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Circular No.21 Public Expenditure Policy Co-ordination Division

Permanent Secretaries Heads of Departments and Agencies Chief Executive Officers of Public Bodies

Revised Procedures for Official Overseas Travel

The Ministry of Finance & Planning carried out a review of the per diem rates payable to public officers to cover expenses while on official overseas business as well as the applicable procedures for overseas travel. However, due to the tight fiscal constraints in which the government currently operates, the increase in the rates was not supported by the Cabinet, therefore the rates approved in 2006 remain applicable (See attached Appendix I).

Notwithstanding the above, the procedures were revised to provide more clarity and also to allow for a more efficient means of allocating per diem (See attached as Appendix II). Special note should be made of the revised procedures below:

- I. Procedure 7 Air Travel
- II. Procedure 11- Reimbursement/Refunding of Expenses
- III. Procedure 12 Report Required.

It should also be noted that there is now a single Application Form (See attached Appendix III) which was revised and now captures the information for both parliamentarians and public officers. Quarterly Reports are also required to be submitted to this Ministry in the format provided as included at Appendix IV by the 15th day of each month following the end of a quarter.

Permanent Secretaries are now delegated the authority to approve all per diem in accordance with the procedures outlined without referral to the Ministry of Finance & Planning. A proper system for managing and controlling foreign travel must be instituted including an audit of this function at least once every year. Further, proper records must be maintained of all official travel for accounting, reporting and auditing purposes.

These procedures and corresponding forms attached as Appendix I – IV supersede all previous Circulars issued in respect to foreign travel and come into operation with immediate effect.

Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Departments and Agencies are asked to ensure that this Circular and its attachments are brought to the attention of all relevant officers.

Devon Rowe, CD

Financial Secretary

APPENDIX I APPROVED PER DIEM RATES PAYABLE FOR OFFICIAL VISITS ABROAD EFFECTIVE APRIL 6, 2006

		REGIONS									
OFFICIALS	North America	South Central America and other Caribbean Countries	CARICOM	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Africa	Middle East	Asia and Far East excluding Japan	Japan	Pacific and Australia and New Zealand	REMARKS
POLITICAL DIRECTORATE	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	US\$	
a) Prime Minister and Minister of Finance	410	390	390	430	390	395	395	390	450	390	(1) These rates are based on the United Nations (UN HQ) index.
b) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs	370	350	350	390	350	355	355	350	410	350	Source: Int'l Civil Service Commission, New York, ICSC Database.
c) Minister of Finance (where office is separate)	335	315	315	355	315	320	320	315	375	315	(2) Notwithstanding the figures stated herein the amount allocated from
d) Minister of Foreign Affairs (where office is separate)	335	315	315	355	315	320	320	315	375	315	time to time must be determined by the particular circumstances
e) Other Cabinet Ministers	310	290	290	330	290	295	295	290	350	290	of their travelling on official business.
f) Ministers of State and other Parliamentarians	270	250	250	290	250	255	255	250	325	250	
PUBLIC OFFICERS											
a) Permanent Secretaries and other Senior Officers	270	250	250	290	250	255	255	250	325	250	
b) Other Public Officers	250	230	230	270	230	235	235	230	305	230	

APPENDIX II

GUIDELINES

OVERSEAS TRAVEL FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES

PURPOSE

These guidelines provide a framework for official overseas travel by public officials.

APPLICATION

These guidelines apply to all public officials; that is officers employed in the public sector, members of the political directorate and private individuals co-opted to represent the Government of Jamaica overseas. It applies in all cases where the travel costs (including expenses and allowances) are either fully or partially met from official funds or where the costs of overseas travel for official duties are funded from other sources (e.g. fee for service activities, full or partial costs covered by a conference organizer and or international body, official grants and other official funds.

The information contained in this document supersedes all previous travel policy, procedures and guidelines.

POLICY STATEMENTS

The following operational guidelines on overseas travel for official purposes were endorsed by the Cabinet on **November 3, 2014**

GUIDELINES

OVERSEAS TRAVEL FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES

1. Guideline Details

1.1 Definitions.

For the purposes of these guidelines "overseas travel" means travel for official purposes from Jamaica to another country.

