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**Annual meeting of the Environment Management Group  
Hosted by the World Health Organization at its Headquarters  
Geneva, 8 October 2007  
9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.**

## **Report of the Annual Meeting of the Environment Management Group**

### **A. Opening of the meeting (Agenda Item 1)**

1. The Annual Meeting of the Environmental Management Group (EMG) was held on 8 October 2007 hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) at its headquarters in Geneva.
2. On Behalf of Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General of WHO, **Dr. Susanne Weber-Mosdorf, Assistant Director-General of WHO, and Co-chair of this EMG meeting**, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. In her statement, she highlighted the importance of collective work by the UN system on Climate Change and stressed the commitment of her Organization in addressing environmental degradation, climate change and health. She supported the EMG's approach in addressing practical issues such as C-neutral and sustainable procurement in its programme of work.
3. In his introductory remarks, **Mr. Achim Steiner, the Executive Director of UNEP, Chair of the EMG**, welcomed the participants. He informed them that the aim of the meeting was to review and discuss the work of the EMG and in particular the progress made in the areas of a Climate-neutral (C-neutral) UN system; of Sustainable Procurement; and to address the role and contribution of the EMG to the ongoing process of International Environment Governance (IEG).
4. He expressed his satisfaction with progress on the **C-neutral UN**. He welcomed that the EMG has tackled an issue of global importance. He further stressed the role and responsibility of the UN family as a whole in facing and addressing Climate Change and the importance of an in-house action to set the examples for others. He emphasized the role of the EMG in framing a UN system-wide response to C-neutrality, as part of the overall system-wide response to Climate Change. He highlighted the importance of management responsibility and the role and contribution of each individual agency in addressing the Climate Change.
5. The Chair also welcomed progress in the area of **sustainable procurement** and emphasized the potential purchasing power of the UN family which could shape the market to promote and enhance sustainable procurement. He underlined the role of the EMG in providing the necessary tools to help agencies move towards a more corporate approach to sustainable procurement.



6. He appreciated the commitment of the EMG members for responding to the IEG questionnaire and their feedback to the report of the GA co-Chair's options paper and observed that the **EMG's work on IEG** should not be interpreted as an effort to define a new mandate for an alternative system. It was rather an exercise to improve and strengthen the current system.
7. The Chair highlighted the role of the agencies to support the member states in implementing the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). He emphasized that the EMG will only function if it carries the commitment and trust of its membership.
8. The **Secretary General of UNCTAD, Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi** addressed the meeting. He expressed UNCTAD's support to the notion of joint and common action, in particular cooperation, in the framework of the EMG and the areas under consideration of the meeting. He underlined UNCTAD's role and commitment in contributing to a coherent regime on Climate Change especially in the areas of trade and development. He expressed UNCTAD's commitment to become C-neutral. He elaborated four areas of UNCTAD's interest and contribution on Climate Change, including: Climate change policies and implications on trade competitiveness; Impact of measures on development of strategies, opportunities; Clean Development Mechanism and the issue of eco-friendly investments; and Compatibility between climate change policies and trade rules.
9. The Executive Secretaries of MEAs and the executive heads of other agencies also made brief statements.
10. The **Executive Secretary of CITES, Mr. Willem Wijnstekers**, cautioned that the emphasis on Climate Change should not be at the cost of neglecting other environmental concerns such as, for example, the disappearance of wild life. The EMG should address these issues, including key emerging environmental issues in a comprehensive manner and not from a single perspective. He added that the importance of EMG and the confidence to its work has increased.
11. The **Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, Mr. Anada Tiéga**, addressed the critical linkages of water, wetlands, biodiversity and climate change. He highlighted the importance of the issue of "land and water" as sustainable land use systems always require a sound water management scheme. He stressed the need to define a better understanding of environmental flows including the quantity and quality of water of river system, lakes and underground water. Referring to the theme of the next Ramsar Conference of the Parties (COP) on "Healthy wetlands, healthy people", he suggested an exercise on the issue of better use of the wetlands to advance adaptation and mitigation objectives.
12. The **Executive Secretary of Basel Convention, Ms. Katharina Kummer Peiry (SBC)** proposed that the EMG should focus on concrete issues such as C-neutral and sustainable procurement. Work on IEG could look at existing efforts on synergies such as those between chemical-related MEAs to replicate the lessons learned at larger scales and in other areas such as biodiversity.
13. The **Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, Mr. Yvo de Boer**, underlined that the EMG should be used as a platform to signal developments and exchange information to identify areas of interest to the members. EMG should look at areas where members have to work together on implementation of existing agreements, and collaboratively design operational strategies. The EMG could play an effective role, for instance, in the development of a coherent set of strategies and a general approach to adaptation o climate change, in their support of developing countries. The next climate change



