

16.19 FOREIGN SERVICE ALLOWANCE AND OTHER RELATED ALLOWANCES

- 16.19.1 Home-based staff serving in our diplomatic missions abroad are paid Foreign Service Allowance (FSA) in addition to their monthly salary to defray costs associated with a higher cost of living index and to partly enable them to adapt to the living conditions in the respective country of posting. In addition to the grant of FSA, diplomatic staff are also paid Other Related Allowances to cater for expenses incurred on essential items which are not included in the computation of the FSA. The quantum, however, varies according to the rank of the officer and the country of posting.
- 16.19.2 In the context of this review exercise, both Management and the staff side have made representations, among others, for: the payment of FSA and Other Related Allowances in hard currency; a review of FSA and other related allowances on a regular basis; the grant of a spouse allowance to diplomatic officers consistent with international practice; payment of the difference in entertainment allowance to officers acting as Chargé d'Affaires until the posting of an Ambassador; and broadening of the definition of school fees such that mandatory school activities forming part of the school curriculum be considered as an integral part of the fees. In addition, they requested that Ambassadors/High Commissioners be provided a car with driver during their visit in Mauritius; the specification of the time frame within which an officer may be allowed to benefit from compassionate passages to attend funeral/rituals of close relatives; refund of medical fees and payment of warm clothing allowance to be extended to dependents of unmarried career diplomats; review of the quantum of hardship allowance; and provision of enhanced conditions of service to home-based staff.
- 16.19.3 The Union on its side has submitted, *inter-alia*, that: periodic adjustment of FSA be carried out on a yearly basis taking into account the UN Indices or Mercer's Report; the policy regarding refund of medical fees to be reviewed; a daily subsistence allowance be paid to diplomatic officers; and air passages for children aged above 20 years be refunded.
- 16.19.4 One Federation apprised the Bureau that the payment of entertainment allowance to diplomatic staff constitutes an international abuse of taxpayers' money, as these officers are already earning a salary out of which they can meet expenses related to entertainment. The Federation equally viewed that the Bureau has been overgenerous in recommending the grant of an array of pecuniary benefits to diplomatic staff including Foreign Service Allowance; refund of school fees incurred in children's education; service allowance; refund of medical expenses; payment of a warm clothing allowance, amongst others, coupled with the fact that these allowances are not subject to taxation.
- 16.19.5 The Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (MPSAIR) which is equally responsible for the Chairmanship of the Foreign Service Committee (FSC) in making its submissions with regard to conditions of service, has proposed to: consider waiving the provision for the FSC to ratify the decision of the Supervising

Officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade concerning the review of the ceiling of rent and utilities up to a maximum of 30% given same is already approved at the level of the Ministry; grant compassionate passage within a fortnight as from the date of the funeral and when the funeral takes place in Mauritius; and consider the possibility of explicitly recommending that the FSA would be payable to officers who are on casual/annual or vacation leave only during the period of their posting in a foreign country.

- 16.19.6 In examining the proposals of parties concerned, we equally took note of the pertinent observations made by the Director of Audit, in its Report for the financial year 2019 to 2020, with regard to the payment of FSA and Other Related Allowances. While both Management and the staff side were apprised of the outcome of their demands and proposals which could not be retained during the consultative meetings, we are making a few observations deemed relevant in the ensuing paragraphs.
- 16.19.7 The Bureau considers that the adoption of a fixed exchange rate mechanism should continue, as it allows for the maintenance of a more constant conversion value irrespective of any appreciation or devaluation of the currency during the period of a review in the country of posting; and the rate recommended by the Bureau is an enhanced one which already caters for a certain extent of fluctuation.
- 16.19.8 Prior to the publication of this Report, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs referred a few cases to the FSC for consideration. Those which either constituted a major departure from our recommendations or were outside the terms of reference of the FSC, were referred to the High Powered Committee (HPC). Following decisions taken by these two instances, certain recommendations have been reviewed, namely those regarding payment of FSA and Other Related Allowances in hard currency; and when the officers are on leave; increase in rent and utilities beyond the prescribed ceiling to be looked into by the Foreign Service Committee; eligibility period to benefit from compassionate passages; and provision of an official car to Ambassadors/High Commissioners/Permanent Representatives while on leave in Mauritius.
- 16.19.9 In addition, further to a few representations made which are considered to be justified, we have provided for new recommendations or enhanced certain existing provisions. The Bureau has also waived a few provisions, which we consider have outlived their utility, as apprised by our stakeholders during consultation. A few requests which relate to internal issues need to be dealt with administratively at the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

Determination of the Comparative Costliness Index by Statistics Mauritius

- 16.19.10 With a view to determining the revised quantum for Foreign Service Allowance and Other Related Allowances, the Bureau sought the assistance of Statistics Mauritius to compute the Comparative Costliness Index (CCI) in all missions so as to measure how much more it costs to a Mauritian national posted in a mission in a foreign city to maintain the pattern of expenditure of somebody in Mauritius. After consulting parties concerned, Statistics Mauritius issued a circular letter along with a

questionnaire to all heads of missions regarding the price collection exercise to be carried out in February 2020 by home-based staff. For this purpose, the basket of goods and services derived from the 2017 Household Budget Survey was used and items which are separately compensated by the Mauritian Government (cost borne by the State) or by the provisions of our Report, have not been accounted for in the basket. However, due to the international crisis triggered by the Covid-19 Pandemic, the price collection exercise could not be carried out in certain missions. As a result, a new pricing exercise was effected in September 2020 in all our missions abroad.

