

Message from the Head of Mission and Force Commander



Dear Colleagues

As we continue this fight against the indiscernible common enemy – COVID-19, I wish to thank all staff in the frontline, particularly the medical personnel and also CLO, Military and Police who are working relentlessly with the communities we serve to tackle the pandemic. However, we cannot forget the different UNISFA sections, probably not in the frontline, but at the epicentre of ensuring UNISFA continues to operate effectively.

As you know, air travel is one of the hardest hit industries by the COVID-19 pandemic and UNISFA Aviation and MOVCON have not been spared. About 98% of UNISFA personnel depend on air travel to get to their duty stations or leave the mission for their entitlement or official travel out of Abyei. Furthermore, most UNISFA's operations are dependent on-air operations. The outbreak of the virus meant cancellation of international and restriction of some of the domestic flights, effectively locking the UNISFA personnel either in or out of the mission area as countries and governments-imposed movement restrictions and closed airports. UNISFA was in dilemma as pressure mounted and uncertainties remained on a number of what if questions regarding travel. UNISFA Aviation and MOVCON main task is to provide uninterrupted efficient, safe, and reliable travel for their passengers and cargo, and this was still expected even under the circumstances and the new restrictions. A case in point, is the establishment of regular flights to Addis Ababa which allows UNISFA personnel to travel back home and telecommute. So far, UNISFA aviation and MOVCON have effectively facilitated two flights while putting in place required safety measures to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

I therefore wish to sincerely thank Aviation and MOVCON for the tremendous efforts to keep UNISFA afloat under these trying circumstances.

As part of UNISFA's support, I wish to inform you that on Tuesday, 16 June 2020, UNISFA handed over an ambulance to the Ministry of Health, Abyei as part of the support of the mission to the health sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Once again, I thank all staff for their continued resilience and support.

Stay Safe.

COVID-19 response: UNISFA hands over an ambulance to Abyei health ministry

The handing over was performed by the UNISFA Ag. Head of Mission and Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Mehari Gebremariam who gave the key of the ambulance to the Abyei Chief Administrator, Mr. Kuol Alor and Ninuut Miyen, a local health representative.

Officials of the mission and representatives of the community attended the brief ceremony held in UNISFA compound, Abyei.

Also, recently, as part of the empowerment of the local community to effectively respond to the pandemic, UNISFA similarly assisted the local authorities in the Northern part of Abyei to repair an ambulance, based on their request.



UNISFA C19 News Brief

Regular updates on the Mission's response to COVID19

AIR TRAVEL - BEHIND THE SCENES

After Travel Survey/Feedback

Overall positive response received from travellers on the 4 June 2020 flight. Feedback was received from 9 of the 12 travellers. Pertinent comments and suggestions are summarized below:

Observations

- Travelers were not subject to any form of screening in Kadugli or Addis Ababa.
- Medical certificate issued by Level I Clinic was requested in Kadugli only; no medical certificate/COVID-19 free certificate was required in Addis Ababa, but it is useful for all travelers to have a certificate/statement from the CMO when traveling.
- Masks are a mandatory requirement for all commercial flights in and out of Addis Ababa.
- Delays experienced in Kadugli due to late clearance/arrival of CRJ aircraft from Entebbe and issues raised due to travelers without valid Sudanese visas.
- After slight delay on arrival in Addis Ababa, all travelers were smoothly assisted by airport staff if remaining in transit or being transported to the airport hotel. No issues related to transit were reported.

Suggestions

- For staff travelling via UNHAS from Addis Ababa, it is advisable to have a reservation for a trip on the day after arrival in Addis to avoid missing flights; UNHAS does not allow transfer of passengers to another UNHAS flight unless it is within the 72-hour window.
- The mission should provide further clarity to staff members on what to do/what will happen in the event of commercial flight cancellations/delays that leave staff in Addis Ababa beyond the 72-hour window.
- Flight clearances should be obtained earlier to reduce uncertainty among staff members.

continued on the last page



A photo of UNISFA Staff who availed of the voluntarily travel out of the mission.

