

Message from the Head of Mission and Force Commander



Dear Colleagues

As you all know, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many countries have imposed travel restrictions and quarantine requirements leaving limited travel options and a high likelihood of passengers being stranded in transit. These travel restrictions have severely limited the travel of staff members, including travel related to Rest and Recuperation, and staff members continue to be confined to their duty stations and transit points respectively. In order to mitigate this confinement, I am delighted that the Mission has now provided guidelines on options for R&R duty stations with COVID related restrictions to allow flexibility in ensuring staff are able to leave their duty station for extended periods of recuperation.

The new policy issued therefore provides staff members who have been unable to leave the mission area for extended periods due to travel restrictions to avail the opportunity of an extended period of recuperation outside the mission area.

The mission is also in the process of organizing a flight from Addis Ababa to Abyei, via Khartoum, tentatively scheduled for 24 July 2020 and staff members currently telecommuting who are able to travel from their current locations can take advantage of the scheduled flight.

Colleagues, I would encourage all UNISFA personnel to avail to the respective opportunities. While we are keen to ensure continuity of Mission operations, the well-being of our staff is also of paramount importance. I wish to thank everyone once more for their patience, resilience and good work.

Stay Safe.

UNISFA C19 News Brief

Regular updates on the Mission's response to COVID19

CMS VISITS THE NORTH OF ABYEI TO ASSESS COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSIVENESS

On 12 July 2020, UNISFA Chief Mission Support (CMS) Mr. Robert Kirkwood together with the Chief Operations and Resources Management (ORM), Chief FTS, representatives of Mission Support Division (MSD), Engineering section, and Community Liaison Office (CLO), undertook a field mission to Goli and Amiet. The aim of the mission was to assess community preparedness to COVID-19 in the North of Abyei. During the meetings with the community members, UNISFA assured of its support and undertook to provide items including a 4X4 utility vehicle to address transport intermissions during the process. UNISFA further offered to facilitate movement of test samples from Abyei to Khartoum where possible. The fundamental need for UN Agencies Funds and Programmes (AFP) humanitarian support was highlighted in order to consolidate community efforts.



CMS engage with GAH medical personnel at Amiet Isolation Center

UNISFA COVID-19 AWARENESS

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PROTECT YOURSELF | PROTECT OTHERS

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WEAR A MASK
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Masks are important to reduce spread of COVID-19

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Avoid physical contact and keep distance at least 2 meters

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SOCIAL DISTANCING

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I make a special appeal to all countries with influence on parties waging war to do everything possible for the ceasefire to become a reality.

”



UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres

SG APPEAL FOR GLOBAL CEASE FIRE – THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

UNISFA CLO Chief interacted with interlocutors in Diffra including the Humanitarian Aid Commissioner representative, the Joint Community Peace Committee (JCPC), local NGOs, Women and Youth union representatives, Resistance Committee representative, Local Population Committee head as well as the Ministry of Health – Sudan. The dialogue dealt with the effects COVID-19 pandemic on the Misseriya community. A number of challenges were brought out including the vacuum in medical services, and the tussle between Ministry of Health and the lead NGO on COVID-19 Global Aid Hand (GAH). The local ministry of health doctor asked UNISFA for the gifting of PPE for the frontline medical staff attending to COVID-19 patients. UNISFA informed them of the precautions being taken and the support extended to both northern and southern Abyei Area in the joint fight against COVID-19. The gifting of a vehicle to the North is currently in the pipeline. In the meantime, CLO continues to follow the progress and render full support to the Health-cluster on the South of the Abyei Area where 34 cases of Corona have now been recorded.

Community Liaison and Gender related work is so far the only operation unsuspending by UNISFA in view of the SG António Guterres appeal for an immediate ceasefire in all corners of the globe to reinforce diplomatic action, help create conditions for the delivery of lifesaving aid and bring hope to places that are among the most vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic. This call was rooted in a fundamental recognition: ‘There should be only one fight in our world today, our shared battle against COVID-19’. In support of this global appeal and following UNISFA’s engagement, on 12 May, Abyei Women Association issued a press release requesting all armed persons to put down their arms. This followed UNISFA’s engagement of the women to take action in the face of COVID-19. A Resolution on COVID-19 was issued by the UN Security Council on 1 July 2020.

“

There should be only one fight in our world today, our shared battle against COVID-19.

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Field Mission to Goli Quarantine Center

NEW POLICY FOR STAFF MEMBERS RESTRICTED TO THEIR DUTY STATION

Effect from 01 June 2020.

- Staff members who have remained in their duty station for an extended period (12 weeks or more) will be eligible for a one-time organization paid travel (official travel) to their place of home leave/place of residence, or parent duty station. This option may be used in combination with rest & recuperation, annual leave, accrued Special Leave With Full Pay (SLWFP), and telecommuting, for a combined period not to exceed 3 months. No DSA will be payable for any time spent away from the official duty station, except in cases of delays, scheduled stopovers, or mandatory quarantines during travel. In these cases, the actual cost of meals and accommodation may be reimbursed, not exceeding the established rate of DSA for the location.
- The provision of 5 days of special leave with full pay (SLWFP) for missed rest & recuperation cycles will be applied as per the below:

Time Spent in the Mission	Eligible Rest and Recuperation	Eligible SLWFP
12 weeks or more in the mission (1 missed cycle)	1 Rest and Recuperation	5 days SLWFP
18 weeks or more in the mission (2 missed cycle)	1 Rest and Recuperation	10 days SLWFP
24 weeks or more in the mission (3 missed cycle)	1 Rest and Recuperation	15 days SLWFP