- 16.19.11 The information obtained from the price collection survey conducted by officers of the different missions were analysed by Statistics Mauritius and any major departure from the Mauritian price level was queried at the concerned embassy. In so doing, only valid and confirmed prices have been used to compute the costliness index of the foreign city. Statistics Mauritius observed that prices submitted by a few embassies were on the high side as they were not collected from popular outlets. Moreover, as there is no quality assurance system for field supervision, it could not be ascertained that accurate data have been submitted for the calculation of CCI.

Foreign Service Allowance

- 16.19.12 In addition to the relative costliness of a basket of selected goods and services in Mauritius compared to one in the foreign cities concerned, as determined by Statistics Mauritius, the Bureau has taken on board, the FSA recommended in the last Report and the average exchange rate prior to the publication of the Report as main determinants before revising the FSA and Other Related Allowances.
- 16.19.13 Further to the aforementioned factors, the following yardsticks, amongst others, have equally been taken into consideration as an indicative measure:
- (i) the cumulative inflation rate of the country of posting since our last Report;
 - (ii) the Mercer's cost of living survey report in relation to the comparative costliness of the cities where the home-based staff are posted;
 - (iii) any fluctuation in the exchange rate in the country of posting since our last Report; and
 - (iv) indicators published by international organisations such as the United Nations Retail Price Index, the IMF World Economic Outlook Report and the UN Classification Index.
- 16.19.14 In light of the above, it can be safely inferred that the revision of the FSA and Other Related Allowances is not simply a matter of granting an increase of allowances. Furthermore, we have noted through the representations made and requests submitted to the FSC, that there is misperception on the philosophy of granting FSA. **We wish to point out that the FSA is meant to address any disparity in the cost of living between the country of posting and Mauritius and not in the standard of living, which is a different concept.** Nevertheless, the Bureau has catered for

some reasonable differences that may arise in the standard of living in determining the quantum of FSA.

- 16.19.15 Being given that certain embassies are located in different cities in the same country and that the cost of living and comparative costliness index vary from one city to another, the quantum of FSA for each city has been determined individually, in line with international practice. Moreover, in a bid to ensuring stability in the quantum payable as FSA, no downward adjustment has been effected to the existing amount although in certain missions, the newly calculated CCI was lower compared to the previous one.

Recommendation 1

16.19.16 We recommend that:

- (i) home-based staff should be paid FSA as per the quantum specified at Annex I of this Chapter, in a hard currency at a fixed rate of exchange as provided at Annex II of this Chapter;**
- (ii) the rate of exchange provided at Annex II of this Chapter should also be applicable for the payment of Other Related Allowances and monthly salary in a hard currency to home-based staff serving in our missions; and**
- (iii) where an officer is presently drawing salary, FSA, Rent and Utilities and Entertainment Allowance, wherever applicable, more than what he would draw in the aggregate with this Report, he should be allowed to continue to draw the higher amount on a personal basis, up to the time of a new posting. On a new posting, the new recommendations should apply in toto.**

Payment of FSA in specific circumstances

Recommendation 2

16.19.17 We recommend that:

- (i) officers who are on casual/annual or vacation leave outside the country of posting, should be paid FSA for up to one month;**
- (ii) home-based staff who are on casual/annual or vacation leave in Mauritius should not be eligible for the payment of FSA during that period; and**
- (iii) officers, married or unmarried, posted in our missions and who have been sponsored to follow a course of study outside the country of posting, should continue to be paid FSA for up to a period of four months, provided their accompanying dependent(s) stay(s) in the country of posting.**

High Inflation FSA Supplement

- 16.19.18 Provision was made in the 2016 PRB Report for the FSC to consider reviewing the FSA payable to home-based staff every two years or whenever there is an emergency in the country of posting, whichever the earlier. Both Management and the staff side requested for such an exercise to be conducted on a regular basis to address high increases in the cost of living in certain missions, triggered by inflationary pressures in the country of posting.
- 16.19.19 The Secretary for Foreign Affairs equally made a request to the FSC to consider a mid-term review of FSA payable in a few specific missions where several factors caused a significant erosion in purchasing power. The request was lengthily discussed at several meetings of the FSC where members stressed that a mid-term review of FSA would require a fresh computation of the CCI in all our missions regardless of requests for an *ad hoc* increase in a few postings only. They equally viewed that using the cumulative inflation rate as the only indicator would not suffice given the basket of goods used by international institutions and their corresponding weightage, is not comparable with the Mauritian basket.
- 16.19.20 After examining the submissions of parties concerned and the implementation problems/implications arising out of a mid-term review of FSA, we consider that there is need for an adjustment mechanism in-between overall reviews to cater for any significant erosion in purchasing power.

Recommendation 3

- 16.19.21 We recommend that the FSC should examine any request made for an adjustment of the quantum of FSA on ground of high inflation (>15%) in the country of posting and based on reliable data, consider the payment of a High Inflation FSA Supplement as a variable component to home-based staff posted in our overseas missions.**
- 16.19.22 We also recommend that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade should monitor, on a quarterly basis, any fluctuation in the rate of inflation in missions where the payment of a High Inflation FSA Supplement has been granted to home-based staff and submit a status report thereon to the FSC.**
- 16.19.23 We further recommend that the FSC should ensure that the payment of the High Inflation FSA Supplement ceases once the rate of inflation in the country of posting subsides (that is, drops below 15%), based on the status report submitted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.**

Consul

Recommendation 4

16.19.24 We recommend that the FSA and Other Related Allowances payable to the Consul, as set out at Annex V of this Chapter, should be effected in hard currency.

