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PEER REVIEWING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROFILE

OF MEMBERS OF THE EMG

A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF OPTIONS

Note by the Chair

Introduction:

The Chairman of the EMG is circulating herewith a background paper for information of the 18th meeting of the Senior Officials of the Environment Management Group, on options for the peer reviewing of the environmental profile of the EMG members.

The background paper responds to the request by the 17th Senior Officials meeting of the EMG to the EMG Secretariat to prepare an options paper on an approach to peer review the environment portfolio and management procedures among Members for its consideration at its 18th Senior Officials meeting. It supports consideration of senior officials of the provisional agenda item 3 (f) of the technical segment of the meeting.

The background paper was circulated to the EMG focal points as well as the focal points of the Issue Management Groups on Environmental Management and the Consultative Process on Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN system and has received and incorporated comments from UNECE, UNDP, UNEP, FAO, UNIDO, UNESCO, UN-OCHA and UNESCAP.

PEER REVIEWING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROFILE

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Secretariat of the UN Environment Management Group

October 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 17th meeting of Senior Officials of the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) (New York, 19 September 2011), requested the EMG Secretariat 'to prepare an options paper on an approach to peer review the environment portfolio and management procedures among Members for the 18th Senior Officials meeting of the EMG'. The present paper responds to this request, and presents the concept without detailing the program.

Peer reviews as an important tool for international co-operation and progress

Peer reviews have proven to be an important tool for international co-operation and progress, over the last few decades and in a variety of policy fields, including environmental policies. While this instrument is used in several intergovernmental organizations (e.g. the IMF country surveillance mechanism, the WTO trade policy review mechanism, the EU reviews for national labor market and social inclusion policies, the UN ECE environmental reviews), it is most commonly associated with the OECD experience. The OECD has used peer reviews over several decades and it conducts systematic peer review programs covering all its member countries and a number of others (such as BRICS), for economic, environment, energy[1], aid[2] policies. This instrument has also been used by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) since 2004 (Annex 1). The Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of the African Union has covered 14 countries since 2006.

These peer review processes rely on mutual trust among peers and confidence in the peer review process. They contribute to enhanced individual and collective performance of participating entities. Review reports include factual evidence, independent assessment and non-binding recommendations and are approved by the peer review body.

Options for a program to peer review the environmental profile of UN EMG members

The paper identifies four options to choose from, bringing together: i) two options for the substantive content of individual reviews (i.e. 'corporate environmental management' applying to facilities and operations of Members of the EMG, or 'corporate environmental and social sustainability' applying to strategies and plans, programs and projects, facilities and operations of Members), as well as ii) two options for the aggregated program of reviews (i.e. a 'gradual' option with a pilot phase, or a 'fast track' option with a more rapid start).

The paper recognizes that the UN entities have engaged in a range of activities (e.g. indicators, objectives, guidelines, safeguards, frameworks, strategies, actions), which together provide a basis for conducting peer reviews. They also provide an asset for individual and collective progress along the sequence intentions-actions-results towards ultimately achieving objectives . The paper further establishes that the tool can easily be adapted to peer review the environmental management of Members of the EMG (relating to

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[1] OECD-IEA.
[2] For donor countries.

operations and facilities), but less so at this stage to peer review the environmental and social sustainability of Members (relating to strategies and plans, programs and projects, as well as facilities and operations).

The paper compares these options against a number of criteria, and presents the argument of favoring a focus on corporate environmental management. It leaves the choice open between a gradual option (A1) and a fast track option (A2). This choice may take into account the availability of resources, the benefits generated, the willingness of EMG members to volunteer to be reviewed; the degree of confidence in drawing for UN entities from the experience of companies or countries with environmental management.

Significant and multiple benefits

The paper considers that, based on the accumulated international experience so far, the proposed peer review mechanism of the environmental profiles of UN EMG members, is a resource efficient tool to provide voluntary participants with non-obligatory recommendations and sharing of best practices.

It also considers that, the proposed peer review mechanism will provide significant and multiple benefits for the UN as a whole and its individual entities. These benefits include transparency and accountability, consistency and coherence, credibility and exemplarity. The proposed peer review mechanism is further seen as most valuable in promoting effectiveness (towards assigned environmental, social, and economic sustainability objectives) and resource efficiency in achieving these objectives (including cost-savings which are simply 'good business'). Overall, the proposed peer review mechanism is a major tool to foster improved performance for individual entities and the UN as a whole..

This proposed peer review mechanism is also a way to strengthen the UN leadership role and the UN support to its Member States in furthering the global sustainability agenda. This is in line with the Rio+20 Summit outcomes and the UN Secretary General determination to have the UN lead by example and maintain sustainability as top priority.

PEER REVIEWING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROFILE OF MEMBERS OF THE UN EMG, AN OPTIONS PAPER[3]

Introduction

The UN Environmental Management Group was established to enhance UN system-wide interagency coordination related to issues in the field of environment and human settlements. It has 45 members[4]. It adopts a problem-solving, issue-focused and result-oriented approach, to enable the formulation of effective, coherent and coordinated UN system responses, including on enhancing sustainability management of the UN.

The 17th meeting of Senior Officials of the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) (New York, 19 September 2011), requested the EMG Secretariat 'to prepare an options paper on an approach to peer review the environment portfolio and management procedures among Members for the 18th Senior Officials meeting of the EMG'[5]. Accordingly, the present document is prepared for the 18th Senior Official meeting of the EMG to propose options to establish a mechanism to peer review EMG Members, with the aim of helping Members improve their individual and collective performances in environmental management.

This peer review mechanism has to be seen as a way to strengthen the UN leadership role and the UN support to its Member States in furthering the global sustainability agenda. This is in line with the Rio+20 Summit outcomes[6] and the UN Secretary General determination to have the UN lead by example and maintain sustainability as top priority[7].

Therefore the present paper :
i) introduces (in Part 1) peer reviewing as an instrument of international environmental co-operation and progress (e.g. exchange of best practices, increased accountability).
ii) presents (in Part 2) two options for individual reviews of EMG Members: the main difference between the two options is with substantive content, either focusing on corporate environmental management concerning operations and facilities[8], or covering more broadly corporate environmental and social sustainability concerning strategies and plans, programs and projects, in addition to facilities and operations[9]. Both options have similar review procedures (e.g. assessment stage, review document, review meeting, non-binding recommendations, mechanisms of ownership, voluntary participation).
iii) presents (in Part 3) two options for an aggregated program of reviews of EMG Members: gradual or fast track (differing in the number of reviews per year). Related benefits are identified for entities reviewed, for entities participating in the program, for the UN as a whole.
iv) summarizes (in Part 4) the combined four options to choose from.