"Overseas Travel" does not include:

- i. Travel undertaken by employees proceeding abroad on long-term appointments to overseas Jamaican Government Offices; and
- ii. Travel undertaken by employees in accordance with scholarship programmes, work programmes or Government Interchange Programmes overseas.
- iii. Instances where the GOJ provides assistance in the form of personnel to the international community in the event of a disaster or other such events.

"Per diem" means an allowance provided to public officials travelling overseas on official business to cover expenses including accommodation, meals, and incidentals related to overseas travel.

"Incidentals" refer to costs associated with telephone calls, ground transportation, facsimile, internet access and any other bona fide charges directly related to the overseas travel.

"Political Directorate" means Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, Senators, Mayors, and Councillors.

"Public officials" include personnel employed to the Civil Service, Local Authorities, Para-statal Entities, Chairmen and members of the Boards of Public Bodies, Police, Soldiers, Teachers, Doctors, Nurses, other Paramedical groups and any other group employed within the public sector.

2. General Information

- 2.1 These guidelines set out the approval process for the payment and reimbursement of bona fide overseas travel expenses incurred by public officials.
- 2.2 All requests for official overseas travel <u>including those sponsored by an overseas entity</u> and application for per diem must be submitted to the Permanent Secretary of the relevant Ministry/Department Agency/Public Body who has full delegation for **approval** in accordance with section 3 of these guidelines.
- 2.3 MDAs and other public entities are required to exercise restraint in planning overseas visits. Only those trips that are considered essential to the attainment of the entity's or Government's objectives should be considered. All other avenues for gaining relevant knowledge or experience should be considered before overseas travel is proposed.

Accounting Officers must ensure that:

- i. Expenditure of public funds for overseas travel must be for the furtherance of organizational or national goals and **an official business purpose must exist** for each instance of expenditure. All persons responsible for making decisions concerning these expenditures must determine whether the expense to be incurred represents creditable use of public funds;
- ii. There is accountability and transparency in the disbursement and reimbursement of expenses incurred or to be incurred;
- iii. The facilities provided to assists public officers to carry out their official duties are safe and reasonable; and
- iv. Business travel arrangements are cost effective ensuring best value to the country.

Public Officials travelling overseas on official business shall:

- i. Exercise fiscal prudence in incurring expenses outside of approved amounts; and
- ii. At all times be mindful that they are representing the organization for which they work and the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) and that the benefits gained from official overseas travel should ultimately be towards enhancing the performance of the employee and the goals and objectives of the organization.

3. Travel Authorization

Ministers/Parliamentarian

- 3.1 A submission shall be made to Cabinet seeking approval for overseas travel involving Cabinet Ministers.
- 3.1.1 Ministers must seek the approval of the Prime Minister prior to the Submission being sent to Cabinet.
- 3.1.2 Submissions should adhere to the established timelines and format for Cabinet Submissions providing information on the purpose and duration of travel, the financial and policy implications, the named members of the delegation. In addition, the purpose of international meetings, the positions proposed to be taken on the issues that these meetings will consider, should be clearly stated in the Cabinet Submission.
- 3.1.3 Ministers of State and Parliamentary Secretaries should submit their requests through the Portfolio Minister. The concurrence of the portfolio Minister should be clearly stated.
- 3.1.4 Approval for Members of Parliament should be submitted by or through the Leader of the House of Parliament. The outcome of consultations with the Leader of the House should be stated in the requests.

Public Officials

- 3.2 Application for approval of overseas travel by government officials (not involving any member of the political directorate) in respect of Ministries, Departments, Agencies, Local Authorities and Public Bodies must be submitted through the relevant Permanent Secretary/Financial Secretary to the Cabinet Secretary for approval.
- 3.3 The requirement for prior approval applies also to invitations to attend or speak at events overseas in relation to the official capacity of Ministers or other officials, and should be fulfilled before acceptance of such invitations.
- 3.4 In all cases, prior approval is required for official overseas travel and should be sought at least seven (7) working days before the intended date of departure.
- 3.5 Such applications should clearly indicate the following:
 - purpose of travel;
 - duration and dates of departure and return;
 - all other named members of the delegation;
 - total costs involved (including those for other participating entities and sponsorship details where applicable).