OTHER RELATED ALLOWANCES

16.19.25 After examining representations made regarding other related allowances, we have considered a few as meritorious. In this context, we have provided for appropriate recommendations and reviewed certain existing ones, while also taking into account decisions of the FSC and HPC since the last Report. These concern: the introduction of the payment of a Dependent Supplement Allowance; payment of entertainment allowance in a specific circumstance; eligibility for payment of Warm Clothing Allowance; review of the quantum of rent and utilities beyond the prescribed ceiling; a periodic evaluation to be carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to justify the continued payment of a Hardship Allowance in missions concerned; posting of diplomatic staff on a rotational basis; and review of the composition of the FSC.

Dependent Supplement Allowance

16.19.26 The staff side has represented that spouses accompanying diplomatic officers on missions abroad should be paid a spouse allowance as a compensation for the loss of income previously derived by the spouse, who has forgone his/her job, career prospects and associated benefits. During the consultative meeting, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade fully supported the payment of a spouse allowance as obtainable in foreign jurisdictions.

16.19.27 We have examined the request and consider that in general, should the need be felt, the spouse may find a job in the foreign country. We do, however, acknowledge that it may be difficult in some postings to find paid work or where certain restrictions on employment of non-nationals are applicable. We, therefore, consider that there is some merit in the request with a view to supporting the family of a diplomatic staff with one or more accompanying dependents. In this perspective, we are providing for some form of assistance to cater for part of the living expenses of the officer's accompanying dependent(s).

Recommendation 5

16.19.28 We recommend that diplomatic staff in our missions abroad be paid a monthly Dependent Supplement Allowance as per the table below, provided that the accompanying dependent/s is/are not engaged in paid employment in the country of posting and/or is/are not eligible for the payment of Foreign Service Allowance:

Eligible Officers	Monthly Dependent Supplement Allowance
Diplomatic staff with one accompanying dependent (including the spouse)	£150
Diplomatic staff with two or more accompanying dependent(s) (including the spouse)	£270

Rent and Utilities

16.19.29 As per existing provisions, Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Permanent Representatives are refunded full charges of rent and utilities while home-based staff are refunded the charges up to a prescribed ceiling to enable them to avail of a convenient accommodation in the country of posting. However, in certain missions where the officers are provided rent free accommodation, they are refunded 20% of the quantum of rent and utilities to meet the cost of utilities only, which comprises electricity, gas, water and telephone facilities. We consider the present provisions to be appropriate and are, therefore bringing no change thereto.

Recommendation 6

16.19.30 We recommend that, pending the acquisition of quarters by Government, wherever feasible, expenses related to Rent and Utilities should be refunded in hard currency at a fixed rate of exchange as set out at Annex II to this Chapter, as follows:

- (i) in toto to Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Permanent Representatives; and**
- (ii) up to a monthly ceiling to home-based staff of other grades according to broad salary levels as per Annex III of this Chapter.**

16.19.31 We also recommend that:

- (i) in the absence of strong reasonable grounds, any expenditure incurred above the prescribed ceiling of Rent and Utilities as specified at Annex III to this Chapter, should be borne in *toto* by the officer concerned;**
- (ii) officers reported upon in this review, other than local recruits, occupying their own house, should be paid 80% of the prescribed ceiling as per Annex III of this Chapter; and**
- (iii) home-based staff who are provided with rent free accommodation should be entitled to 20% of the quantum of Rent and Utilities as specified for their grade as per Annex III of this Chapter, in the event they are required to meet only the cost of utilities (electricity, gas, water and telephone facilities). In case any of the utilities mentioned above is provided free of charge along with accommodation, appropriate deduction should be made to the quantum of 20% for Rent and Utilities.**

16.19.32 The Supervising Officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade may presently, in urgent cases relating to new posting/renewal of lease agreement of home-based staff backed by strong reasonable grounds, review upward the quantum payable as rent and utilities up to a maximum of 30% beyond the prescribed ceiling. This increase, which is granted on a personal basis to the officer, is then ratified by the FSC at its next meeting. As regards cases where the increase in rent and utilities was beyond 30% of the prescribed ceiling, same were being looked into by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service as per a Cabinet decision.

16.19.33 It is equally worth highlighting that the FSC noted with concern that more and more cases are being referred to the Committee for ratification. At times, though the justifications provided were not always being viewed as strong and reasonable by the FSC, the latter was left with no other alternative than to ratify decisions already approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. The MPSAIR in the context of this Report, therefore, proposed for this specific provision to be waived.

16.19.34 We consider that it would be more appropriate for the FSC to look into all requests made in between general reviews regarding increases in rent and utilities beyond the prescribed ceiling, so as to avoid any element of subjectivity or conflict of interest that may arise on the part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. Moreover, given that the FSC examines, among others, requests for an increase in the quantum payable for rent and utilities on a case to case basis, any increase approved therefore, should be personal to the incumbent in post and cannot *de facto* be extended to other officers. We are making appropriate recommendations to that end.