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[3] Prepared by Dr. Christian Avérous, Consultant, for the Secretariat of the UN Environment Management Group, September 2012
[4] The UN system includes some 54 entities, with a total of about 215 000 staff, including from the Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO). Some 14 entities have more than 2000 staff members, and the DPKO has some 115 000.
[5] See paragraph 12 of EMG/SOM.17/CRP.1.
[6] Paragraph 96 of ' The Future We Want' states: 'We call on the United Nations system to improve the management of facilities and operations, by taking into account sustainable development practices, building on existing efforts and promoting cost effectiveness, and in accordance with legislative frameworks, including financial rules and regulations, while maintaining accountability to Member States'.
[7] The mandate of the UN Secretary General includes to act as UN Chief Administrative Officer, thereby carrying out the functions of the UN in as efficient and effective a manner as possible
[8] In short 'environmental management'
[9] In short 'environmental portfolio and management'

1. PEER REVIEWS: A TOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND PROGRESS

What are peer reviews?

'Peer reviewing' is an important tool for international co-operation and progress[10]. It is an international co-operative effort by similar entities (e.g. countries), aiming at enhancing individual and collective performance. It relies on mutual trust among peers and confidence in the review process. It brings a range of benefits, including mutual learning on best practices, transparency and accountability, consistency and coherence, credibility and exemplarity, efficiency and effectiveness.

This instrument is used in several intergovernmental organizations (e.g. the IMF country surveillance mechanism, the WTO trade policy review mechanism, the EU reviews for national labor market and social inclusion policies). The Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of the African Union has covered 14 countries since 2006. The instrument has also been used by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) since 2004 (Annex 1), and by the UN ECE.

It is most commonly associated with the OECD long-standing practice. The OECD has used peer reviews over several decades and progressively extended its use in most policy areas. It conducts systematic peer review programs covering all its member countries[11] and a number of others (such as BRICS), for economic, environment, energy[12], aid[13] policies (Annex 2). It also uses peer reviews to foster the effective implementation of specific instruments, such as the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions.

Five main features[14]

Five main features are at the core of the concept (and success) of peer reviewing. They are rather salient characteristics of peer reviews rather than a fixed blue print.

Review actors: peers roles and responsibilities

They are four main actors: the collective peer review body, the reviewed entity, the reviewing entities, the Secretariat. The collective peer review body is made of representatives of the different entities and operates with a peer spirit of open dialogue, result oriented analysis, exchange of experience (e.g. drawing lessons from the reviewed entity experience), advisory conclusions and recommendations. It determines the frequency of its reviews.

The reviewed entity has the duty to co-operate by providing access to data and documentation, answering questions, hosting visits and facilitating contacts with a range of

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[10] The term "peer review" usually refers to 'the evaluation of creative work or performance by other people in the same field to enhance the quality of the work or performance in that field'. It is commonly used in a range of fields, such as academic and scientific research and professional activities (e.g. medicine, law). This definition is not fully established, and it is not this concept which is used in the present document.

[11] As well as some other countries (e.g. economic reviews of Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia, China, South Africa).

[12] OECD-IEA.

[13] For donor countries.

[14] Based on OECD review programs and experience (e.g. economic, energy, aid, environment policy reviews). The example of the OECD Environmental Performance Review program is given in Annex 2.

relevant individuals and organizations; it has an interest in moving reforms forward through the review process and its recommendations.

The specific reviewing entities are selected on a rotating basis from among the different members of the peer review body; they act as peers (not inspectors) in the early stage of the process (e.g. with individual and objective representatives or experts involved in the analytic work and the field missions) and lead in the peer review debate.

The supporting Secretariat has to provide independence, accuracy, and analytic quality in individual review processes and provides continuity, memory and consistency of the sequence of reviews; the balance of its involvement with the specific reviewing entities may vary according to review programs, but this involvement remains labor-intensive.

Review spirit : trust

The effort relies on mutual trust among entities and shared confidence in the process. This is key throughout peer reviews. The individuals conducting the review have to understand that they are not inspectors or teachers, but rather peers gathering facts, assessing progress made from good practices, and providing recommendations for further progress. The review builds on exchange of best practices, use of internationally established standards and principles, non-adversarial peer reviews, non-binding conclusions and recommendations.

Review procedure : an assessment by peers

Several stages are typically needed in sequence for all peer reviews and are at the core of the peer review instrument. The preparatory stage involves some calibration of the review (clarifying what is to be done and not done in the review), background analysis (based on data and documentation both from national and international sources), a questionnaire (for answer or as an agenda for dialogue in the next stage).

The consultation stage involves consultation by specific reviewing entities and the Secretariat with relevant authorities of the reviewed entity, as well as academics, civil society and interest groups. The Secretariat, in liaison with reviewing entities, drafts the report, which includes an analytic evaluation and an assessment (i.e. conclusions and recommendations); the report both gives credit to the achievements (and the lessons to be derived from good practices identified for other entities) and identifies areas for progress. This draft report is at some point (preferably after the peer review meeting) revised on the basis of comments from the reviewed entity.

The peer reviewing stage[15] follows with the report as the basis for discussion by the peer review body (made of peers), with introductions from specific reviewing entities. The conclusions and recommendations are adopted by the peer review body (including all its member entities) usually by consensus.

The further release/ownership stage can vary, with release organized to maximize ownership of the conclusions and recommendations by those having the capacity to influence change. Dissemination of the review conclusions and recommendations may take different forms

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[15] Sometimes called examination stage.

(presentations to different bodies, press events involving different types of media, seminars, different languages).

The review ends there, but some programs include, on a voluntary basis, a <u>follow-up and monitoring stage</u>, with self-reporting on the actual implementation of the recommendations, not waiting for the next review of the same entity in the next review cycle.

Review content: indicators and performance

The substantive content of reviews varies (e.g. economic, energy, aid, environment policy reviews), but also relies on some common features: indicators, a range of (domestic or international) policy objectives, and references derived from soft law or traditional hard law.

<u>Indicators</u> (associated or not to targets) enable assessments relying on quantitative measures (in line with the management saying 'we can manage what we can measure') and contribute to comparability among reviews. They need interpretation in context. Although an important tool, they are only one among the tools available.