4. Consideration for Granting Approval for Overseas Travel

- 4.1 Before submitting a recommendation to the Cabinet Secretary, Permanent Secretaries are required to ensure that expenditure from the public purse for official overseas travel by Ministers or Ministry officials is met from the relevant Ministry's or entity's budget and **not** by associated Departments, Agencies or Public Bodies.
- 4.2. In general, proposals for official travel overseas must take into consideration the benefits to the country, as well as financial constraints, duration, size of delegations, public perception, and such travel must be in the interest of the country and only in regard to the relevance of the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister or public officials concerned.
- 4.3 In respect of invitations to speak at events overseas in an official capacity, and where sponsorship is not being provided by an overseas entity, public officials should ensure that the benefits that accrue to the country from these overseas visits exceed the cost of the related expenses for attending these engagements.

5. Procedure for Application of Per Diem

5.1 Members of the political directorate and other public officials, who are granted approval to travel abroad on official business, will be given a per diem (travel allowance) to cover expenses related to the travel (i.e. hotel bills, meals, transportation, telephone calls, internet access and other expenses related to travel) for the period of the proposed trip.

Parliamentarian

- 5.2 Application for the release of foreign exchange for Parliamentarians and Senators must be made on the application form designated "Application for Foreign Exchange for Official Visits Abroad". Applications should clearly indicate the following:
 - purpose of travel;
 - dates of departure and return;
 - name of individual travelling and all other named members of the delegation;
 - total costs to be borne by the GoJ.
- 5.3 Accounting Officers are required to submit applications for the release of foreign exchange for ministerial and parliamentary travel directly to the office of the Minister of Finance together with a copy of the agreement/approval of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretary along with other supporting documents such as travel itinerary, hotel reservation, invitation letter and where sponsorship is provided, details of such sponsorship.
- 5.4 Application forms must be submitted to the Office of the Minister of Finance at least three (3) working days prior to the travel date.

Public Officials

5.5 The application for per diem must be made on the prescribed application form "Application for Foreign Exchange for Official Visits Abroad". The completed application form must be submitted to the Permanent Secretary of the portfolio ministry department, agency or public body at least seven (7) working days before the proposed date of the applicant's departure on the trip for which the foreign exchange is being sought.

The application form must clearly indicate the information at 5.2 above.

- 5.6 The Financial Manager must certify that funds are available from the approved budget for each application for foreign exchange for official visits abroad.
- 5.7 The application for overseas travel must be supported by a <u>valid</u> travel itinerary, a hotel booking and relevant documentation from organizers, setting out the details of the meeting/seminar/workshop etc. Where these costs cannot be verified, the amounts must be treated as an advance to be cleared upon presentation of actual bills/receipts.
- 5.8 In cases where official visits are being subsidized by overseas bodies or organizations, the required adjustments must be made to the per diem and reflected on the application form.
- 5.9 Copies of the approved foreign exchange application form, Cabinet Secretary's approval and other relevant supporting documents must be maintained by each entity on a file specific for the purpose. For audit purposes, proper records must be maintained of all foreign exchange approved for official visits abroad.

6. Release of Funds for Travel

- Request for the release of funds, including foreign exchange for official travel overseas should not be considered without the requisite approvals indicated at three (3) above.
- 6.2 The release of funds for official overseas travel will be subject to the relevant per diem rates approved by Cabinet from time to time. Appropriate and bona fide justifications must be provided prior to travel to make payments above the approved rates.
- 6.3 Where bona fide justification is not provided to support expenditure above the approved per diem rates, the excess amount should not be paid. If the cost is incurred while overseas and cannot be justified and supported with the requisite receipts and bills, the individual who incurred the cost must absorb the excess amount.
- Once the annual budgetary allocation of a ministry, department, agency or public body for official travel abroad has been exhausted or fully committed, no further requests for

- foreign exchange should be made until the entity has applied for and has been granted a supplementary financial allocation for the year.
- 6.5 With respect to self-financing public bodies, once the budget for foreign travel has been exhausted, no request should be approved unless the Board has approved an increase in the allocation.