Recommendation 7**16.19.35 We recommend that:**

- (i) **the FSC should, henceforth, examine and consider a review of the quantum of Rent and Utilities beyond the prescribed ceiling as specified at Annex III of this Chapter, only in urgent cases which are related to a new posting/renewal of lease agreements of home-based staff. Such cases should be based on strong reasonable grounds and subject to the production of full documentary evidence by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, ascertaining the reasonableness of the increase; and**
- (ii) **the increase in the quantum would apply to the officer concerned on a personal basis until such time he/she is subject to a new posting or in case of renewal of the lease agreement.**

Entertainment Allowance

16.19.36 At present, Ambassadors/High Commissioners/Permanent Representatives; Minister Counsellors/Deputy High Commissioners; First Secretaries and Second Secretaries posted in our diplomatic missions are paid an entertainment allowance as a means to foster healthy diplomatic relations and for reciprocating invitations with foreign diplomats.

16.19.37 Both Management and the staff side have made representation for the payment of the difference in entertainment allowance to the Chargé d’Affaires until the posting of an Ambassador on the ground that the former, in his capacity as Head of Mission, performs the same diplomatic, functional and representational duties as an Ambassador. After examining the request, we consider same to be meritorious.

Recommendation 8

16.19.38 We recommend that the payment of Entertainment Allowance should be made in hard currency to diplomatic staff as per Annex IV of this Chapter as from the date on which the officer effectively assumes duty in the country of posting.

16.19.39 We further recommend that the diplomatic officer serving as Chargé d’Affaires in our diplomatic missions overseas during the absence of an Ambassador, should be paid the same quantum of entertainment allowance as recommended for an Ambassador in that mission.

Refund of School Fees/Children’s Education

16.19.40 At present, home-based staff are refunded school fees inclusive of admission fees, contribution to land/building fund, society fees, registration fees and school endowment fund in respect of their dependent child/children aged between three and 20 years attending pre-primary, primary and secondary schools as well as for children up to three years attending nurseries and day care centres.

- 16.19.41 Both Management and Union made several representations with regard to school fees. These have been examined and it is observed that: the refund of school fees regarding education is primarily meant to allow the dependent child/children to acquire basic education that is, up to secondary level. It is up to the parents to decide whether their offsprings should attend a university in Mauritius, where tertiary education is dispensed free of charge or attend a foreign university at their own costs; and the refund of school fees is meant as a government contribution to home-based staff with a view to ensuring continuity in their children's education in systems more or less similar to what obtains locally in public schools.
- 16.19.42 The staff side has equally apprised the Bureau during the consultative meetings, that school fees should include mandatory fees in connection with books, library charges, sports activities, amongst others, given there are instances where an officer has no choice than to abide by the school policies and pay for compulsory programmes that take place outside the normal taught curriculum. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade on its side, viewed that an equivalent allowance in respect of tuition fees for international schools could be paid with an adjustment of 10% of contingency to cater for all other fees.
- 16.19.43 It is worth highlighting that a few cases relating to the payment of mandatory school activities forming an integral part of the school curriculum were equally referred to the FSC. After examination, the Committee observed that expenses incurred towards the purchase of books, transport and payment of outdoor activities, among others, were not refundable and it would be unfair to refund a lumped amount of the total fees to certain home-based staff only while others were being refunded strictly as per the provisions of the 2016 PRB Report. In this respect and based on information provided by Statistics Mauritius, the FSC decided that in cases where a breakdown of school fees could not be provided by the school authorities, the total fees be discounted to effect payment.
- 16.19.44 Against this backdrop, we consider the existing provisions governing the refund of school fees to be appropriate. Moreover, we are making a recommendation to cater for cases where a breakdown of mandatory school fees cannot be provided by the school authority.

Recommendation 9

16.19.45 We recommend that for home-based staff posted abroad, school fees, inclusive of admission fees, contribution to land/building fund, society fees, registration fees and school endowment fund should be refunded:

- (i) at the rate of 80% in respect of their dependent children, aged between three and 20 years old, attending pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, as well as for children up to three years, attending nurseries and day care centres; and**
- (ii) at the rate of 90% for dependent children aged between three to 20 years old attending pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, as well as for**

children up to three years, attending nurseries and day care centres in countries where the medium of teaching is neither English nor French and where the children have no alternative than to seek admission in international schools.

16.19.46 We further recommend that in cases where a breakdown of mandatory school fees with regard to books, library charges, sports activities, among others, cannot be provided by the school authority, the Foreign Service Committee should look into the rate at which the fees in respect of the non-refundable components would be discounted from the total fees, to determine the quantum of school fees to be refunded pursuant to recommendations of the preceding paragraph.

Service Allowance

Recommendation 10

16.19.47 We recommend that, as for all contractual employees, Ambassadors and/or High Commissioners employed on a contractual basis should continue to be paid a Service Allowance equivalent to two months' salary, in lieu of gratuity, on completion of 12 months' satisfactory service.

Refund of Medical Expenses

16.19.48 Currently, home-based staff posted in our overseas missions are refunded medical expenses at the rate of 90% provided the expenditure is supported by a medical certificate. In case of hospitalisation for surgical intervention, the totality of medical expenses are refunded in respect of the officer, his/her spouse and dependent children aged up to 20 years. Provision was equally made in the last Report for the FSC to study on the introduction of a Health Insurance Scheme in Mauritius to cover all home-based staff posted in overseas missions.