<u>Policy objectives</u> are central to performance oriented reviews, with broad ones (aims), specific ones (goals) and quantitative ones (targets). They have differing strength according to their status (e.g. legal or declarative status) or simply their feasibility (ambitious or modest in a given context). They are to be found in a range of domestic or international documents. These policy objectives include those adopted by a country for itself, or those part of an international agreement. Effectiveness in achieving objectives is supplemented by an analysis of how to improve cost-effectiveness in doing so.

<u>References to a range of legal, regulatory, economic principles, criteria and standards</u>, issued from various sources (e.g. executive, legislative, judicial branches of government; treaties, conventions, protocols, declarations, recommendations) usually provide a common substantive body contributing to the content of reviews. Recommendations adopted in a previous cycle of reviews also can play an important role, with the peer review rolling process generating by itself some soft international law.

Review methodology: supporting credibility and influence

The review overall assessment is based on <u>factual evidence, independent assessment, and non obligatory recommendations</u>. This is key for peer reviews credibility and influence. It differs from fact-finding missions per se, although fact-finding is usually a key element in the peer review process. It differs from programs requiring periodic self-reporting from countries to independent bodies, which then analyze the reports. It also differs from judicial processes leading to binding judgments or acts, and does not carry formal obligations or sanctions. A performance oriented review has to distinguish among intentions, actions and results.

Variations among peer review programs

There are a number of variations among peer review programs, beyond the inherent ones associated to substance[16]. Such variations include: the balance in attention among process, product and communication, the set up of the reviewing team, the degree of performance

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[16] Policy reviews (e.g. economic, environmental, energy, aid, regulatory policies) or reviews associated to the implementation of some international instruments (e.g. anti-bribery Convention).

focus, the style of the debates among peers in the peer reviewing body, the strength of the recommendations by the peer reviewing body, the level and mix of representation of reviewed entities in the peer reviewing body, the degree of attention given to the transfer of ownership and influence of the recommendations, the follow-up arrangements, the length of the full cycle of reviews which determines the frequency of reviews for a given entity, the differences in format and substance among successive cycles.

Benefits

Enhanced individual and collective performance

The <u>overall benefit</u> of a peer review is its actual contribution to <u>enhancing the individual and collective performance of the participating entities</u> (e.g. countries). Individual entities reviewed can build on the review process and the review output (i.e. the report and the recommendations) to implement the recommendations, particularly to progress towards their own objectives (effectiveness), in an efficient and cost-effective way[17]. The scale of progress depends on the actual transfer of ownership of the recommendations by those influencing change (public and private decision makers as well as public opinion). Experience suggests that the efficiency and result-oriented focus in the reviews translates into simply '<u>good business</u>'[18] and useful changes (Annex 2 and 5).

Collectively, entities involved in the review program potentially benefit of sharing best practices and mutual learning, with some economies of scale and faster transfer of know-how, which in turn means <u>more efficient and consistent progress for the set of entities</u> involved. Comparative elements lead to more confidence in the feasibility of achieving more ambitious objectives. In practice this overall benefit relies on a range of more specific benefits, as follows (Table1).

Table 1 **Main benefits of peer reviews and peer review programs** [a]

Enhanced individual and collective performance
Mutual learning on best practices
Transparency and accountability
Consistency and coherence
Credibility and exemplarity
Efficiency and effectiveness for reviewed entities
Cost effectiveness of the review program

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a) benefits for entities reviewed, for other entities participating in the program (as specific reviewing entities or as members of the peer reviewing body), for the UN as a whole.

Mutual learning on best practices

The process of sharing experience on <u>best practices</u> is an important <u>capacity building instrument</u>, for: i) the entity under review, ii) the entities participating in the process as

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[17] Formally, efficiency refers to process/output vs cost, while cost-effectiveness refers to outcome vs cost.

[18] A conclusion from the WBG study 'Furthering the WBG's Corporate Environmental Sustainability'.

specific reviewing entities, and iii) the entities participating simply in the responsible collective peer review body. Mutual learning helps replace more isolated capacity building efforts. Derived products can be produced on specific topics covered in different reviews, and feature innovative and cost effective approaches.

Transparency and accountability

During the review process, the entity under review has to present and clarify its case and explain its rationale. This means enhanced transparency, internal to the entity reviewed but also external, towards peer entities and towards public opinion. This is closely associated to accountability with respect to relevant commitments and objectives. In practice, it is a soft incentive to enhancing compliance, which differs from traditional enforcement mechanisms involving administrative or legal sanctions. Transparency and accountability contribute to an explicit assessment of progress towards formal or declared objectives.

Consistency and coherence

During the review process, entities systematically exchange information, attitudes and views on what to do and how to do it. It contributes to consistency and coherence in policy design, implementation, evaluation and in individual and collective progress.

Credibility and exemplarity

The credibility of the review itself depends on its quality, both in terms of substance (e.g. analysis, objectivity, fairness, consistency) and in terms of process (e.g. independence, openness, transparency). Exemplarity in a 'walk the talk' logic enhances external credibility towards a range of actors (e.g. governments, enterprises, NGOs, citizens).

Efficiency and effectiveness for reviewed entities

Reviews emphasize in their analysis and recommendations economic efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the reviewed entity, and thus help obtaining improved results and related efficiency gains for the reviewed entity. The actual gains obtained depend on the ultimate ownership of the outcome, particularly by those having the capacity of influencing change at the release/ownership stage. This capacity is usually shared by decision-makers of the public and private sectors, and public opinion.

Cost-effectiveness of the review programs

In the OECD and AU-NEPAD context, member countries have attributed a quite positive mark to the cost-effectiveness of the peer review programs themselves. They sometimes queue for being reviewed. Experience of UNEG/DAC-OECD is also positive. In OECD, reviews of non member countries have been carried out (e.g. BRICS) with funding from both the reviewed country and from member countries. Member countries are willing to contribute through their involvement during their own review and additional matching contributions to the programs, beyond the core funding of the review programs. Overall peer reviews are seen as cost effective instruments to achieve individual and collective progress, and having a capacity to enhance co-operation between the driving institution and its members.

2. PEER REVIEWS OF EMG MEMBERS: SHAPING INDIVIDUAL REVIEWS

Two proposed review options

The following two options are considered. They are quite different in substantive content.

Option A: corporate environmental management (applying to facilities and operations)

Option A reviews would have a substantive focus on internal environmental management[19]; this would draw from an agreed menu of items concerning facilities and operations to be specified. For a given review, coverage would include standard items (e.g. three items from the menu) common to all reviews, such as air travel, energy use for facilities, or waste management, and selected items (e.g. one item from the menu) chosen by the reviewed entity, such as water management, ICT, procurement, local transport, staff awareness and training, risk prevention). Each item would be treated in one chapter of the review report. The choice of standard items would provide for a UN-wide coherence, while the choice of selected items would provide some diversity among UN entities (Table 2). This corresponds to the concept of corporate environmental management.

