DRAFT UNON Director-General’s remarks for the Airlines Open Day at UNON, 23 February 2016

Representatives of our partner airlines,

UN colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to join us for this Airlines Open Day here at UNON.

This is the second Airlines Open Day that has been organized at UNON. The first was held in 2013. That one was very well received by staff. Given the success of that event, and the continuing high demand for UN staff to travel by air, we decided to organize this second Airlines Open Day today.

By linking people and regions, air transport plays a vital role in the implementation of the UN’s work and activities around the world.

Although VTCs and tele-conferences can sometimes replace the need for air travel, it is inevitable that UN staff members and officials will continue to have to travel by air extensively, to carry out the UN’s important business, in the service of humanity.

As you know, Nairobi hosts the global headquarters of UNEP and UN-Habitat, and the staff of those two programmes must travel regularly to their many field offices in all corners of the world.

This duty station also serves as a major hub for the UN system’s humanitarian, development, human rights and peace support operations in the region.

Without the airline industry, it would not be possible for the UN family in Nairobi, or the UN anywhere, to deliver services and programmes to the people who require our assistance.

In 2015, UNON, UNEP and UN-Habitat spent jointly $ 9.3 million on air tickets. Thanks to the agreements and discounts we have established with our partner airlines, we achieved saving of $570,000, which is very significant, especially in these times of tight budgets.

I am very pleased that our 11 airline partners are all present here today: Kenya Airways, British Airways, Lufthansa Group (Lufthansa / Swiss International /United Airlines), Emirates, Ethiopian Airlines, Etihad, KLM – Royal Dutch Airlines, South African Airways, Turkish Airlines, Qatar and Rwandair. I would like to thank them for the continuous support and excellent cooperation over the past years. I would also like to encourage them to give us even better discounts!

I would like to encourage UN staff to visit each stand and learn more about the different products offered by the airlines, such as frequent flyer programmes, meeting packages and discounts for conferences. These products can be of use to you in planning your upcoming missions. Some of the products could also be relevant for your holidays and home-leave travel.

Let me also welcome the staff of BCD Travel, who are with us today. They can assist you in taking advantage of any travel packages that may be of interest to you. For those who don’t know yet, let me mention that BCD Travel will support UNON, UNEP and UN-Habitat for the next three years in all travel-related matters, after BCD was awarded the travel contract, effective the 1st of February. Soon, we will have also opportunity to visit their new office space in the upper concourse, in the first week of March.

Last but not least, I would like to express my appreciation to the staff of UNON’s Travel, Shipping and Visa Unit. The Unit plays a crucial role in guiding staff on the UN’s travel policies and processes, including for the travel module in our new Umoja system. I am still learning how to work in Umoja, but I understand that the Umoja travel module has 15 different modes of travel that can be selected in the system – Commercial Aircraft, Boat, Bus, Rail, Private Car, even Walking! It won’t be a surprise to you that Air is the most commonly used mode of travel by UN staff.

Thank you again for coming today. I wish you all a pleasant event, and safe travels on your upcoming missions.

There is a proverb from Saint Augustine, the 5th century theologian and philosopher, that I wanted to share with you as a final note: “The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page.”

Thank you for your kind attention.