Apart from the special flights which may be requested occasionally to fulfil certain tasks in support of the mandate, the mission has always operated and tasked its aircraft according to a published weekly flight schedule to different destinations including Wau- Entebbe and Kadugli-Khartoum which are the only two gateways that link Abyei to the outside world.

Current flight schedule

The COVID pandemic disrupted the weekly flight schedule as flights were no longer guaranteed. New regulations and travel requirements were introduced. All UNISFA flight destinations only allowed cargo and emergency flights with prior approvals on a case by case basis as compared to before COVID where UNISFA was guaranteed diplomatic exit, overflight, and landing clearances of all flights by most countries. Many countries further added additional players including COVID task forces that were required to approve flights. These new procedures have not only delayed flights but most of the time, flights have been cancelled for lack of clearances.

The new approval processes in countries we operate such as Uganda, Sudan and South Sudan meant that flight request had to be done earlier to be able to meet the approval deadlines, this limited flexibility in aviation operations, as once a request is submitted, there is no room for amends or changes. In the mission area, most of the time personnel operate in difficult situations and having aircrafts that are ready to take off at short notice provides a lot of confidence to the personnel who give their all knowing that should there be an accident or emergency, they would be guaranteed a flight out to safety or where they may receive treatment. The inability for the aircraft to launch as required is likely to erode confidence of the personnel on the ground.

Aviation staff found themselves with a lot of extra duties and new ways of doing almost everything as their operational terrain changed.

Aircrew were equally affected as the rotations were halted, and some could not fly as their licenses and certificates expired or are about to expire. It took some time before most of the Civil Aviation Authorities provided waivers or extension to enable the aircrew to continue flying. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that there was and still are no clarity or ability to meet some of the requirements for flights as directed by some countries. For instance, some countries have relaxed travel requirements and opened the air skies giving special consideration to UN staff, however they demand COVID free certificates which are not being issued by many countries and definitely cannot be issued in Abyei. There are ongoing discussions on what processes the passengers and crew should undergo upon arrivals and departures. While many recommendations and practices have been floated, there have been variation from airport to airport depending on the resources available and countries' requirements. Seating in the aircraft during flights to allow social distancing is also being considered.

UNISFA Aviation has tried to live to its expectation of ensuring continuous flights despite the restrictions and all odds brought about by COVID.

Thanks to the mission management who have without fail continued to engage the governments and local authorities to allow limited flights for UNISFA in order to undertake emergency flights. The aviation unit has successfully performed two repatriation of human remains to Ethiopia and two medical Evacuations flights to Uganda and Ethiopia. Behind the scenes, for these flights to be performed, the amount and level of coordination was unprecedented with a number of meetings running at times late in the night to ensure that all documents, clearances and arrangements were in place at the launch and destinations.



Behind the scenes
How UNISFA Aviation is trying to ensure continuous flights despite the restrictions and all odds brought about by COVID-19



“ UNISFA Aviation has tried to live to its expectation of ensuring continuous flights despite the restrictions and all odds brought about by COVID ”

by Edward Lutta

Overcoming Challenges

The biggest challenge that remained was how to fly out UNISFA staff who had self-identified as having underlying issues, yet all destinations did not allow passengers. It was a relief when WFP introduced the weekly flights to fly UN staff to specific destinations. UNISFA managed to piggyback on this with a maiden flight on 04 June flying 13 passengers. From Abyei to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia through Kadugli, Sudan. The aviation unit hopes that it will be able to fly its outgoing passengers every Thursday subject to clearances from Sudan and Ethiopia. Perhaps when Uganda allows incoming passengers, UNISFA will be able to fly its passengers to Entebbe again which remains the Rest and Recuperation destination for UNISFA.