Option B : corporate environmental and social sustainability (applying to all activities)

Option B reviews would have a substantive coverage on environmental and social sustainability at large; and cover a much broader menu of items concerning strategies and plans, programs and projects, in addition to facilities and operations. This would build on on-going work on a 'framework for advancing environmental and social sustainability in the UN system'; this deals not only with environmental management but also with the environmental portfolio which much depends on the mandate of the entity(e.g. environmental safeguards of projects, sustainability plan) . This corresponds to the concept of corporate environmental and social responsibility.

Table 2 **Outline of a review report**, under option A

Chapter 1[a] GHG emissions and buildings management
Chapter 2[a] GHG emissions and air travel management
Chapter 3[a] Waste management
Chapter 4[b] Water management
[Chapter 5[c] Environmental and social safeguards for projects]
Chapter 6[d] Recommendations

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a) topic (standard for all entities reviewed), concerning the corporate environmental management of facilities/operations. GHG emissions is directly connected to **energy use**.
b) topic (chosen by the reviewed entity from a menu of items), concerning the corporate environmental management of facilities/operations. For instance, the menu could include :**water management, ICT, procurement, local transport, staff awareness and training, risk prevention.**
c) topic (chosen by the reviewed entity), concerning its own positive experience with corporate environmental and social sustainability activities among its program/ project or planning/strategy work. For instance, use of environmental and social sustainability safeguards for projects.
d) non-obligatory recommendations.

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[19] In some instances, the wording 'sustainability management' is used. It is common to distinguish 'environmental sustainability', 'environmental and social sustainability', and 'environmental, social and economic sustainability'.

Foundations

UN experience with methodological tools

There is already, within the UN system, a considerable body of methodological tools, dealing with environmental management. Concerning data and indicators, the most prominent tool is the GHG emissions inventory (as part of the UN climate neutrality effort), and its present support indicators: emissions per floor area (tons of CO_2eq/m^2), energy consumption per floor area (kWh/m^2), emissions per staff, air travel emissions per staff, % of premium class air travel , office related emissions per floor area (Annex 3)[20]. Other indicators are under consideration within the UN system itself, such as waste reduction-reuse-recycling (in tons per year, per staff member, including for electric and electronic waste), fresh water use (in m^3 per year, per staff member). Progress with harmonized indicators within the UN system could also be derived from progress within corporate sustainability reporting nationally or internationally (e.g. Global Reporting Initiative). In any case, data and indicators, both specific to UN entities and harmonized among UN entities are important in providing factual evidence for the reviews. Various techniques may accompany their use and development.

Concerning objectives (aims, goals, targets), the commitments to 'Greening the UN' (by the UN Secretary general) and to resource efficiency in management (by the mandate of the Secretary General) are key examples of aims. Further the commitment to a 'climate neutral UN' (by the UN CEB) is an example of goal, while an example of target is provided by the 2011 request by the Secretary General that all UN organizations reduce their annual travel budget by 3% (implying a reduction of 25 500 tons of emissions of $CO_{2\ eq}$, and a cost saving of USD 30 million).

Concerning references, there is a range of UN guidelines (e.g. sustainable consumption and production; environmental aspects of field missions; GHG emissions reduction; sustainability in buildings, travel, meetings, events, green office; ozone layer; drinking-water; carbon offsets, various procurement aspects;). Beyond UN guidelines, the ISO 14 000 series of standards provides voluntary environmental standards, which are widely used in the world, for: environmental management systems (EMS)[21], environmental and EMS auditing, environmental labeling, life-cycle assessment. All these methodological tools are important assets to conduct reviews under option A.

UN frameworks for options A and B

Under option A, the menu of items should provide the framework for option A and may include according to the experience of a number of UN entities (Annex5): air travel, building emissions (energy efficiency and type of energy used), local transport (owned vehicle fleet and commuting), waste management (including electronic waste), sustainable procurement, ICT and greening events and meetings, water management, staff awareness and involvement, environmental liability, etc.

Under option B, the 2012 EMG report 'a Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN System' provides, as an interagency review, the framework for the

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[20] A 'verification' mechanism is being established as a quality assurance mechanism concerning GHG emission data and is thought as a form of peer review mechanism (Annex 3).

[21] Sometimes called SMS in the UN context.

design of option B. It is expected to be followed in the coming years by 'an implementation plan and operational model to be adapted and used by individual UN entities'. This suggests that some time may be needed to implement option B, unless very rapid progress makes the broader sustainability concept more operational (beyond environmental management itself). Given the very large scope of this framework, the design of option B should also include selectivity in the choice of items to be covered in the various reviews.

UN practice

The 2009, 2010 and then 2011 reports 'Moving towards a climate neutral UN' have opened the way for measuring GHG emissions, reducing these emissions, and offsetting them, in the context of the 2007 UN-wide Climate Neutral Strategy (Annex 3). By June 2012, 34 out of 54 reporting UN entities had finalized their own draft GHG emissions reduction strategies. For instance the 2010 UNEP Climate Neutral Strategy focuses on travel, facilities and office operations, meetings, administrative systems, local transport, flexible working arrangements, staff engagement and communication, procurement, environmental safeguards, environmental management systems, as well as GHG offsets, and outreach. It has a payback period of 19 months thanks to cost savings, and additional environmental benefits, credibility effects, etc. Beyond climate neutral strategies there are a number of related actions already implemented, including at UN Head Quarter (e.g. building renovation, purchasing renewable energy certificates for electricity powering), actual green events management and progress with sustainable green travel.

While a Strategic Plan for Sustainability Management in the UN System is well advanced[22], some individual entities have their own approaches not only varying much in scope and content, but also dealing sometimes with facilities and operations, sometimes with programs and projects, sometimes with strategies, plans and policies. For instance, concerning facilities and operations, DPKO has a 2009 Environmental Policy for UN Field Missions. The World Bank Group has implemented environmental management for its facilities, (becoming carbon neutral for its Headquarters internal business operations, increasing its efficiency in energy and water use, diverting waste from landfills, enhancing the sustainability of its procurement) and thereby has demonstrated this brings cost-savings and is simply 'good business'. UNDP applies environmental procurement guidelines and has taken a 'green UNDP' initiative. For instance concerning projects, while the IFC has long applied environmental safeguards to investment projects, regional development banks (e.g. ADB, EIB, IDB) have adopted environmental and social safeguards for projects; similarly IFAD, WFP and WHO have environmental and social screening procedures for projects. The web site 'Greening the Blue' provides an information and co-ordination platform of the many and diverse efforts in the area. 'The Change Plan' is a major recent UN document (December 2011).