7. Air Travel

- 7.1 Officers travelling must <u>not</u> be allowed to make their own travel arrangements. A designated Officer/Unit/Division within the organisation should be responsible for making all travel arrangements.
- 7.2 For parliamentarians, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance will decide the class of air passage in each case. With regard to ministerial travel, travel must be **at the most** business class.
- 7.3 Permanent Secretaries, Chairmen and Chief Executive Officers may travel <u>at the most</u> business class where amounts are approved within the budget to allow for such travel.
- 7.4 For other public officials, <u>air travel</u> of less than eight (8) hours consecutive flying time between departure and arrival must be at the most economy class. Air travel of longer duration should be dealt with on a case by case basis and specific approval of the Permanent Secretary is required for upgrade to business class.
- 7.5 When airline tickets are provided by overseas organizations as a part of sponsorship for official visits abroad, additional funds should not be expended to upgrade the airline tickets without the prior written approval of the Permanent Secretary.
- 7.6 For travel time of over eight (8) hours between departure and arrival, Permanent Secretaries may exercise discretion to allow for an additional day's travel instead of an upgrade where the cost of the upgrade exceeds the day's per diem.
- 7.7 In all cases, air travel must be planned to make use of the most economical route. In addition, steps should be taken to avoid multiple transfers, overnighting and lengthy waiting time(s) between flights. Transfers to facilitate personal needs should only be considered if the officer is willing absorb the additional cost which must be paid prior to departure.
- 7.8 Continuous reviews must be undertaken of the service charges of travel agencies to ensure that the Government at all times receives value for money.
- 7.9 Travel days must be planned to allow for arrival the day before and departure the day immediately after seminars/meetings/conferences except in cases where flights are not available or other unforeseen events prevents same.

8. Warm Clothing Allowance

- 8.1 Warm clothing allowance may be payable to public officers travelling on official business where countries to be visited have temperatures below 19 Degrees Celsius or 60 Degrees Fahrenheit at the time of visit.
- 8.2 The rates for warm clothing allowance should be applied in relation to the time of year and geographical location of the country to be visited by the officer.
- 8.3 Warm clothing allowance is paid once every 3 years irrespective of the period in which it was paid. The rates are as follows:
 - i. US\$150.00 April September where the duty period is less than 2 months;
 - ii. US\$300.00 if the visit is made during the other months of the year and the period spent abroad is less than 12 months;
 - iii. US\$400.00 where the period spent abroad is over 12 months.

Where it can be determined that the weather condition at the time of the trip does not warrant warm clothing it should not be paid. Conversely where the season of the year of the country that is visited is the reverse to the periods set out above, the amount assigned to that season should be applied. Where the temperature cannot be ascertained before the time of departure, an advance maybe given, which must be cleared upon presentation of actual bills and receipts.

9. Accommodation, Meals and Incidentals

- 9.1 Accommodation should be arranged through the designated Officer/Unit/Division assigned with such responsibility. A corporate credit card may be acquired to guarantee reservations or make payments on behalf of an officer.
- 9.2 In determining the per diem to be applied, cognisance must be taken of the cost of hotel accommodation and of any special discounts or concessions that may be offered. Per diem/stipend given by the sponsoring country as well as meals provided at hotel, seminar/training course or meals included in a registration fee should also be taken into consideration.
- 9.3 Where travel cost (i.e. accommodation, meals and incidentals etc.) are below the per diem rate, the estimated expenses that will be incurred should be paid and not the maximum rate.