Conference of the Parties (COP) in Bali would be another good opportunity to stay in touch for considering coherent approaches to implementation issues that will arise there. Cooperation should be specific with clear goals.

14. The **Executive Secretary of UNITAR, Mr. Carlos Lopes** noted the practical character of the EMG now, which offered an opportunity for a good start. Referring to UNITAR's ongoing reform process, he highlighted UNITAR's new focus on developing knowledge systems for the whole of the UN system, including the translation of specialized knowledge into cutting edge training packages and e-learning applications. He underlined that UNITAR's commitment and contribution to the work of the EMG will continue like in the past including its role and contribution to the EMG stocktaking exercise.
15. The list of participants is contained in Annex 3 to the present report.

### **B: Adoption of the Agenda**

16. The meeting **adopted the following agenda:**

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda
2. The UN Secretary General's initiative on making the UN Climate-neutral
3. Work of the EMG in the area of Sustainable Procurement
4. System-wide coherence on International Environment Governance
5. Issues related to the future work of the EMG
6. Any other business
7. Date and agenda for the next meeting
8. Closure of the meeting

17. Before proceeding with the Agenda item 2, **Mr. Achim Halpaap of UNITAR**, on behalf of the EMG Secretariat, briefed the meeting on the status of the **EMG stocktaking report**.
18. The Chair thanked those organizations who had provided information to the stocktaking questionnaire and invited the others to do so at their earliest convenience. The report will be finalized and distributed to the members by the end of December 2007.

### **C: The UN Secretary General's initiative on making the UN Climate-neutral**

(Agenda item 2)

19. The Chair opened the discussion by thanking the Group for the rapid progress made on this agenda item. Work on this issue started just a few months earlier at the meeting hosted by the World Bank and had already led to three practical deliverables, namely a preliminary estimate of greenhouse gas emissions for the UN system; a draft joint statement for Executive Heads of UN agencies on their commitment to moving the UN toward climate neutrality, and a strategy paper. He invited a discussion to follow to address also how to deal with the arguments of those that are not keen to join this exercise, in particular by bringing arguments on the costs that climate neutrality might inflict to their operations, and either affect their already tight budgets or subtract resources to priority activities.