Overall, UN entities have engaged in a range of activities (e.g. indicators, objectives, guidelines, safeguards, frameworks, strategies, actions) concerning environmental management, and to a lesser extent concerning environmental and social sustainability (Annex 5). This provides a solid basis for conducting peer reviews of option A, building on best practices, and to progress with corporate environmental management. Progress with

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[22] Submitted to the UN CEB, including the concept of Sustainability Management System for entities , in practice focusing on environmental management.

broader environmental and social responsibility could be made otherwise. However most of these activities are ad-hoc, and there is <u>much room for progress</u>. In particular there is a need to move along the sequence: i) <u>intentions</u> (e.g. adopting strategies and plans), ii) <u>actions</u> (e.g. implementing them), and iii) actual <u>results</u>. There is also a need to manage in common some core functions and services in the context of the One UN reform, and to achieve related economies of scale and other efficiency gains.

Common features

In line with core features of peer reviews identified in Part 1, reviews in both options A and B would be similar in terms of actors (although with broader expertise for option B), process, and methodology. Of course a true spirit of peer reviewing should be rooted in <u>mutual trust and confidence in the process</u>.

Review actors

- voluntary <u>entities to be reviewed:</u> entities may declare their willingness to be reviewed either at the start of the program, or after being associated to initial reviews through a specific reviewer function.
- collective <u>peer review body:</u> such a body should be set up and include a number of peer entities to conduct the peer reviews; it should involve the relevant officials of the executive part of the entities, it would presumably report its conclusions and recommendations to the Senior Officials meetings of the EMG.
- <u>reviewing teams to prepare the assessment reports</u> and their conclusions and recommendations, covering both the achievements of the entity reviewed and the areas for progress. For a given review, the team could include typically four members: two experts from two specific reviewing entities, a consultant and a member of the supporting Secretariat. The team should be equipped with substantive knowledge, practical experience and strong realism.

Review procedure

Typically, a review would develop over a year, with:
- a <u>preparatory stage</u> would rely on: clarification of the process between the Secretariat and the reviewed entity, work on available information and data, recollection of objectives (aims, goals, targets; formal and declarative), response of the reviewed entity to a questionnaire from the Secretariat.
- a <u>consultation stage</u> would involve: a recommended on-site visit of the reviewing team with consultation with relevant officials and staff of the reviewed entity, preparation of the draft report including its draft conclusions and recommendations, transmission of the report to all members of the collective peer reviewing body, well in advance of its meeting (including the reviewed entity).
- a <u>peer reviewing stage</u> by the peer review body[23], which would include for each review: i) an exchange among peers, and ii) review and revision of the draft conclusions and recommendations. The peer review meeting adopts final <u>non binding conclusions and recommendations</u> on both achievements and areas for progress, to be transmitted to a Senior Officials meeting of the EMG and to top officials of the reviewed entity.

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[23] Sometimes called examination body.

- the release/ownership stage, driven by the entity reviewed, with the support of the Secretariat. This stage could include: presentation to and by top officials; staff involvement; releases on appropriate web sites, relationships with local, national and international press; expected follow up.

Review methodology

As mentioned earlier, a peer review effort is based on factual evidence, independent assessment, non-binding recommendations. They also rely on indicators, a range of (domestic or international) policy objectives, soft law or traditional hard law references. Indicators are one tool to contribute to quantitative assessments. Data used could include available data from reviewed entities, available harmonized data among entities (e.g. CO_2 emissions), and additional harmonized data among entities depending on the scope of the review and resource availability. Policy objectives (aims, goals, targets) are central to performance oriented reviews, which typically also distinguish among intentions, actions and results; such objectives are to be found in a range of 'in house'[24] or international documents. A range of principles, criteria and standards, whether international (e.g. the ISO 14 000 series of standards) or from 'in house' sources, provide further references.

The review could in general be based on a criteria of effectiveness (i.e. achieving environmental, social and economic objectives) and cost-effectiveness in achieving these objectives. In practice this means, first to use simply resource efficient management practices, second to capture win-win potentials (e.g. energy or water resources savings are environmentally and economically beneficial), and third to harvest the flow of net benefits over time (e.g. investment in ICT and video conferences capabilities will reduce the flow of physical travel needs; investment in energy efficiency for buildings will generate energy savings flows). This will also help to capture the benefits of technological progress and of improved internal regulations, guidelines and incentives, However, based on the nature of the entity being reviewed, the scope of the review and resource availability, other criteria could be defined.

3. PEER REVIEWS OF EMG MEMBERS: SHAPING A PROGRAM OF REVIEWS

Two proposed program options

Two options are considered[25] aggregating the different individual reviews of EMG members.
Option 1: Gradual option
The option 1 or Gradual option would: i) start slow, with two reviews per year for a pilot period (2013-2015); including an assessment report of the achievements and outputs of the pilot period in the third year (2015); ii) move faster, with four reviews per year in a period of two more years (2016-2017) and; iii) beyond 2017, the cycle would continue with a six reviews per year rhythm. A total of 14 reviews would be completed over the first five years.

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[24] 'In house' objectives refer to entity specific objectives or UN objectives (e.g. Climate neutral UN).
[25] Beyond a 'zero option' (i.e. business as usual with no reviewing program).

Option 2: Fast track option

The option 2 or Fast track option would have <u>four reviews per year</u> for five years (2013-2017). Beyond 2017, the cycle would continue with a six reviews per year rhythm. A total of 20 reviews would be completed over the first five years.

A 'review of reviews'

In <u>both options</u>, after the initial period of five years, the program could be revisited and revised (i.e. 'a review of reviews'), building on the <u>experience gained</u> (e.g. improved guidelines, indicators and benchmarks, higher reliance on standard and quantitative reporting by reviewed entities, more compact assessment mechanisms by reviewing teams), to cover at a higher rhythm (e.g. six reviews per year) the remaining voluntary entities, without a significant change in resources.

This experience gained with the initial period of five years, could be sufficient to construct a simplified review process for entities not yet reviewed (balancing in depth reviews and lighter reviews, degree of self-assessment, etc.) There could be various possibilities[26], not fully considered at this stage and dependant of the results achieved. For example:
- all EMG member entities may not need to be peer reviewed in a review cycle. Instead, a set could be reviewed in a first part of the review cycle, and useful lessons drawn for all;
- some entities may be subject to an in-depth peer review (e.g. entities with a heavier environmental footprint or more explicit environmental objectives), while others would receive a lighter review.