- 9.4 The following should be used as a guide to allocate the respective components of the per diem rate where the prescribed rate is insufficient to cover the total cost:
 - i) Accommodation at the average cost of available hotels;
 - ii) Meals and incidentals at US\$90.00 to US\$120.00 depending on the country visiting and the cost to be incurred.
- 9.5 Per diem begins on the day of arrival of destination. A full day's per diem at the applicable rate is paid if the travel begins before 11 am. Thereafter, meals should be apportioned according to travel time. No per diem is paid on the day in which the travel ends. However, provision may be made for meals where departure is after 11 am or where there are lengthy stopovers.
- 9.6 Where overseas travel is fully sponsored by an overseas organization an advance may be given to cover unforeseen expenditure until sponsorship funds are received. However, the advance must be fully accounted for within seven (7) days on the return of the officer.
- 9.7 Where only accommodation and meals are provided (paid) and the sponsor indicates that **no additional funds** will be granted, an amount of US\$40.00 per day for parliamentarians and US\$35.00 per day for public officers to a maximum of one month may be given. Thereafter, an application of US\$10.00 per day to a total maximum of US\$2,000.00 may be paid.
- 9.8 In instances where a stipend is paid by sponsors but is less than the stipends indicated at 9.7 (US\$40.00 & US\$35.00), Permanent Secretaries may approve the difference between the amount paid and the applicable rate if the amount provided is considered inadequate to cover estimated expenses.
- 9.9 Permanent Secretaries are therefore required to ascertain the level of sponsorship and assess whether the amounts referred to at 9.7 above should be paid based on the offer given by the sponsor.
- 9.10 An in-transit allowance may be paid to officers en route, where the time between departure and arrival spans twenty-four (24) hours. An amount not exceeding US\$100.00 may be paid depending on the estimated expenditure to be incurred. This allowance should be separate from the amount paid for accommodation, where the individual is required to overnight at a hotel.
- 9.11 Where the assistance of Missions abroad is sought to make reservations for hotel accommodation, directions must be given to the Mission regarding room rates, as these rates must be consistent as much as possible with the approved per diem rates.

- 9.12 Any official stationed in an agency office overseas, who authorizes the use of funds of the agency (held there in foreign exchange) to pay bills left there by a public official, who before leaving Jamaica was provided with foreign exchange sufficient to meet all reasonable bills, is liable to a surcharge of a sum equal to the full amount of the payment.
- 9.12 Cabinet Ministers may occupy hotel suites <u>only</u> where the cost for hosting planned meetings is more economical than the rental of other venues. Where this is proposed, full particulars pertaining thereto are to be submitted to the Permanent Secretary in order to facilitate assessment and adjustment of the per diem payable as may be necessary.
- 9.13 Per diem should be paid to the spouses of selected officials accompanying their wives/husbands on official duties abroad in circumstances where protocol requires their presence on the trip. The selected officials are the Governor General, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and any other Minister representing the Prime Minister subject to the approval of the Prime Minister.
- 9.14 In determining the per diem for spouses, the conditions set out above must be observed and the cost for accommodation must only be included where the spouse is travelling alone on official business.
- 9.15 In cases where protocol demands that ministers travel with security on visits abroad for official business, the release of foreign exchange must be approved for only one security officer per minister.

10. Hosting of Receptions and Other Meetings

- 10.1 In cases where protocol demands that ministers or public officials host receptions or other meetings, application for the required foreign exchange must be submitted with the relevant particulars for approval. If the required foreign exchange cannot be accurately determined before departure, the amount requested must be treated in the accounts as a contingency advance. In the case of public officials, hosting of such activities is restricted to heads of delegations only. The amount advanced is to be accounted for in each case by the submission of actual bills to the Financial Manager of the official's ministry, department, agency, or public body within seven (7) days of the return of the public official to Jamaica.
- 10.2 Where the full amount of the contingency advance was not utilized or is not properly accounted for, the public official must refund within seven (7) days of return to Jamaica, the unaccounted balance to the entity, in the foreign currency in which it was released or the Jamaican Dollar equivalent of the amount calculated at the rate at which the funds were purchased.