16.19.49 For this review exercise, the staff side has made representation to extend the refund of medical expenses to the dependent(s) of unmarried career diplomats who accompany them in missions abroad. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade has no objection to the request. Considering the genuineness of the case and views expressed by stakeholders concerned, we are extending this benefit for dependent(s) of unmarried diplomats.

16.19.50 Request was equally made for the refund of medical fees in *toto* for officers and their dependent(s) who stay in a hospital on the advice of a doctor without any surgery and refund of eye glasses and frames to diplomatic staff posted abroad. During the consultative meeting, the Bureau informed parties concerned that full refund of medical fees to home-based staff and their dependent(s) is meant only in case of hospitalisation due to surgical intervention owing to its high cost implications in the country of posting, particularly in the absence of a medical insurance cover. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade on its side informed that it would consider reviewing the protocol in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Wellness to include the list of items of medical expenses to

be refundable to home-based staff in their respective country of posting, in consonance with medical facilities available freely to citizens of Mauritius. As regards the introduction of a Health Insurance Scheme, we consider that same is not required given that home-based staff are already refunded medical expenses incurred.

Recommendation 11

16.19.51 We recommend that 90% of medical expenses, should continue to be refunded to home-based staff posted abroad subject to:

- (i) the production of duly signed and certified copies of medical certificates/prescription, invoices and receipts;**
- (ii) the claim being submitted on prescribed form, as determined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, duly signed by the officer making the claim and upon the recommendation of the Head of Mission; and**
- (iii) medical bills falling within the Protocol and Guidelines approved by the Government.**

16.19.52 We further recommend that in case of hospitalisation for surgical intervention, medical expenses incurred in respect thereof should be refunded, *in toto*, subject to the conditions set out in the above provision to an officer, his/her spouse, dependent children aged up to 20 years and accompanying dependent of unmarried career diplomats, upon their posting to overseas mission on a tour of service.

Warm Clothing Allowance

16.19.53 At present, a Warm Clothing Allowance is payable to Ambassadors/High Commissioners/Trade Advisers and home-based staff as well as their spouse and dependent children aged up to 20 years subject to set criteria.

16.19.54 The staff side has requested to extend the payment of the Warm Clothing Allowance to the dependent of unmarried career diplomats who accompany them in missions abroad such that they could avail of the same facilities as their fellow married colleagues. During consultation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade fully supported the request of the diplomatic staff owing to the conditions prevailing in the country of posting. We have examined the case and consider that there is merit in the representation made.

16.19.55 Following research carried out on Warm Clothing Allowance, we are also aligning the existing recommendation to the criteria set for obtention of this allowance in foreign jurisdictions.

Recommendation 12

16.19.56 We recommend that a Warm Clothing Allowance equivalent to £ 290 should be paid only in missions where extreme winter conditions prevail, to:

- (i)** the officer, his/her spouse and dependent children aged up to 20 years on first posting and on subsequent posting, as well as upon renewal of each tour of service and accompanying dependant of unmarried career diplomats, upon their posting to overseas mission on a tour of service; and
- (ii)** Ambassadors/High Commissioners/Trade Advisers, accompanying spouse and dependent children aged up to 20 years on first posting and upon renewal of contract after a period of three years.

16.19.57 For the purpose of implementation of the above recommendation, a list of missions where the payment of Warm Clothing Allowance would apply is provided at Annex VI of this Chapter.

Transfer Grant**Recommendation 13**

16.19.58 We recommend that officers should be paid a transfer grant in hard currency, equivalent to 5% of the gross annual salary or an amount equivalent to £265, whichever is higher while proceeding to an overseas mission on a first posting or on return from overseas or on transfer from one mission to another.

Travelling Benefits**Recommendation 14**

16.19.59 We recommend that home-based staff posted in our missions should continue to be entitled to travelling facilities along the same lines as their counterparts serving in Mauritius, depending on the monthly salary drawn, as hereunder:

- (i)** the same travelling benefits as applicable to officers in Mauritius, should be granted to home-based staff posted in our overseas missions except for those drawing a monthly salary of Rs119500 and above, payable in hard currency at a fixed rate of exchange;
- (ii)** officers drawing a monthly salary of Rs 119500 and above, other than Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Permanent Representatives should, on posting to a mission, be allowed to use the official car and in case no official car is available for this category of officer, incumbent may be allowed to opt for the payment of a car allowance as provided at paragraph 16.2.102(i) in this Volume; and
- (iii)** Ambassadors, High Commissioners, Permanent Representatives and officers drawing a monthly salary of Rs119500 and above, be provided with an official car without driver while on leave in Mauritius. The officer can, however, be provided with the services of a driver, upon request, to attend official and related functions only.

Baggage Allowance

Recommendation 15

16.19.60 We recommend that officers, while proceeding to overseas mission on a first posting or on return from overseas or on transfer from one mission to another, should be paid an all-inclusive amount equivalent to £295 as excess air baggage allowance. The officers should also be refunded the cost of transportation of either a 20 feet container of personal effects by sea, or the cost of transportation by sea of up to 10 cubic meters, inclusive of packaging and crating of personal effects, not exceeding four tons. However, officers choosing to carry their luggage by air, may opt to do so, but the cost would be limited to the cost of transport by sea. Any extra cost should be borne by the officer.

Subsistence Allowance

16.19.61 A subsistence allowance for a maximum of 15 days is paid to home-based staff posted abroad at short notice. We consider the present arrangement to be appropriate.