Participation of entities

The entities being reviewed would be so on a <u>voluntary basis</u>. It would be best to achieve some mix and diversity of entities reviewed (e.g. small and large, with different environmental profiles, different environmental footprints).The specific reviewing entities would also act on a <u>voluntary basis</u>. The criteria to identify entities being reviewed and reviewing entities need to be detailed, including the order in which they will be reviewed or participate in reviews. The collective peer review body would operate as a program management <u>supervisory body</u>, for technical and general matters.

Resource implications

The Secretariat support needed would typically allocate 80% of time to individual reviews, and 20 % to the general program management (e.g. derived products, liaison with other groups, fund raising, web and communication work). The funding of the support would rely on various <u>funding sources</u>: directly from the regular budget, from economic savings generated by improved environmental management, from extra-budgetary sources (including from donor or host governments or sponsors).

Outputs

Over five years (2013-2017), the option 2 would lead to <u>more reviews as output (</u>20 reviews instead of 14 reviews with option 1), including their reports and recommendations. Option 2

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[26] While self-assessment is not a substitute to peer review as a non independent review, it can be seen as a necessary component of any peer reviews.

would have a full cycle of reviews shorter by about one year. Some derived products could be drawn up, building on best practices or comparative result indicators.

4. FOUR OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

Bringing together the options A and B concerning individual reviews (with respectively environmental and sustainability substantive focus) and the options 1 and 2 concerning the program of reviews (with respectively a gradual and fast track approach), four options A1, A2, B1, B2 are considered (Figure 1).

Figure 1 **Four options**
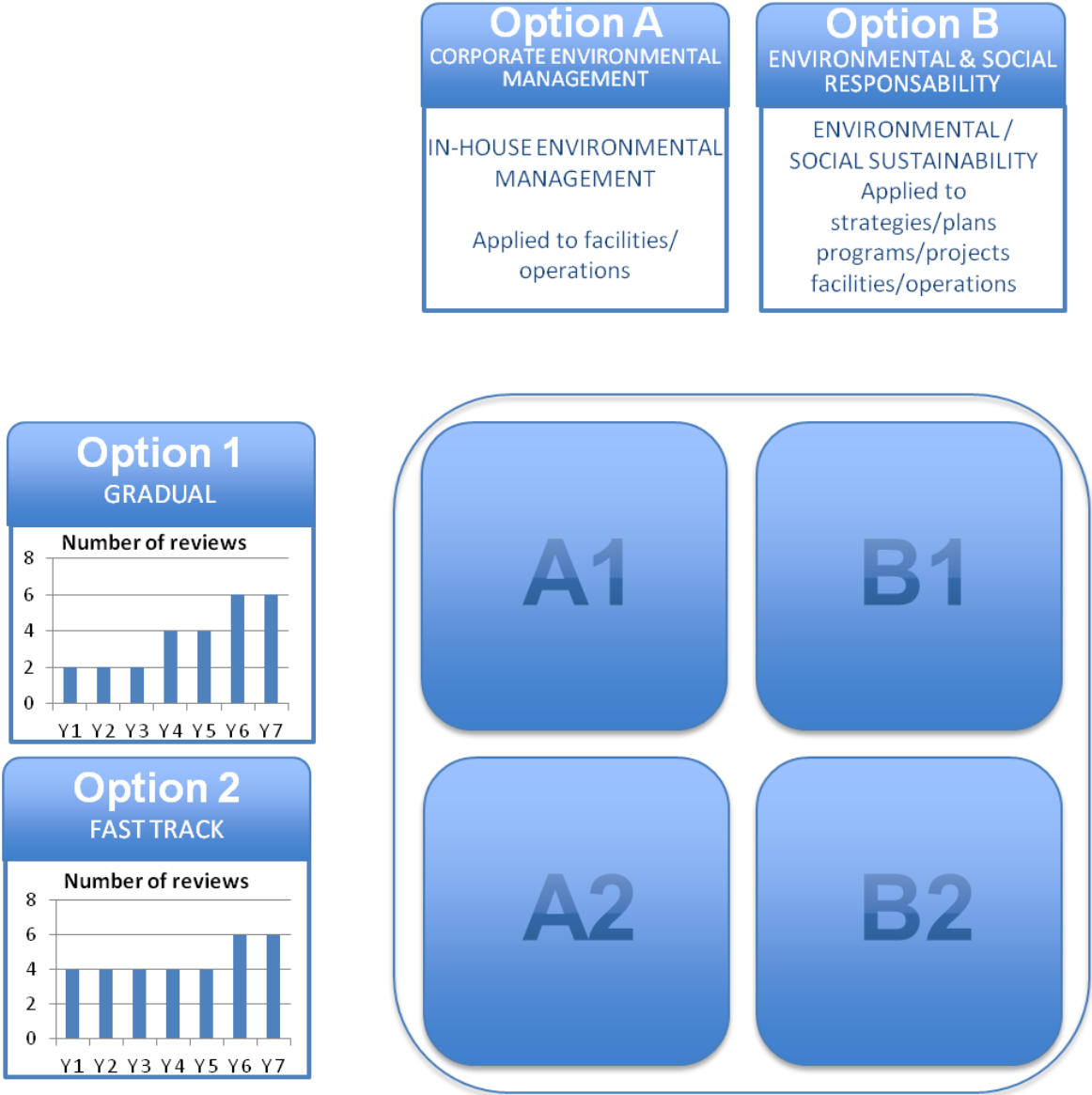
Comparing the four options, the previous assessment suggests that the options A1 and A2 are more amenable to effective and efficient peer reviews than B1 and B2. Indeed, options B1 and B2 are, at present, more challenging to design and to translate into an operational peer review program, because of their wide ranging scope and methodological difficulties. Of course, it is likely that with time there will be progress with tools, frameworks and practices

needed to carry reviews under options B1 and B2. Of course, sustainability (and its components) as described in option B1 and B2 is a priority for the UN. To 'bridge the gap', one possibility is to adapt options A1 or A2 by letting each of the reviewed entities choose one more 'specialty item' out of their broad environmental and social sustainability activities portfolio (but outside the menu of items on environment and facilities/operations), and then report on it at the review peer reviewing stage.