11. Reimbursement/Refund of Expenses

- In the event that the per diem allowance issued was inadequate to cover expenses due to an emergency or other unforeseen event while overseas, reasonable out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed on presentation of receipts and proper justification. **No reimbursement will be made without original receipts.** The Government will not reimburse the cost for:
 - i. Laundry or dry cleaning services;
 - ii. Tips paid for services;
 - iii. Expenses related to the consumption of alcohol.
- 11.2 The Government will reimburse public officers the cost for one entry visas, travel insurance where this is a prerequisite for entering the country, medical expenses associated with vaccinations necessary for overseas travel. The Government will also cover the cost of conference registration fees associated with training programs and baggage cost where it is not included as part of the airfare, that is, the cost for one (1) piece of baggage except where the travel period exceeds three weeks and the travel warrants more than one piece of baggage.
- 11.3 Where the actual period of the trip is reduced subsequent to the approval of total foreign exchange, the per diem, travel allowance in respect of the days by which the tour is reduced must be refunded within seven (7) days of return to Jamaica in the foreign currency in which it was released or the Jamaican Dollar equivalent of the amount calculated at the rate at which the funds were purchased.

The amounts are to be calculated and credited directly to expenditure account.

11.4 Similarly, where it becomes necessary for officers to be reimbursed for expenses incurred outside of the approved per diem, the request with **justifiable** supporting documents must be made within seven (7) days of return to Jamaica. Where the above becomes **necessary** while the officer is overseas, the requisite prior approval must be received from the Permanent Secretary to incur additional cost outside of the amount originally approved.

12. Report Required

12.1 As a condition of official overseas travel, the public official must provide a travel report on return from an overseas trip. The report should state inter alia, dates of travel and countries visited; objectives of the trip; benefits to the entity and to the public generally; recommendations and/or action plans arising from the overseas trip; and suitability of the report for inter-agency sharing.

- 12.2 Subsequent request for approval by applicants to travel should be linked to the compliance of officers submitting the required Reports.
 - Individual ministries/departments/agencies and other public entities may specify the manner and procedures for submitting travel reports.
- 12.3 All Permanent Secretaries must furnish the Cabinet Secretary and the Financial Secretary with quarterly reports in the format attached at Appendix IV stating the total expenditure and details thereof relating to official overseas travel with regard to the Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Public Bodies falling within the purview of the respective portfolios.

Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Department and Agencies and Chief Executive Officers of Public Bodies are to ensure that these procedures are brought to the attention of all relevant officers.

APPLICATION FOR RELEASE OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE FOR OFFICIAL VISITS ABROAD

(All questions relevant to your application must be answered)

1.	MINISTRY	5.	EVENT CATEGORY (Conference, Meeting, Workshop, Seminar, Negotiation, etc):
2.	DEPARTMENT; STATUTORY BODY; PUBLIC ENTERPRISE; HOUSES OF PARLIAN	MENT	
3.	NAME AND STATUS OF EACH PERSON PROCEEDING ABROAD Name Status	 6. 7.	EVENT DATE: PURPOSE OF OVERSEAS VISIT (Give details including names of sponsors of seminars; conferences; workshops; training courses; etc. and work to be done by each of the persons at (3):
		8.	Persons other that those named at (3) attending as part of the Government Delegation:
			Name & Status Organization
4.	DATE OF DEPARTURE DATE OF RETURN FROM JAMAICA TO JAMAICA		
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FINANCIAL

9.	benefits to be received from sponsors and/ or other Governments) during the course of visit.	(State per diem for each person) Am	quested nount and Currency	12. Amount of For	Amount and Currency
	Name of Sponsor				
	Amount and Currency				
	Airfare	_			
	Accommodation			<u>=</u>	
	Meals				
	Stipend				
	Other				
10.	Cost of Air Ticket Ticket Class	AUTH	ORIZATION		
13.	I certify that funds are available from the approved allocation visits abroad to meet the cost at (10) and (12) if approved at the cost at (10) are the cost	J\$ for official	15. Minister	er of Financeable to Parliamentarians)	Date
	Financial Manager	Date	16. Certifyi	ing Officer	Date
14.	Comments and Recommendations of the portfolio Ministry				
	Permanent Secretary				

QUARTERLY REOPRT OF OFFICIAL VISITS ABROAD

DELEGATION	DURATION OF TRIP	PLACE(S) VISITED	OBJECTIVES OF TRAVEL	COST ASSOCIATED WITH TRIP (\$) (Disaggregated) Specify Meals, Accommodation, airfare, other	CONTINGENCY (If Applicable)	OUTCOMES OF TRIPS/ TRAVEL

PERMANENT SECRETARY:	
DATE:	