipt of evidence that: (a) the estimated travel days are reflected in consultancy contracts, and significant variations between the estimated and authorized travel days are explained in travel requests; and (b) the criteria for classifying consultants as international or local for appropriate payment of DSA have been clarified. | 31 March 2022 |
| 3 | UNOV should: (a) remind certifying officers of their role in ensuring that appropriate justification is provided and approved in cases where travel arrangements are not initiated within the required timelines; and (b) instruct programme managers to ensure that the need to comply with the 16-day advance ticket purchase is taken into account when planning contract start dates for consultants. | Important | O | Receipt of evidence that certifying officers have been reminded to ensure compliance with the 16-day advance ticket purchase requirement. | 31 March 2022 |

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

³ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁴ Date provided by UNOV in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of official travel at the United Nations Office at Vienna

| | | | | | |
|---|--|-----------|---|--|------------------|
| 4 | UNOV should establish appropriate controls and mechanisms to ensure that daily subsistence allowances are accurately processed and are not paid twice for overlapping travel days in situations when consultants travel on short trips while they are on long missions (mission within mission). | Important | O | Receipt of evidence that travel allowances are accurately processed and not paid twice in situations when consultants travel on missions within a mission. | 31 December 2021 |
| 5 | UNOV should undertake annual client satisfaction surveys to improve the quality of its travel services. | Important | O | Receipt of evidence that annual client satisfaction surveys are being conducted. | 31 December 2021 |
| 6 | UNOV should issue guidance for minimizing carbon emissions caused by official travel as part of integrating environmental sustainability into the activities of UNOV/UNODC. | Important | O | Receipt of evidence that UNOV/UNODC has issued guidance communicating its vision and goals, as well as the efforts it would pursue to help minimize carbon emissions caused by official travel in accordance with the United Nations Climate Neutral Strategy. | 31 March 2022 |

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of official travel at the United Nations Office at Vienna

| Rec. no. | Recommendation | Critical ¹ / Important ² | Accepted? (Yes/No) | Title of responsible individual | Implementation date | Client comments |
|----------|--|---|-----------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| 1 | UNOV should establish a procedure or mechanism to ensure that: (a) programme managers document prior authorization of travel as required by ST/AI/2013/3; and (b) staff submit a corresponding absence request in Umoja prior to travel. | Important | Yes | Officer-in-Charge, General Support Section | Q4 2021 | The recommendation is accepted. As already advised and as per travel policy clarification by UNHQ, the approval by the supervisor of the corresponding leave type in the time and attendance module of Umoja is deemed to be the prior written travel authorization as per ST/AI/2003/3. Furthermore, the next upcoming system enhancement in the travel module of Umoja will establish the required link between time and attendance and the travel module. In addition, UNOV has already held one webinar and will hold another webinar in September 2021 to clarify this aspect to staff at large and to reiterate the importance of checking this aspect with all certifying officers in UNOV and UNODC. UNOV will also include information on the procedures on the UN Vienna Client Support Portal. |

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Management Response

Audit of official travel at the United Nations Office at Vienna

| Rec. no. | Recommendation | Critical ¹ / Important ² | Accepted? (Yes/No) | Title of responsible individual | Implementation date | Client comments |
|----------|--|---|-----------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| 2 | UNOV should strengthen controls for approving consultants travel days by: (a) requiring the estimated travel days to be reflected in the terms of reference of consultancy contracts; (b) requiring programme managers to ensure that authorized travel is aligned to the terms of reference, and any significant variations are explained in the travel requests; and (c) issuing clear guidelines for classifying consultants as international or local and paying them appropriate travel allowances accordingly depending on their place of recruitment. | Important | Yes | Chief, Human Resources Management Service and Officer-in-Charge, General Support Section | Q1 2022 | <p>The recommendation is accepted.</p> <p>(a) implemented; please refer to the UNOV-UNODC HRMS August 2021 Newsletter (link: UNOV-UNODC HRMS Newsletter (August 2021) (sharepoint.com))</p> <p>(b) will be covered in the webinar and online refresher training for staff and managers (see comments on rec. no. 1 and rec. no 3);</p> <p>(c) UNOV will issue guidelines for classifying local and international consultants. Local consultants in UNODC field offices are engaged by UNDP under their administrative framework, with the exception of the UNODC Regional Office for Eastern Africa (ROEA). In the case of ROEA, the Human Resources Management Service/UNOV engages local and international consultants. The guidelines will include information on travel allowances in respect of consultants engaged at the duty station.</p> |
| 3 | UNOV should: (a) remind certifying officers of their role in ensuring that appropriate justification is provided and approved in cases where travel arrangements are not initiated within the required timelines; and (b) instruct | Important | Yes | Officer-in-Charge, General Support Section | Q1 2022 | <p>The recommendation is accepted.</p> <p>(a) UNOV has already held one webinar and will hold another webinar in September 2021 to clarify these aspects to staff at large, including</p> |

Management Response

Audit of official travel at the United Nations Office at Vienna

| Rec. no. | Recommendation | Critical ¹ / Important ² | Accepted? (Yes/No) | Title of responsible individual | Implementation date | Client comments |
|----------|--|---|-----------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| | programme managers to ensure that the need to comply with the 16-day advance ticket purchase is taken into account when planning contract start dates for consultants. | | | | | managers and to reiterate the importance of checking this aspect with all certifying officers in UNOV and UNODC. UNOV will also include information on the procedures on the UN Vienna Client Support Portal. (b) implemented; please refer to the UNOV-UNODC HRMS August 2021 Newsletter (link: UNOV-UNODC HRMS Newsletter (August 2021) (sharepoint.com)). |
| 4 | UNOV should establish appropriate controls and mechanisms to ensure that daily subsistence allowances are accurately processed and are not paid twice for overlapping travel days in situations when consultants travel on short trips while they are on long missions (mission within mission). | Important | Yes | Officer-in-Charge, General Support Section | Implemented | UNHQs has tested UMOJA and there is a hard stop to avoid double payments which indicates that the instance observed may have been an aberration. UNOV has also asked UNHQ to create a job aid for missions within a mission to inform all staff accordingly. Documentary evidence has already been provided to the audit team. |
| 5 | UNOV should undertake annual client satisfaction surveys to improve the quality of its travel services. | Important | Yes | Officer-in-Charge, General Support Section | Q4 2021 | The recommendation is accepted. Regular surveys are being planned going forward. |

Management Response

Audit of official travel at the United Nations Office at Vienna

| Rec. no. | Recommendation | Critical ¹ / Important ² | Accepted? (Yes/No) | Title of responsible individual | Implementation date | Client comments |
|----------|---|---|-----------------------|--|---------------------|---|
| 6 | UNOV should issue guidance for minimizing carbon emissions caused by official travel as part of integrating environmental sustainability into the activities of UNOV/UNODC. | Important | Yes | Officer-in-Charge, General Support Section | Implemented | UNOV is part of the UN Secretariat-wide carbon emissions offsetting programme. In the context of the "Greening the Blue" reporting, all annual carbon emissions are consolidated and then centrally offset by UNHQ. Nevertheless, UNOV will emphasize the importance to staff-at large of minimizing official travel wherever feasible. |