Comparing options A1 (gradual) and A2 (fast track), the previous assessment suggests that the fast track option brings more benefits than the gradual option (including the initial pilot phase) , both during the five year period and beyond. This is largely the consequence of a volume effect (more reviews in the first three years) and an earlier effect (earlier flows of net benefits from all individual reviews). However, the choice between options A1 and A2 should also take into account:
- the availability of resources, to be seen in conjunction with the potential benefits;
- the degree of caution/determination and the dynamics of volunteering for being reviewed;
- the confidence in drawing from the experience in environmental and social sustainability from countries or companies.

Overall, this means a final choice could be made by the Senior Officials Meeting of the EMG between A1 and A2.

Annex1: UNEG PEER REVIEWS

UNEG

The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) is a professional network that brings together the units responsible for evaluation in the UN system including the specialized agencies, funds, programs and affiliated organizations. UNEG currently has 43 such members and 3 observers. UNEG has an elected Chair and vice-Chair, and is supported by an Executive Coordinator and the UNEG Secretariat. UNEG's governance and ways of working are outlined in the UNEG Principles of Working Together (adopted in 2007 and last revised in 2012).

UNEG aims to strengthen the objectivity, effectiveness and visibility of the evaluation function across the UN system and to advocate the importance of evaluation for learning, decision making and accountability. UNEG provides a forum for members to establish common norms and standards for evaluation; develop methodologies addressing UN concerns; strengthen evaluation functions through peer review and information exchange and establish partnerships with the wider evaluation community.

Peer reviews

The UNEG Professional Peer Review mechanism of evaluation functions in multilateral agencies was introduced in 2004, by the Evaluation Network of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)-Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), jointly with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). Two key factors led to this introduction: a strong demand for multi-donor evaluations of multilateral organizations on the one hand and the recognition of the need to harmonize evaluation practice due to the considerable variation across the UN System on the other.

Over the years, this developed into the UNEG framework for professional peer reviews, with a strong linkage to the UNEG norms and standards. The purpose of peer reviews is to assess the extent to which the evaluation function meets the UNEG norms and standards and to recommend how the function could be strengthened and made more credible and its evaluations more useful. Such Peer Reviews have already assessed the evaluation functions of ten UN entities: UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, OIOS, UNIDO, IFAD, the GEF, UN-Habitat, UNEP and FAO.

Annex 2: OECD COUNTRY ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

The program of country "Environmental Performance Reviews" (EPR) was launched in 1992. It is one of the systematic peer review programs of OECD, together with economic, aid and energy reviews. Since the inception of the EPR program more than 75 country reviews have been conducted by OECD. Most of the actual OECD member countries have been reviewed twice, during the first (1992-2000) and the second (2001-2009) cycle. Some OECD non-members, such as China and Russia, have been reviewed. A third review cycle was launched in 2009.

The main purpose of the program was to strengthen the accountability of member countries with respect to their domestic objectives and international commitments and to promote environmental progress. The program also draws lessons from the achievements and best practices of the reviewed country for other countries. The system relies on mutual trust among the states involved, as well as the shared confidence in the process. OECD staff experts also play an important role in supporting and stimulating the analysis and the process.

Purpose and content of EPRs

EPRs assess the environmental performance of individual countries. This means first the environmental effectiveness and economic efficiency of their policies (pollution control and resources management), in particular, examining: the range of policy instruments used (e.g. regulations and economic instruments such as charges, taxes, market creation, subsidies); the institutional setting (e.g. administrative and legal reforms, institutional integration); environmental information and education; environmental expenditure and costs. This further means their compliance with international commitments (treaties, conventions, protocols etc.) adopted at global, regional or bilateral levels.

In a sustainable development context, particular attention is given to the "decoupling" of environmental pressures from economic growth, the integration of environmental concerns into other policies (e.g. transport, agriculture, energy, fiscal, trade, aid policies) and the social-environment interface (e.g. employment and distributive issues). Each review includes detailed conclusions and recommendations, approved by all member countries, to help the reviewed country to consolidate achievements and make further progress. Green growth has become a standard chapter with reviews of the third cycle.

Process

For the preparation of each report, a thorough analysis is conducted using international and national documentation and data, responses to a detailed questionnaire from the reviewed country. A team of experts (comprising OECD staff, consultants and officials from three other member countries) conducts a thorough consultation process (including a 10-15 days mission) with some 200-350 officials at national and local levels, stakeholders (industry, NGOs, independent experts) and field visits.

The drafted report is then discussed at an peer review meeting of the OECD 'Working Party on Environmental Performance', where member countries Delegates raise questions to the reviewed country delegation (itself commonly made of 8 to 15 representatives). The recommendations are revised and approved by this OECD body. The report is then finalised and published.

Influence

EPRs influence policies of member countries in several ways. First, the EPR report is usually released at a press conference held by the Minister in charge of environment in its capital city, with the participation of OECD representatives. Individual country reports have also been presented to the Presidents of Chile, Mexico, Korea, Hungary, Turkey, typically by the OECD Secretary General. The publication is further disseminated (e.g. seminars), with

special distribution efforts in the national language. This 'transfer of ownership' stage addresses public and private decision makers, as well as the general public and NGOs.

Secondly, the "peer review" *process* as such (questionnaire, data collection and analysis, team review in the country, peer review in WPEP, etc.) constitutes a good opportunity for the reviewed country to identify specific issues and assess its own achievements.

Thirdly, at a later stage, within 24 months or so of the release date, it is common to have a formal voluntary "Government response" to the OECD recommendations, possibly with a volontary 'mid term' review by the WPEP.

For exemple OECD reviews have been directly influential on national environmental plans (e.g. Japan, Turkey, Czech Republic, Hungary), national law making (e.g. Sweden, Japan, Chile), adoption of economic instruments (e.g. Korea, Poland, Italy), environmental integration (e.g. Canada, Mexico, Poland, USA), establishment of national parks and nature protection (e.g. Denmark, Iceland, France, Switzerland). OECD recommendations to China have been implemented, they were also made part of the US-China Strategic Economic Partnership. Some international agreements identified as unratified were later ratified.

The sets of recommendations, adopted jointly by all member countries, represent a commonly agreed 'soft international law', a country specific but common way forward, subject to monitoring and revision in each OECD review cycle. The OECD EPRs program has supported the development and implementation of a similar program by the UN-ECE for EECCA countries. EPRs constitute a reference and a tool for governments, enterprises, NGOs and the public.

Annex 3 : CO2eq EMISSIONS FROM UN ENTITIES, in 2010

As part of the UN-wide effort to achieve a climate neutral UN, UNEP SUN has not only started to establish an inventory of CO_2 equivalent emissions of the UN entities (Table below) but also initiated a process of external verification, at the request of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), including capacity building. The on-going phase 1 focuses on fund raising and design of the phase 2 (implementation). The phase 2 will focus on implementation, building on WRI/WBCSD and ISO 14064-1:2006 GHG standards, and based on some peer reviewing features.