Be ready to make adjustments

There are a lot of changes that have come up affecting travel during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it's expected that the hangovers of COVID-19 will linger long after it is declared not a threat. As we yearn to travel again either to see our families for those in the mission area or back to mission area for those at their homes, just know that it's not going to be the same and a lot of restrictions will not go away overnight. But whatever the case, UNISFA aviation is and will continue working and ensuring that when you travel back or out of the mission, you travel in an efficient and safe way. So, let's all remain safe but mostly, let's be patient.

Behind the Scenes: MOVCON SERVICES – DURING AND POST COVID 19



**“ CUSTOMER SERVICE IS OUR
ATTITUDE! ”**

By Mariam Ambo



The COVID -19 pandemic has brought the world to a standstill and completely changed the travel industry. To curb the spread of the Corona virus, many countries have imposed restrictive measures that include the complete or partial closure of borders, total or partial suspension of flight operations, requirements for medical certificates and/or mandatory quarantine. Our travel on UNISFA aircraft now requires passenger and cargo details for every individual flight, before flight clearances are granted by the relevant governments and Civil Aviation Authorities. These changes and requirements in a trickle effect have greatly impacted the way we do business. Currently, there are no inbound international passenger flights into Abyei from any destination.

The weekly outbound passenger flights from Abyei via Kadugli, Khartoum into Addis Ababa are approved individually by the Sudanese and Ethiopian authorities.

Until we are notified otherwise, all outbound passenger flights on the Entebbe route are suspended by the Ugandan government. The restrictions at border points are continuously modified based on the changing COVID-19 related risks and threat level of infection.

International and domestic Medical Evacuation flight clearances are granted on individual flight basis by the relevant governments and Civil Aviation Authorities.

Submission of Mops and CMRs

All your travel on UNISFA aircraft must be planned in detail at least one week in advance. The extra time and details are required by the Civil Aviation Authorities before individual flights can be cleared.

MOP and CMR for domestic and international travel must be submitted a minimum of 7 days before the flight.

The mission has established an outbound international passenger flight to Addis Ababa Ethiopia, scheduled every Thursday. Transit Passengers wishing to utilise this service will be required to plan such travel in advance and must submit the following documents to MovCon passenger booking office 7 days prior to the travel date:

- 1.Approved MOP
- 2.Photocopy of UN ID card

3.Photocopy of National Passport and UNLP

4.A commitment to purchase an airline ticket to final destination (the actual airline ticket must be presented to the MovCon officer at the check in counter).

5.A hotel reservation in Addis Ababa for passengers transiting for more than 8 hours. (The actual hotel booking must be presented to the MovCon officer at the check in counter)

6.A transit visa will be required for non-UNLP holders staying more than 8 hours.

Partial Suspension of Domestic Regular passenger / cargo Flights

Domestic passenger and cargo flights are currently limited to operational requirement only. The approval of these flight operations requires the extended lead time of 7 days for MOP and CMR submission for the individual flight clearances from the relevant government authorities

International Cargo Flight Operations and CMR entitlement

International cargo flights on the Entebbe route are requested on operational requirement only with priority being given to Mission essential cargo. Personal cargo will be moved on space available basis.

UNISFA does not have cold storage facilities in Entebbe and Wau to ensure suitable conditions are maintained for temperature sensitive shipments and perishables like fresh fruit, meat and vegetables.

Without the guarantee of flight clearances, we discourage the transportation of personal perishables. The support for the UNISFA PX will continue. The delivery of PX Fresh fruit and vegetables will be coordinated to arrive at the airport on the day of the flight due to lack of cold storage facilities.

Current Covid-19 preventive Measures

- **Face Masks/gloves:** This is a requirement for all MovCon personnel whether at the check in counters, cargo and baggage handling areas, meeting or dispatching flights. In addition, staff that require the services of MovCon must wear face masks. Passengers should not agree to be served by Staff not wearing a face mask. All passengers are required to wear face masks at all time on board the aircraft.
- **Hand sanitizers:** Available at counters. Passengers are strongly encouraged to carry their own hand sanitizers (1 bottle 100 ml permitted in hand luggage).
- **Physical Distancing:** Must always be enforced by maintaining two (2) x meters between passengers while at the MovCon passenger terminal.

