

Sustainable United Nations: Helping the UN system become sustainable

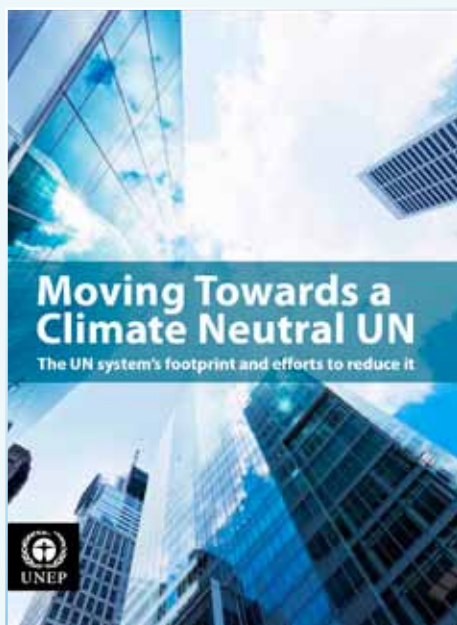
■ Our Role

On 5th June 2007 UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon publically called for the UN system to become climate neutral and more sustainable. In response to this call, the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) approved the Climate Neutral Strategy, which commits all UN organizations to:

- prepare annual greenhouse gas inventories,
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible, and
- consider purchasing offsets for remaining emissions.

Implementation of the Strategy, as well as the introduction of sustainability management within the UN, is directed by the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) and delivered by the Sustainable United Nations (SUN) facility, both hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The SUN facility is coordinated from Paris and employs staff and consultants in New York, London, Geneva, Nairobi, Bangkok and Stuttgart. SUN primarily supports the UN system in becoming more resource efficient but also offers services to organizations outside the UN.



“The responsibility for the future lies in our hands. Let’s begin change at home.”

Ban Ki-moon
Secretary General
United Nations

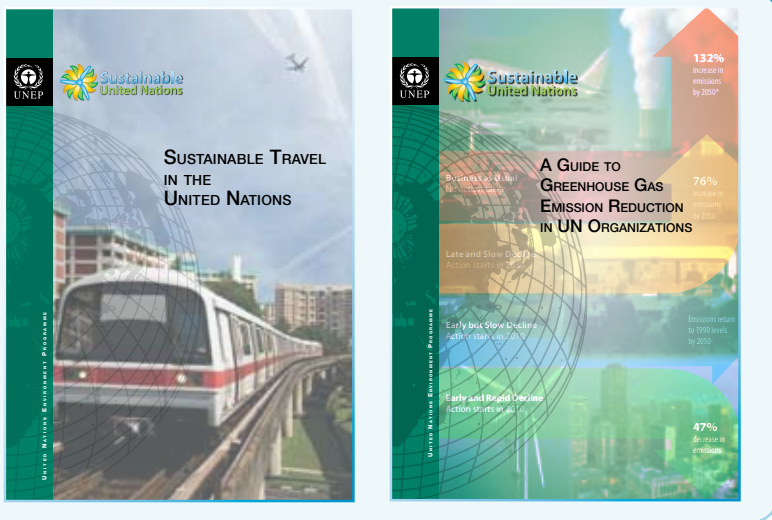


■ How we work

SUN oversees a number of activities, for example:

- SUN works in close cooperation with key UN interagency networks to review and update common policies with the aim of encouraging and supporting sustainability in the UN. These networks address key issues such as budgeting, procurement, travel, ICT support and facilities management.
- SUN coordinates the Issue Management Group (IMG) on Sustainability Management, which included representatives from all UN organizations. The IMG provides tools and advice to assist UN organizations in achieving climate neutrality and sustainability.
- SUN hosts the Climate Neutral Network helpdesk which provides technical advice to organizations both within and beyond the UN on reducing their carbon footprints. Several public organizations in developing countries are receiving support from SUN in this way.





■ Activities 2009-2010

Common Greenhouse Gas Inventories for the UN system

SUN manages the process of compiling annual greenhouse gas inventories for the UN, based on data from 49 organizations across more than 500 duty stations. The first UN-wide inventory was released at the end of 2009, and the second in early 2011.

Emission Reduction Strategies

Based on their 2008 inventories, all UN organizations are in the process of developing emission reduction strategies. These strategies are likely to include emission reduction targets as well as measures to motivate staff and actions to modify travel patterns. SUN has supported this work by providing a template strategy, guidelines for completing it, on-line training and one-to-one assistance. At the start of 2011, all the 19 draft strategies that were received by SUN included emissions reduction targets.



Policy Guidance

SUN is helping the UN's inter-agency networks develop best practice advice in their areas. These include the Inter-agency Network for Facility Management, the Information and Communication Technologies Network, the Inter-Agency Travel Network, the UN Procurement Network, and the UN Communications Group.

Training and Capacity Building

In 2009-2010 SUN organized 32 trainings, workshops and capacity building meetings on issues ranging from green field operations to sustainable buildings and sustainable procurement. Over 1000 staff received training on at least one of these issues.

