



**THIRTEENTH REGULAR SESSION
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

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PROPOSED REVISIONS TO STAFF REGULATIONS

WCPFC13-2016-FAC10-11

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Paper by Secretariat

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to table for the consideration of the Committee a proposal to revise the Staff Regulations to provide for assistance to a staff that is required to undertake official duty travel and is accompanied by a dependent infant.

Introduction

2. Regulation 29 of the Staff Regulations stipulates the various rules and entitlements for staff required to undertake official duty travel. The basic principle that guide those rules and entitlements is encapsulated in paragraph (a) of regulation 29 that state that “the Commission meets the traveling expenses necessarily incurred by the staff required to travel away from Pohnpei on official business”. The said regulation then proceeds to enumerate those rules and entitlements. Not included in those entitlements is a provision for assistance to a staff who is required to undertake official duty travel and is accompanied by a dependent infant.

3. The cost and financial burden on a staff that is placed in such a situation can be quite substantial depending on the destinations the staff is required to travel to. Such costs include the airfare for the infant child and costs of childcare arrangements necessary to cater for the dependent child whilst the staff attends to official responsibilities.

4. Therefore, the Secretariat proposes that the Staff Regulations should be revised to include a provision in regulation 29 to provide for some assistance to a staff who is required to undertake official duty travel but is also required to travel with and cater for a dependent infant.

Precedents for such assistance

5. Amongst the regional organizations in the Pacific, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat has in its travel policy a provision that offers the cost of an economy air fare for a dependent breastfed infant under the age of 12 months that accompanies the staff who is required to travel on official business. It is understood that this policy has been used as a guidance by the CEO of other regional organisations in the Pacific when considering individual staff requests for assistance of this nature.

6. At the United Nations, there is a provision for a 20% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for a dependent infant under the age of 12 months who accompanies a staff travelling on official business.

7. It is also understood that at some national agencies actual and reasonable additional childcare costs associated with travelling on agency business are considered as official charges. In practice this has included, on a case by case basis, the cost of economy class travel for someone to care for a breastfed infant that accompanies a mother who is required to travel.

8. Of relevance to consideration of this issue is the advice of the World Health Organisation that recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods for a child up to two years of age or beyond. The WCPFC like other regional and national agencies have in place working arrangements that permit staff to breastfeed their infants as required during the working hours.

Proposed Revision

9. There is no denying that such costs to a staff to travel with and cater for a dependent infant are actual and unavoidable costs and they arise because of the requirements of the Commission for the staff to undertake official duty travel. As such, they become necessary traveling expenses incurred by the staff who is required to travel away from Pohnpei.

10. It is therefore proposed that a new paragraph (h) is inserted in regulation 29 of the Staff Regulations that read as follow:

“Dependent Infant Accompanying Staff on Duty Travel

(h) The Executive Director may approve the following entitlements for a staff who is required to travel on official business and is accompanied by a dependent infant under the age of 12 months:

(i) cost of an economy airfare for the dependent infant; and

(ii) 20% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for the dependent infant.

The Executive Director may, on a case by case basis, approve the extension of the above entitlements to a dependent infant between 12 and 24 months who is being breastfed by a staff.”

11. It is further and respectfully submitted that the proposed revision if adopted should be backdated to the 1st January, 2016. Currently, the Secretariat has a professional staff member who has a dependent infant under the age of 12 month. The staff concerned has been required to undertake duty travels that are essential and critical to the business and interests of the Commission. In undertaking those travels she has incurred significant actual costs to travel with and cater for her dependent infant child. It will be a serious iniquitous to deprive the staff member of the intended benefit of the proposed revision should the Commission decide to adopt it.

Recommendation

12. The Committee is invited to:

- (a) consider and adopt the proposed revision to the Staff Regulations contained in paragraph 10 above; and
- (b) agree to backdate the application of the proposed revision to 1st January, 2016.