Recommendation 16

16.19.62 We recommend that home-based staff posted abroad at short notice should be paid a Subsistence Allowance for a maximum period of up to 15 days as from the date on which the officer effectively assumed duty in the country of posting. However, the beneficiary would not qualify for the payment of any other allowance during this period.

Air Passages in Specific Circumstances

16.19.63 Air Passages are provided to home-based staff's spouse and wholly dependent children up to the age of 20 in case they join the officer within a period of six months after the date of departure of the latter and the officer should make arrangement to return within a period of six months on termination/completion of the tour of service to benefit from air passages. In the case of unmarried career diplomats, a two-way air ticket is paid to either their father or mother or brother or sister.

16.19.64 After examining claims made by different stakeholders on this benefit, we are extending the provision allowing the dependent(s) of married home-based staff to make necessary arrangement to join the officer within a period of six months to the accompanying dependent of unmarried career diplomats.

Recommendation 17

16.19.65 We recommend that:

- (i) when an officer is posted overseas in one of our missions or in case of change in posting from one mission to another, air passages should be provided to the accompanying spouse/and wholly dependent children below the age of 21 in case they join the officer within a period of six months after the date of departure of the latter; and**

- (ii) **unmarried career diplomats, upon their posting to overseas mission on a tour of service or in case of change in posting from one mission to another, should continue to benefit from the payment of a two-way air ticket, for either their father or mother or brother or sister, in case they join the officer within a period of six months after the date of departure of the latter.**

16.19.66 We further recommend that the officer, married or unmarried, should make arrangement to return within a period of six months on termination/completion of the tour of service in order to benefit from air passages.

Compassionate Passages

- 16.19.67 Diplomatic staff and officers employed on contractual basis in our diplomatic missions overseas, as well as their accompanying dependent(s) are eligible for one compassionate passage during their tour of service or duration of the contractual employment upon the demise of the father or mother of either spouse or any child or a close relative (brother or sister of the officer or of the spouse), when the death occurs in Mauritius.
- 16.19.68 In the context of this review exercise, both Management and the staff side have represented that the existing provision does not mention as to whether the officer should expressly attend the funeral to be eligible for compassionate passage. To this effect, they requested the Bureau to spell out the time frame within which an officer may be allowed to attend the funeral/rituals of close relatives to benefit from compassionate passage.
- 16.19.69 During the consultative meetings, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade proposed that a time bar of one year be set as from the date of the funeral while the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms argued that compassionate passage be granted for travel within a fortnight from the date of the funeral and when the funeral takes place in Mauritius.
- 16.19.70 This issue was equally discussed at the level of the FSC where it was observed that in some cases, the officers are not able to attend the funeral of their close relatives due to genuine reasons/constraints. Suggestion was, therefore, made for the Bureau to make a clear recommendation to the effect that Compassionate Passage could be granted within a period of 10 days as from the date of death to officers to attend the funeral or associated rituals.
- 16.19.71 We have examined the proposals of all parties and consider that there are justifications in the proposals made. We are, therefore, reviewing the existing recommendation and also including the decision of the HPC for the grant of compassionate passage when the death occurs outside Mauritius.

Recommendation 18**16.19.72 We recommend that:**

- (i) diplomatic staff and officers employed on a contractual basis in our diplomatic missions overseas as well as their accompanying dependent(s) be granted one compassionate passage during the tour of service/duration of the contractual employment in the event of the death of the father or mother of either spouse or their child or a close relative (brother or sister of the officer or of the spouse), when the death occurs in Mauritius or outside Mauritius, to attend the funeral or rituals associated with the death within a period of 15 days as from the date the death occurs;**
- (ii) where an officer serving in a mission proceeds on approved leave in a country other than Mauritius, that is, a third country, he should be paid compassionate passage for either the equivalent cost from the country of posting to Mauritius or from the third country to Mauritius, whichever is the lower;**

OR

where the officer concerned is, at the time of demise of a close relative, on official mission abroad that is, in a third country, the compassionate passage should be the equivalent cost from the third country to Mauritius and back to the country of posting; and

- (iii) where the officer is already on official mission or on approved leave in Mauritius at the time of the demise of a close relative, there should be no refund of compassionate passage.**

Implementation Issues

16.19.73 For the purpose of implementation of certain recommendations made in this Chapter, we are providing the following:

- (i) in respect of payment of Foreign Service Allowance and/or Other Related Allowances, in missions where the currency of the country of posting has been specified at Annex I, III, IV and V, their conversion in a hard currency should be looked into by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade;
- (ii) dependent of a married home-based staff refers to the officer's accompanying spouse; and child/children up to the age of 20 years if they are in full-time education; and
- (iii) an accompanying dependent of an unmarried career diplomat refers to the officer's father or mother or brother or sister.

Tour of Service

Recommendation 19

16.19.74 We recommend that:

- (i) a tour of service for Diplomatic Staff posted in our missions should continue to be for a period of three years. However, in exceptional circumstances, the tour of service may be extended for a maximum period of one year; and
- (ii) staff of the General Services should serve for only one tour of service and same may be of a shorter duration in countries where the conditions of living are difficult.

16.19.75 The fact that officers posted in overseas missions are fully aware when their tour of service would end, they may make all necessary arrangements regarding their return beforehand.

Posting of diplomatic staff on a rotational basis

16.19.76 During a meeting of the FSC, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs informed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade encounters serious problems in the posting of officers in missions considered as hard postings, despite the payment of a hardship allowance.