Technical Guidelines

SUN developed guidance on a range of activity areas with input from the IMG and relevant UN inter-agency networks. These covered sustainable travel, green meetings, climate friendly buildings and offices, energy efficient buildings and sustainable procurement. An overarching Guide to Greenhouse Gas Emission Reductions in UN organizations has also been published.

Communication

In 2010, SUN launched Greening the Blue, a one-stop shop for all activities related to making the UN more sustainable. The website includes information from all UN organizations on their greenhouse gas emissions and efforts to reduce them, as well as information on how staff can get involved.



Sharing of Best Practices

Greening the Blue includes an animation on how staff can play their part, technical information on greening key activity areas, over 40 case studies from across the UN system and a host of new stories.

Green Field Operations

SUN works closely with UN organizations that have a heavy field presence - for example DPKO, WFP and UNHCR - to make the UN's field operations more efficient. This is done through assessments and training, and work on a *Toolkit for Green Field Operations* will begin in early 2011.

Integration with Business Management Systems

SUN is working with the Umoja project (www.unumoja.org) to support sustainability reporting via the new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system that will be introduced in 2012 to replace a large number of existing ERP's across the UN.

Common Facilities

In addition to technical guidance developed with the Inter-Agency Network for Facility Managers, SUN provides targeted advice to support the greening of UN facilities. In particular, SUN has contributed to the Capital Master Plan in New York, the development of green leases for facilities outside the UN compound in New York, a partnership between the Canton of Geneva and the UN and the development of a new climate neutral office in Nairobi. Another example is training and support provided by SUN to the UN office in Hanoi to ensure that the new buildings meet high sustainability standards.

Sustainable Travel

Travel is responsible for approximately 50% of the UN system's climate footprint, and represents a major cost to the organization (more than US\$ 1 billion in ticket costs per year). A joint effort from SUN, ICAO, IMG and IATN resulted in the Guide to Sustainable Travel in the United Nations (2010) which provides practical advice on how travel (and related emissions) can be conducted in a more efficient, climate friendly and cost effective ways. The report also includes examples of where this is already happening.



Results

While it is too early to measure the actual impacts of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there are a number of signs that suggest the UN system is progressing:

1. UNEP released its Climate Neutral Strategy in April 2010.
2. By January 2011 the following organizations had drafted their emission reduction strategies to be submitted to management: FAO, IFC, ITU, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNON, UNOV, UNU, UNV, UPU, WB, WHO, and WTO. Most other organizations are scheduled to deliver their strategies in 2011.
3. Six organizations have publicly committed to Climate (or Carbon) Neutrality. These are the GEF secretariat, ILO, SBC, SCBD, UNEP and the World Bank Group (including IFC).
4. The environmental performance of new UN offices (owned or leased) is receiving increased attention, and many offices have been awarded environmental certification.
5. Specific measures to encourage more sustainable travel habits are being implemented in many UN organizations in response to climate neutral objectives and budget restrictions.
6. Thousands of UN staff are engaging with Greening the Blue and over 40 have volunteered to become Green Champions.
7. In 2010 Greening the Blue was awarded the prize for Best Website at the international IVCA Clarion Awards.
8. The UN has received positive media coverage for its greening efforts, in part due to the website, Greening the Blue.
9. A growing number of organizations outside the UN system, in particular public organizations at country and regional levels, are seeking advice from SUN on climate neutral approaches.

■ Outlook

The Secretary-General's effort to move the UN system towards climate neutrality and sustainability has made significant progress over the two past years. Nevertheless, these gains could be lost if UN organizations fail to maintain their support for the work.

UN EMG has requested that the IMG and SUN develop a strategic plan for sustainability management in UN organizations by the end of 2011. This plan is intended to guide UN towards embedding sustainable management into daily operations, and will also propose a long-term solution of how to maintain inter-agency support and cooperation in support of the work.

In particular, the following work will require continued attention over the next several years:

1. **Internal-external communications.** It will be important to maintain engagement with key audiences, though Greening the Blue. This will require strategic development, content management and regular updating of the profiles of UN organizations.
2. **The greenhouse gas inventory management, analysis, and reporting.** The new ERP system, as designed by Umoja, will be able to support an automated data collection and management system of greenhouse gas data, resolving compatibility issues across UN agencies,.
3. **Technical support services.** The implementation of ERSSs, as well as the introduction of integrated sustainability management in UN organizations, will require continued technical support. This can be sourced by each organization individually, but the experience of SUN and the



IMG suggests that significant benefits result from taking a coordinated approach, through mutual support and pooling of resources. Key benefits resulting for this approach include:

- Development of common materials and guidelines, including technical advisory services;
 - Sharing of best practices and lessons learned – internally and externally;
 - Coordination and facilitation of cooperation with inter-agency networks;
 - Implementation of joint training and awareness raising campaigns;
 - Coordination of joint action in common UN facilities;
 - Coordination of procurement of offsets or external expert services.
4. **Outreach to governments.** Governments are the ultimate beneficiaries of the UN's work. SUN will therefore intensify its outreach to public organizations and share tools, best practice and - most importantly - the collective wisdom that has resulted from implementing the UN Climate Neutral Strategy.

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