

**UN Secretariat
Administrative Guidelines on the Novel Coronavirus
(COVID-19) Pandemic**

Recipients of Mission Subsistence Allowance (MSA)

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I. General

Novel Coronavirus Virus Disease (COVID-19)

1. On 30 January 2020, the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a “public health emergency of international concern” (PHEIC). The outbreak spreads by person-to-person contact and the potential public health threat posed is high. The World Health Organization, on 11 March 2020 declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

Applicability

2. These Guidelines are intended for the use of staff in the United Nations Secretariat who are responsible for the hiring and administration of recipients of Mission Subsistence Allowance (MSA): United Nations individual police officers, military observers, military advisers, military liaison officers, staff officers, government-provided corrections officers and non-uniformed civilian government-provided personnel such as justice officers.

3. These Guidelines are meant to provide information applicable to the MSA recipients indicated in paragraph 2 above. They have been prepared to adopt a common approach on the most important aspects of managing these MSA recipients during the pandemic. These Guidelines are meant for information and guidance only and do not take the place of duly promulgated administrative issuances and other governing conditions of service for the MSA recipients identified in section 2 above. To the extent that the below provisions are in conflict with the foregoing, the duly promulgated administrative issuances or other governing conditions of service are applicable, except if otherwise expressly indicated in this document.

4. These Guidelines mainly address the issues which are likely to emerge during the COVID-19 pandemic. They may be updated as necessary.

Critical services

5. For purposes of these Guidelines, non-staff personnel are grouped into:

- a) **Critical:** non-staff personnel who are required to provide critical services in the event of a closure of offices for normal operations (both physically and virtually) due to a COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure continuity of work. These non-staff personnel may be requested to carry out such critical services on premises, in an alternate location or from home; and
- b) **Non-critical:** non-staff personnel who would not be required to work during an office closure (both physically and virtually) due to a COVID-19 outbreak or pandemic. Non-staff personnel who are not designated as critical but who volunteer and are authorized to work from home or another location will still be considered as non-critical.

6. **Criteria for selecting critical services.** Heads of Entities¹ are required to identify and designate non-staff personnel who will be required to perform critical services. The list of names and respective contact information must always be up to date.

7. **Critical services at the duty station.** Heads of Entities should ensure that non-staff personnel performing critical services have the necessary tools and accesses to

facilities, communications and information technologies that enable them to provide critical services.

Closure of Offices – officials with delegated authority

8. The Resident Coordinator, guided by WHO and following consultation with the United Nations Country Team, may recommend to the Secretary-General, closure of the country office or offices when deemed necessary. Upon authorization by the Secretary-General for the closure of such United Nations offices, the Resident Coordinator or other official with delegated authority will notify the host government and local authorities.

Offices virtually open during a physical closure

9. For the purpose of ensuring continuity of operations, United Nations offices may be virtually open during a physical closure. In such instance, MSA recipients may be requested to provide their services/expertise from an alternative site, such as their home. The Secretary-General or the Head of Entity in accordance with the host country precautionary measures and WHO guidance, in coordination with all Organizations in a duty station may decide to keep United Nations offices open virtually. The Secretary-General or the Head of Entity or other official with delegated authority will notify the host government and local authorities on the virtual opening of the offices.

II. Attendance

10. In line with guidance from local authorities and United Nations security and medical personnel, MSA recipients may be authorized to work remotely from an alternate location within the mission area. For possible alternate work arrangements outside the mission area, MSA recipients will be provided instructions locally in line with any guidance provided by UN Headquarters for that purpose during COVID-19. Alternate working arrangements will not be available to police and military personnel in the home country. More information is available in the FAQs regarding Uniformed Personnel (including police and military) and Government-Provided Personnel.

11. MSA recipients who are authorized to work remotely within the mission area will continue to receive MSA payments. MSA recipients who are authorized to work remotely from an alternate location outside the mission area, including from the home country, may be reimbursed costs for accommodation retained at the regular location of deployment, upon submission of satisfactory supporting documentation. The reimbursable costs shall be the actual accommodation costs incurred at the location of deployment not to exceed the accommodation component of the MSA payable at the regular location of deployment. When shared and/or substandard accommodation is provided free of charge at the location of deployment by the United Nations, a Government or related institution, MSA shall not be payable.

Annual leave and CTO for MSA recipients

12. Taking into consideration the local health advisories and the WHO guidelines, flexibility may be exercised in authorizing annual leave that has been accrued for MSA recipients that request leave. MSA remains payable during authorized annual leave or CTO, if applicable.

13. MSA recipients who travel outside the duty station during annual leave or CTO, if applicable, must be aware that, re-entry into the location of deployment or departure from the countries to which they travel may not be possible. When MSA recipients are unable to return, they may request additional annual leave or CTO if available. The provisions of paragraph 19 below will apply.

III. Official travel

14. The decision as to whether to travel to or from an affected location should be made in accordance with the national travel advisory set by the host country and taking into consideration WHO guidelines. This should be in conjunction with the local Senior Crisis Management Structure relevant to the duty station.

15. Planned travel on behalf of the United Nations to or from an affected location that has not been initiated and which is considered non-critical may be deferred. Travel to or from an affected location should be planned and authorized in accordance with the needs of the Organization as determined by the Head of Entity in line with all current security measures in place.