As we adjust to the new normal, MovCon is continuously consulting with our stakeholders, IATA, ICAO and regional Civil Aviation Authorities on the best and safest way to serve you.

We ask for cooperation and understanding from all you our esteemed clients.

Help us to keep you safe!!!

Key Contact Telephone Numbers

Coordinator COVID-19

Task Force / **3979**

CMO/FMO / **3283 / 3940 / 3319**

Call Center (Hotline) / **3030**

Bar Assistant / **4891**

GCC / **3293 / 4493**

PX / **3291**

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Suggestions:

- Process for handling staff travelling through Kadugli without valid Sudanese visas should be established.
Lack of prior notification in Addis meant that there was a slight delay in dis-embarkment. Improved notification/coordination needed to minimize delays.
- Ensure that each individual traveler has a medical clearance certificate/letter when traveling.
- Small aircraft should be avoided due to severe baggage restrictions, which is not realistic in cases of staff leaving for an extended telecommuting period and mandatory quarantine in some cases; this will also reduce the risk of travelers being removed from the flight.
- Travelers should be encouraged to travel with only cabin baggage if at all possible; however, in Addis Ababa airport staff will handle baggage effectively.
- Advisable to have a same day ticket for commercial travel to avoid having to leave the airport; most flights out of Addis Ababa leave around midnight so staff arriving on the UNISFA flight would not be required to stay in the airport beyond the 12-hour limit.

The following issues and concerns raised have already been addressed in the planning of future flights:

- **Late flight clearance:** the mission has revised the flight clearance schedule to ensure clearances are requested more than a week in advance and passenger lists are available at least 7 days in advance of every flight to ensure all clearances are received in good time and reduce the risk of flight cancellations.
- **Lack of notification/coordination causing delays in Kadugli and Addis Ababa:** clearance requests for the repositioning of the CRJ in Kadugli will also be submitted earlier to ensure availability in good time; earlier flight notification and aircraft clearances will also ensure notification to Addis Ababa on arrival times, etc. can be done in advance
- **Management of Staff without Valid Visas:** Government of Sudan and civil aviation will be notified of staff travelling without valid visas in advance to avoid delays in check-in/boarding; tacit agreement has already been received that the mission will submit new visa requests for those with expired visas once they exit.



Doctor's CORNER



Can people wear masks while exercising?

People should NOT wear masks when exercising as masks may reduce the ability to breathe comfortably.

Sweat can make the mask become wet more quickly which makes it difficult to breathe and promotes the growth of microorganisms.

The important preventive measure during exercise is to maintain physical distance of at least one meter from others.



World Health
Organization

#Coronavirus

#COVID19

'New Normal' Travel Expectations

A few countries are slowly easing travel restrictions that were imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are positive that countries will soon start opening their borders.

As we await further guidance from UNHQ MOVCON, IATA (International Air Travel Association) and ICAO on the way forward for the travel and cargo industry, clients should expect the following new normal.

- **Face Masks:** All the time every time even on flights
- **Physical Distancing:** During check in, queuing; and in transit areas
- **Extended check in times:** Passengers are advised to check in online where they can. MOVCON will provide this facility for passengers flying Entebbe/Abyei
- **Reduction in number of passengers per flight:** To enforce physical distancing
- **Long Queues at the airport:** Longer times spent at airports
- **Baggage restrictions:** Either less or no hand luggage (everything checked in). May be allowed a small inflight bag. (international flights).

Cooperation and understanding from everybody will be necessary as we operate in these abnormal times.

For Questions

Kindly send an email to the UNISFA
COVID-19 Task Force :

UNISFA-COVID-19-Task-Force@un.org



For COVID related
broadcasts, please visit:

<https://unisfa.unmissions.org/unisfa-broadcast-messages>