16.19.77 The Bureau has to point out that the primary duty of diplomatic staff is to serve and represent Mauritius in all its Missions, irrespective of whether it is a hard posting or not. However, we also consider that to enable a proper functioning of the diplomatic service without causing frustration and demotivation among home-based staff and with a view to providing equal opportunities, a rotation of the latter in the different missions is of central importance.

Recommendation 20

16.19.78 We recommend that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade should implement a system of regular rotation of home-based staff in our different missions for parity of treatment.

Hardship Allowance

16.19.79 At present, staff posted in certain missions considered as hard postings are being paid a monthly Hardship Allowance of USD 1000, as approved by the HPC. According to Management, factors that would determine a mission as a hard posting include undesirable local conditions that cannot be prevented, mainly in the form of less favourable living conditions, lack of basic infrastructure and amenities, lack of personal security, poor health facilities, political instability, social unrest, adverse climatic and environmental conditions, amongst others. The rationale, therefore, for the payment of an extra compensation in the form of a hardship allowance is mainly to incentivise the officers to be mentally and financially equipped to face such difficult situations. It is worth highlighting that during a meeting of the FSC, the

Secretary for Foreign Affairs underlined that officers were reluctant to accept such postings.

16.19.80 While the Bureau fully acknowledges the rationale behind the payment of the allowance, we, however, hold the considered opinion that payment of the allowance is justified as long as these factors continue to prevail in these missions. Therefore, there is need for a periodic evaluation of the situation to determine whether payment of the allowance is still warranted, the moreso, all *ad hoc* allowances lapse with the publication of a new Report.

Recommendation 21

16.19.81 We recommend that:

- (i) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade should, on a yearly basis, reassess the degree of hardship in missions where a hardship allowance is payable and submit its findings to the FSC for consideration to justify its continued payment or otherwise; and**
- (ii) for the reassessment exercise, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade should devise a Rating Form on Hardship/Difficult Posting to be filled by home-based staff in the concerned missions to measure the relative degree of hardship in the city concerned.**

Foreign Service Committee

16.19.82 The FSC is required as per its terms of reference to examine and report, in between a general review, on matters related to conditions of service of officers posted in our overseas missions. As per present provisions, the FSC may co-opt a representative of the diplomatic class, whenever necessary.

16.19.83 We opine that since the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade form part of the Committee and are aware of the living conditions of home-based staff serving in our missions abroad, there is no justifiable ground to co-opt a representative of the diplomatic class, the moreso, the presence of a diplomatic staff in the Committee may lead to conflicts of interest thereby impeding the decision-taking process of the FSC.

Recommendation 22

16.19.84 We recommend that, whenever required, the Foreign Service Committee under the Chairmanship of the Secretary for Public Service of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms and comprising representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade; the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development; Statistics Mauritius and the Pay Research Bureau, should continue to examine and report in-between general reviews, on matters related to conditions of service of officers posted in our overseas missions.

ANNEX I

FOREIGN SERVICE ALLOWANCE (FSA) PER MONTH (IN FOREIGN CURRENCY)

City	Currency	Ambassador/ High Commissioner/ Permanent Representative	Minister Counsellor/ Deputy High Commissioner	First Secretary	Second Secretary	Attaché (Administration) (Personal)	Office Management Executive/ Confidential Secretary	Office Management Assistant	Word Processing Operator
Addis Ababa	Birr	29,990	26,420	22,015	15,205	12,865	9,700	8,310	7,145
Antananarivo	Ariary	6,269,895	5,545,240	4,555,325	3,175,585	2,614,925	2,058,660	1,752,050	1,533,040
Beijing	Yuan	42,995	39,310	32,250	22,650	19,105	14,445	12,385	10,700
Berlin	Euro	5,570	5,100	4,185	2,925	2,400	1,885	1,615	1,390
Brussels	Euro	4,950	4,535	3,720	2,600	2,135	1,675	1,435	1,235
Cairo	Egyptian Pound	17,555	15,420	12,650	8,830	7,265	5,720	4,885	4,240
Canberra	Australian Dollar	8,615	7,870	6,465	4,510	3,710	2,905	2,495	2,150
Dubai	Dirham	24,495	22,445	18,410	12,875	10,580	8,295	7,100	6,110
Geneva	Swiss Franc	10,000	9,130	7,480	5,240	4,285	3,380	2,880	2,510
Islamabad	Pakistani Rupee	121,160	107,040	87,990	61,275	50,630	39,790	33,995	29,330
Jeddah	Riyal	20,000	18,325	15,035	10,510	8,640	6,775	5,800	4,990
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysian Ringgit	14,630	13,345	10,930	7,720	6,265	4,985	4,180	3,695
London	Pound Sterling	4,365	3,990	3,270	2,285	1,950	1,465	1,255	1,085
Maputo	MZN	80,440	73,480	60,330	42,070	34,580	27,250	23,200	20,135
Moscow	Russian Rouble	298,285	273,310	224,950	156,565	128,440	100,820	86,440	74,545
Mumbai	Indian Rupee	129,200	118,115	97,005	67,580	55,595	43,710	37,310	32,410
New Delhi	Indian Rupee	138,425	126,550	103,935	72,405	59,565	46,830	39,975	34,725
New York	US Dollar	6,650	6,085	4,990	3,475	2,875	2,250	1,925	1,540
Paris	Euro	6,185	5,650	4,645	3,240	2,670	2,120	1,790	1,555
Pretoria	Rand	25,425	23,230	19,065	13,295	10,960	8,605	7,340	6,380
Riyadh	Riyal	21,055	19,290	15,825	11,065	9,075	7,130	6,105	5,250
Washington	US Dollar	6,380	5,835	4,785	3,335	2,755	2,160	1,845	1,475