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- Travel to an alternate location may be requested, in which case the cost of travel may not exceed the cost of travel to the authorized locations as listed above.
- The one-time organization paid travel shall consist of one economy class return trip ticket; no lump sum option is available.
- Staff members who left their duty station on or after 01 June 2020 on a self-purchased ticket will be eligible for the reimbursement of the cost of their ticket, up to an amount not to exceed the cost of the equivalent economic class ticket to their place of home leave/place of residence/parent duty station that would have been purchased by the mission, provided they had met the requirement of having been in their duty station for at least 12 weeks before departure.
- Taking into consideration the continued uncertainties in international travel, additional travel charges incurred due to circumstances beyond a staff member's control will be borne by the mission; charges related to changes made at the request of the staff member will be borne by the staff member.
- Staff members are reminded that the suspension of hardship and non-family allowances during flexible working arrangements have been waived. Absence from the duty station on SLWFP and telecommuting will result in the deduction of danger pay.
- The departure of staff members is subject to the approval of the First Reporting Officer, Section Chief, and Mission Senior Management, who must ensure operational continuity will not be adversely affected by the departure of the requesting staff member.
- To ensure operational requirements are met, those staff members currently working away from their duty station on flexible working arrangements will be required to return to their duty stations as soon as conditions allow, in order to facilitate the departure of counterparts on the ground. Once travel restrictions limiting entry into Abyei have been eased those staff members on Flexible Working Arrangements will be required to validate their status on a weekly basis. Staff members who fail to return to their duty station without cause may have their approval for flexible work revoked and may be placed on Annual Leave or Special Leave Without Pay.
- Flexible working arrangements continue to be a voluntary option available at the request of the staff member. While staff members are encouraged to take part to support the organization's goal of reducing the mission footprint, there is no mandatory requirement to remain away from the duty station for an extended period.
- Staff members who wish to request telecommuting in combination with R&R/annual leave/SLWFP are requested to submit the "Request For and Agreement on Working Away from the Office and the Official Duty Station" form and obtaining approval from their First Reporting Officer and Section Chief prior to departure. All requests are subject to validation by the Acting Head of Mission or the Chief of Mission Support.
- The above travel option must be utilized before 31 July 2020, unless departure is delayed at the request of the mission due to operational requirements.

For further information and clarification, please check the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on UNISFA Staff Relief/Rotation Policy (broadcast of Wednesday 7 August 2020).



“ Something to smile about despite COVID-19 Pandemic ”

On 09 July 2020 at about 10:20 hours, UNISFA undertook its first helicopter sling operation and the helicopter flew at about 50 Knots instead of the expected 100Knots, maintaining 3500 ft above ground Level (AGL), clear of populated areas. The operation was for the delivery of the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) weighing about 2.2 tonnes from Abyei HQ to Abu Qussa.

Sling Operations are considered high risk and require meticulous planning and coordination. A thorough Aviation Risk assessment is a must for such operations to ensure all risks are mitigated and reduced to as low as practicably possible. Therefore, UNISFA Aviation together with MOVCON and Engineering left no loose strings in their preparations and ensured that JBVMM monitors, Military Observers and Ethiopian troop assigned to Abu Qussa had something to smile about as the Water treatment plant was delivered by the helicopter safely. The water treatment plant will be used to filter water assuring all personnel in Abu Qussa of at least 5000 liters of clean water daily.

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**

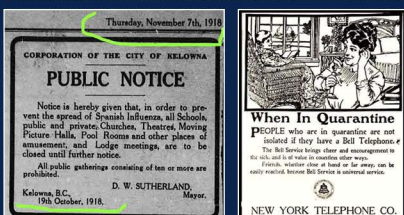
UNISFA Flight schedule

- Every Thursday: Abyei – Addis (one way)
- Friday 24 July: Addis – Khartoum – Abyei (tentative)
- Other flights, cargo and pax are conducted on case to case basis as per demand
- For UNHAS flight, please refer to the link below
https://unisfa.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/flights_booking_deadlines_25june-02aug_01july.pdf
- Please note that all flights are subject to approvals by respective governments.

UNISFA has successfully facilitated 3 flights to Addis Ababa.

“ History repeats itself ”

The 1918 Spanish flu Pandemic



Doctor's CORNER

The UNISFA mission through the COVID-19 Task Force Medical Sub-committee has embarked on an Antibody (AB) Testing for Coronavirus infection among its personnel and operational partners. The aim is to detect for antibodies to the SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The selection of individuals for testing is based on the parameters as follows:

- Those individuals acting as the “bridge” or link between the presumed major source of COVID-19 infection and the non-infected.
- Those individuals on the frontline and at highest level of exposure.

The primary aim of the antibody testing is to assess the heard immunity (previous exposure) of all the individuals in and working with UNISFA and to establish the status of all the respective high-risk groups and sub-groups with a view to develop mitigation measures to control and where possible stop the spread of the infection. So far, out of 283 tests conducted, about 25% are either inconclusive/repeats (IgM positive/IgG negative) while about 5% showed evidence of previous exposure (IgM positive/IgG positive) and the remaining have tested negative (IgM negative/IgG negative).

Some governments have suggested that this test could be a litmus for an “immunity passport” or “risk-free certificate” that would enable individuals to travel or to return to work assuming that they are protected against re-infection. According to WHO however, there is currently no evidence that people who have recovered from COVID-19 and have antibodies are protected from a second infection.



World Health
Organization

#Coronavirus

#COVID19

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>