UN agency	Number of staff	Total emissions	Emissions per staff	Air travel	Share of air travel	Air travel per staff	Building related emission intensity
		tonnes CO₂eq	tonnes CO₂eq	tonnes CO₂eq	% of total emissions	tonnes CO₂eq	kg CO₂eq/m²
CBD**	95	3,426	36.1	1,555	45%	16.4	707
CTBTO	426	2,773	6.5	1,756	63%	4.1	42
DFS**	500	3,074	6.1	276	9%	0.6	45
DPA**	1,339	18,227	13.6	6,289	35%	4.7	1,445
DPKO**	114,206	966,068	8.5	456,010	47%	4.0	246
ECA	1,545	4,373	2.8	4,133	95%	2.7	3
ECLAC	700	3,868	5.5	2,737	71%	3.9	54
ESCAP	954	6,764	7.1	1,184	18%	1.2	277
ESCWA	401	4,155	10.4	658	16%	1.6	91
FAO	5,992	45,473	7.6	29,709	65%	5.0	66
IAEA	2,563	25,312	9.9	14,470	57%	5.6	69
ICAO	719	6,080	8.5	2,454	40%	3.4	33
IFAD	900	5,599	6.2	3,796	68%	4.2	71
ILO	3,117	15,000	4.8	9,550	64%	3.1	86
IMO	331	4,447	13.4	1,393	31%	4.2	127
ITC	320	3,447	10.8	3,285	95%	10.3	21
ITU	961	4,883	5.1	3,390	69%	3.5	25
OHCHR	520	5,164	9.9	4,787	93%	9.2	18
OPCW	611	5,163	8.4	3,573	69%	5.8	76
UNAIDS	904	6,678	7.4	4,313	65%	4.8	49
UNCCD	50	406	8.1	318	78%	6.4	14
UNCDF	35	399	11.4	175	44%	5.0	182
UNDP	10,600	54,516	5.1	25,849	47%	2.4	91
UNEP	1,210	13,505	11.2	12,710	94%	10.5	40
UNESCO	5,333	26,581	5.0	10,589	40%	2.0	34
UNFCCC	500	5,119	10.2	4,941	97%	9.9	7
UNFPA	3,303	21,756	6.6	13,503	62%	4.1	38
UN-Habitat*	536	4,057	7.6	3,661	90%	6.8	30
UNHCR*	1,040	2,593	2.5	2,281	88%	2.2	20
UNHQ	8,185	76,912	9.4	29,126	38%	3.6	172
UNICEF**	1,197	9,565	8.0	6,376	66%	5.3	10
UNIDO*	2,019	11,127	5.5	7,015	63%	3.5	67
UNITAR §	124	494	4.0	478	97%	3.9	12
UNOG¹	2,502	13,105	5.2	9,638	74%	3.9	22
UNON	750	2,261	3.0	863	38%	1.2	34
UNOPS	2,548	11,054	4.3	4,565	41%	1.8	76
UNOV (incl. UNODC)	950	6,216	6.5	3,925	63%	4.1	41
UNRWA	2,565	12,623	4.9	447	4%	0.2	45
UNU	61	1,512	24.8	318	21%	5.2	799
UNV	150	416	2.8	282	68%	1.9	11
UNWomen* (UNIFEM)	917	3,599	3.9	2,838	79%	3.1	75
UNWTO	148	797	5.4	508	64%	3.4	42
UPU*	250	1,061	4.2	359	34%	1.4	70
WFP	12,390	80,045	6.5	22,422	28%	1.8	9
WHO	2,443	30,319	12.4	26,846	89%	11.0	31
WIPO	1,346	7,069	5.3	3,819	54%	2.8	37
WMO*	600	3,330	5.5	2,750	83%	4.6	21
World Bank (incl. IFC)	14,933	219,763	14.7	137,721	63%	9.2	104
WTO	845	6,061	7.2	4,955	82%	5.9	34
UN TOTAL	214,634	1,766,234	8.2	894,537	51%	4.2	104
TOTAL minus DPKO	100,428	800,166	8.0	438,527	55%	4.4	102

Notes: * 2009 data . ** 2008 data amended for available locations. § Air travel data extracted from UNOG report. ¹ UNOG data includes OCHA, UNCTAD, UNECE, UNISDRh

Source: UNEP (2012) Moving towards a climate neutral UN.

Annex 4: SMALL LEXICON FOR PEER REVIEWS

<u>Actors</u>

<u>Collective peer review body</u> : the body made of all relevant entities conducting the reviews, and approving the non-binding recommendations

<u>Reviewed entity</u> : the entity under review, on a voluntary basis <u>Review meeting</u> : meeting of the collective peer review body, at which inter alia the recommendations are approved

<u>Reviewing team</u> : it prepares the report and its conclusions and recommendations

<u>Specific reviewing entities</u> : the (two) entities playing specific roles i) in the reviewing team and ii) in introducing the peer review meeting

<u>Secretariat</u> : ensuring the supporting function of the program (e.g. in the reviewing teams drafting the report, for the general program support)

<u>Stages of the review process</u>

<u>Preparation stage</u> : early stage of the review process

<u>Consultation stage</u> :second stage of the review process (the reviewing team consults the reviewed entity and drafts the report)

<u>Peer review stage</u> : third stage of the peer review process (the review meeting of the collective peer review body)

<u>Recommendations</u> : non binding recommendations adopted by the collective peer review body

<u>Release/ownership stage</u> : the fourth stage of the peer review process (to maximize the influence of the report and of its conclusions and recommendations)

<u>Follow-up and monitoring stage</u>: the last and recommended stage of the peer review process (to accompany the implementation of the recommendations)

<u>Tools</u>

<u>Indicators</u> : selected statistics relevant, sound and measurable, provides part of the evidence base of the review

<u>Objectives</u>: aims (general and qualitative), goals(specific and qualitative) and targets(quantitative); environmental, social and economic sustainability objectives

<u>Performance assessment</u> : assessments with respect to the achievement of self-adopted objectives, distinguishing among intentions, actions and results

<u>References</u> : body of legal, regulatory, economic principles , criteria and standards used as framework for the substantive assessment

<u>Effectiveness</u> : degree of achievement of objectives (environmental, social and economic sustainability objectives)

<u>Efficiency</u>: degree of cost –effectiveness in the way of achieving objectives

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