ANNEX II

CURRENCY AND RATE OF EXCHANGE OF THE COUNTRY OF POSTING

City	Currency	Unit	Rate of Exchange Year 2020 in Mauritian Rupees (Rs)
Addis Ababa	Birr	1	1.1063
Antananarivo	Ariary	100	1.0187
Beijing	Yuan	1	5.6982
Berlin	Euro	1	44.8887
Brussels	Euro	1	44.8887
Cairo	Egyptian Pound	1	2.4816
Canberra	Australian Dollar	1	27.1486
Dubai	Dirham	1	10.7060
Geneva	Swiss Franc	1	41.8408
Islamabad	Pakistani Rupee	1	0.2419
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysian Ringgit	1	9.3680
London	Pound Sterling	1	50.3898
Maputo	MZN	1	0.5613
Moscow	Russian Rouble	1	0.5364
New Delhi/ Mumbai	Indian Rupee	1	0.5307
Paris	Euro	1	44.8887
Pretoria	Rand	1	2.3599
Riyadh/Jeddah	Riyal	1	10.4762
Washington/ New York	US Dollar	1	39.3272

ANNEX III**CEILING OF RENT AND UTILITIES PER MONTH (IN FOREIGN CURRENCY)**

City	Currency	Minister Counsellor/ Deputy High Commissioner/First Secretary	Second Secretary/ Attaché (Administration) (Personal)	Office Management Executive/ Confidential Secretary/ Office Management Assistant/ Word Processing Operator
Addis Ababa	Birr	17,335	12,795	11,760
Antananarivo	Ariary	1,809,310	1,036,240	657,930
Beijing	Yuan	111,240	64,825	41,325
Berlin	Euro	2,660	1,780	1,660
Brussels	Euro	3,500	2,275	1,745
Cairo	Egyptian Pound	5,095	3,295	2,545
Canberra	Australian Dollar	3,525	2,120	1,695
Dubai	Dirham	12,900	8,620	8,045
Geneva	Swiss Franc	7,050	4,230	3,385
Islamabad	Pakistani Rupee	86,535	59,785	37,760
Jeddah	Riyal	10,685	7,145	6,670
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysian Ringgit	5,645	3,525	2,820
London	Pound Sterling	1,975	1,270	1,060
Maputo	MZN	40,000	33,325	21,190
Moscow	Russian Rouble	89,040	59,485	55,435
New Delhi/ Mumbai	Indian Rupee	70,010	48,775	31,465
New York	US Dollar	5,770	4,040	2,880
Paris	Euro	3,870	2,370	1,935
Pretoria	Rand	12,730	8,235	5,985
Riyadh	Riyal	11,225	7,500	7,000
Washington	US Dollar	4,790	2,995	2,395

ANNEX IV**ENTERTAINMENT ALLOWANCE PER MONTH (IN FOREIGN CURRENCY)**

City	Currency	Ambassador/ High Commissioner/ Permanent Representative	Minister Counsellor/ Deputy High Commissioner	First Secretary	Second Secretary
Addis Ababa	Birr	4,535	1,815	1,355	910
Antananarivo	Ariary	793,080	316,980	238,670	159,115
Beijing	Yuan	7,250	2,820	2,030	1,365
Berlin	Euro	925	375	285	190
Brussels	Euro	800	315	245	155
Cairo	Egyptian Pound	2,790	1,120	830	560
Canberra	Australian Dollar	1,280	510	385	255
Dubai	Dirham	4,490	1,825	1,385	910
Geneva	Swiss Franc	1,580	635	475	315
Islamabad	Pakistani Rupee	25,355	10,190	7,705	5,095
Jeddah	Riyal	3,720	1,515	1,145	755
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysian Ringgit	2,505	1,005	760	495
London	Pound Sterling	625	255	190	125
Maputo	MZN	12,295	4,975	3,730	2,485
Moscow	Russian Rouble	30,955	12,430	9,325	6,215
New Delhi/ Mumbai	Indian Rupee	22,495	8,950	6,710	4,475
Paris	Euro	970	380	290	195
Pretoria	Rand	4,435	1,780	1,245	885
Riyadh	Riyal	3,905	1,590	1,205	795
Washington/ New York	US Dollar	995	395	300	200

ANNEX V**ALLOWANCES FOR CONSUL**

City	Currency	Foreign Service Allowance (FSA) per month (In Foreign Currency)	Ceiling of Rent and Utilities per month (In Foreign Currency)	Entertainment Allowance per month (In Foreign Currency)
Dubai	Dirham	18,410	12,900	1385
Jeddah	Riyal	15,035	10,685	1145
Mumbai	Indian Rupee	97,005	70,010	6,710

ANNEX VI

LIST OF MISSIONS – WARM CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

SN	City
1.	Beijing
2.	Berlin
3.	Brussels
4.	Canberra
5.	Geneva
6.	London
7.	Moscow
8.	New York
9.	Paris
10.	Washington