Tickets:

16. When official travel must be cancelled or modified for reasons related to COVID-19, such as travel restrictions or cancellations of official meetings, events or missions, the travel request shall be cancelled or amended in Umoja, as appropriate. For tickets purchased by the United Nations, the Organization will seek (1) reimbursement or refund of the ticket expenses for cancellations or (2) changes to the ticket for modifications to the travel itinerary. For the self-ticket option, the travelling MSA recipients will be responsible for managing any associated cancellation, change and refund requests directly with the ticket provider from whom they made the purchase. Should the traveler not be able to recover the actual costs incurred, in part or in full, the traveler may be reimbursed, not to exceed the maximum authorized reimbursable amount for the purchase of the ticket.

Daily subsistence allowance (DSA) and related travel expenses:

17. For **planned travel** that is cancelled, expenses related to the official travel (e.g. prepaid hotel charges) which the traveler is not able to recover may be reimbursed subject to presentation of receipts and confirmation of the non-recovery amount by the service provider. The maximum amount reimbursable for prepaid hotel charges is the accommodation portion of the applicable DSA rate.

18. For **initiated** travel outside the mission area, in the event that the authorized itinerary must be changed for reasons related to COVID-19, the following will apply and administered in line with ST/AI/2014/2 and ST/AI/2013/3:

- a) **Departure from travel destination not possible.** If during the travel, local authorities or the United Nations do not allow departure, DSA applicable to the travel destination will be payable until departure is authorized and up until the first available flight, provided the MSA recipients incurs related expenses.
- b) **Entry into return destination not possible.** If local authorities or the United Nations do not allow entry, and the MSA recipients must remain in the travel destination or at a transit point, DSA applicable to the location will be payable until entry to the return destination with the first available flight is possible, provided the MSA recipients incurs related expenses.
- c) **Individual is sick while on travel.** If the MSA recipients falls sick due to COVID-19 while on travel, DSA, if applicable, is payable for the authorized period of travel. If hospitalized, DSA will be reduced to one third. If the sickness prolongs after the authorized period of travel, the provisions of (a) or (b) above may be applicable.

- d) **Individual is quarantined.** If the individual is quarantined while on travel, DSA will be payable until the quarantine is over and departure is authorized provided the individual incurs related expenses. However, if hospitalized, DSA will be reduced to one third.

19. MSA recipients who cannot return to their regular location of deployment beyond the period of authorized leave or CTO may be reimbursed up to a maximum of 30 days for costs for accommodation retained at the regular location of deployment, upon submission of satisfactory supporting documentation. The reimbursable costs shall be the actual accommodation costs incurred at the location of deployment not to exceed the accommodation component of the MSA payable at the regular location of deployment. When shared and/or substandard accommodation is provided free of charge at the location of deployment by the United Nations, a Government or related institution, MSA shall not be payable. Additional guidance will be provided in the event that MSA recipients are unable to return to the duty station beyond this period. More information is available in the FAQs regarding Uniformed Personnel (including police and military) and Government-Provided Personnel.

IV. Tour of duty

20. For MSA recipients who have travelled outside of the mission area and who are unable return to the regular location of deployment or the mission area due to COVID-19 related reasons, and who have exhausted their annual leave, the mission together with DPO and DPPA, as necessary, should discuss appropriate measures in regard to the tour of duty, which may include curtailment of the tour of duty and early repatriation. DPO and DPPA will liaise with the relevant permanent mission of the MSA recipient as required to facilitate such arrangements.

21. For MSA recipients who have travelled outside of the mission area and who are authorized alternate working arrangements (excluding police and military personnel in the home country), tours of duty will continue without interruption and may be extended as required operationally.

V. Medical

Medical support

22. The United Nations will provide coverage for medical services including hospitalization and medical evacuation which is attributable to conditions or hazards within the area of assignment and occurring within the mission area. The United Nations shall not reimburse expenses if the MSA recipient is reimbursed by other insurance arrangement or source.

Medical evacuation

23. Medical evacuation of MSA recipients who are on travel on behalf of the United Nations may be authorized in accordance with ST/AI/2000/10 on Medical Evacuation (for MSA recipients) and the "Guidance for field offices on medevac in the context of COVID-19," as applicable.

Compensation for service-incurred injury or death

24. The United Nations may provide compensation for service-incurred death, injury or illness in accordance with relevant policies for MSA recipients.

VI. Death of an individual

25. In the unfortunate event of the death of MSA recipients, it cannot be over-emphasized that all persons involved in making the various arrangements must use their utmost discretion, tact and sensitivity, particularly when dealing with the family of the deceased. In case of queries from the family, it is recommended that complete documentation on the procedures followed should be kept in a confidential file.

26. When an MSA recipients dies, the relevant units in the mission shall coordinate the actions required with the concerned Member State and the family of the deceased, providing the family assistance throughout the difficult period following the death.

Repatriation of remains

27. The local regulations and laws and international health regulations shall apply. Coordination with the Member State, as necessary, shall be maintained throughout the process. Repatriation of the deceased MSA recipients could be delayed during COVID-19.

VII. Information and queries

28. MSA recipients should be informed of the following sources of information.

- The latest information related to COVID-19:
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Situation reports:
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>
- Latest available information on travel restrictions, please refer to this link from IATA¹:
<https://www.iatatravelcentre.com/international-travel-document-news/1580226297.htm>
- United Nations dedicated website or iSeek:
<https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus>
<https://iseek-external.un.org/nyc/coronavirus>

29. For further information, MSA recipients may contact the executive or local human resources office.

¹ This information is only as reported to IATA by the countries and may not reflect the absolute latest information. Therefore, travelers should still ensure that they check with the relevant authorities for any countries they plan to travel to and ensure that they would not face any issues as it relates to their specific situation.