20. A representative of the EMG Secretariat (Mr. Aniket Ghai) then introduced the papers before the meeting and recalled the process that led to the establishment of an Issue Management Group (IMG) on climate neutrality. He recalled the stages that led to the preparation of the final products presented to the meeting and the openness and participatory character of the process. He also mentioned that while there is an increasing number of organizations announcing that they are becoming C-neutral, sometimes the approaches for purchasing carbon offsets are controversial and have been subject to criticism. The UN system – apart from a few exceptions – is a late comer in this area. Its “leadership by example”, however, has to hinge on adopting high standards for the way it purchases its offsets to ensure that its efforts benefit the environment, sustainable development, and also reflect the political realities. This way, the UN's efforts could also serve to benchmark outside the United Nations family.
21. In the subsequent discussion, participants expressed satisfaction with the approach taken, work done, and progress achieved on this issue. For many, the exercise came at an opportune time, when agencies had been requested or already started to look into the issue and make their agencies climate neutral.
22. In responding to the issue of costs, it was noted that it was often the symbolic value of the exercise that might represent a problem, more than its financial impact. Making the UN climate neutral might be perceived by some as more of a ‘northern’ agenda, than a priority ‘south’ issue. The choice of the source of funding for such activities is a key political issue. Thus, there is a need to make sure there is clarity on the source of funding and that resources invested are not at the detriment of development and humanitarian aid.
23. In general, the argument of costs was considered counterintuitive to the objective, as many of the development problems are currently caused by the negative impacts of climate change (for instance on soil fertility, agriculture, health) and reducing greenhouse gas emissions has direct and indirect beneficial impacts on both environment and development, and it is thus helpful to the humanitarian cause as well.
24. It was stressed that climate neutrality should become part of those regular facility management activities, such as the upgrading of security, or the installation of a more cost effective heating system – all to keep the ‘UN house in order’. While this was in general agreed, some agencies recalled recent cuts in their budgets and the need to bring the issue back to their governing bodies before making formal financial commitments.
25. While the current level of commitment of agencies varies - between those that can only commit to the minimum and those who want to do more - the need not to take a two-tiered approach was reiterated. The EMG needs to develop a framework valid for all.
26. It was agreed that measuring the organizations’ footprint (i.e., undertaking inventories of emissions) was a critical first step, and that intergovernmentally approved methodologies should be used, such as those consistent with the IPCC. If new methodological information becomes available, it would be incorporated into the common methodology following EMG consultations.
27. Once the inventory is in place, and management decisions have been taken to reduce some emissions, the remaining emissions will need to be offset, if a climate-neutral target is to be reached. The choice of which offsets to use is critical. A suggestion was made for the UN system to specifically make use of Certified Emission Reductions (CERs) from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) for its



offsets, which was supported by all who spoke. Subsequently, some participants noted that those agencies who have already taken climate neutral decisions before the emergence of the system-wide approach have already made offset commitments that were not linked to the CDM.

28. At the end of the discussion, the Director of the EMG Secretariat (Mr. Janos Pasztor) answered a number of technical questions. He also emphasized that the plan was not only to prepare the documents discussed, but also to provide ongoing, technical advisory services to agencies that might need help and advice to become climate neutral. Such a service is being established in UNEP's Paris-based Division on Technology, Industry and Economics (UNEP/DTIE).
29. In his concluding remarks the Chair stressed that it was very important that we do not portray this exercise as a cost problem as this was not only an administrative issue, but an exercise by which the UN can lead by example and commit to one of the topics of greatest interest to the world. There are net benefits to be gained, like energy saving. Also, the UN, through this exercise, is also given the opportunity to bridge technology gaps, build capacity and become a market enabling mechanism.
30. He invited the group to send a strong signal that the UN system would be seeking to be climate neutral by a certain date (e.g., 2010) and meanwhile focus on the strategy, which should reflect that the exercise is not only about administration and indicate ways to empower the staff members to contribute to it.
- 31. The Chair then concluded that the EMG:**
  - (a) Adopted the "Strategy for a climate-neutral UN", subject to the secretariat making a number of changes to reflect the views expressed<sup>1</sup>; and**
  - (b) Adopted the "draft statement on a Climate-Neutral UN" to be transmitted to the Chief Executives Board for adoption by the UN Secretary-General, and Executive Heads of agencies, subject to the secretariat making a number of changes to reflect the views expressed, including simplifying the draft, and making it into a single approach, adoptable by all agencies<sup>2</sup>.**

#### **D: Work of the EMG in the area of Sustainable Procurement**

(Agenda Item 3)

32. A representative of the EMG secretariat (Ms. Isabella Marras) presented the results of the Survey on Sustainable Procurement in the UN, as well as the resulting "Initiative on sustainable procurement in the UN". The goal of the EMG in addressing Sustainable Procurement is to support UN agencies in exercising leadership by example in the field of sustainable development.
33. On this basis, the Secretariat asked the EMG to approve a plan of work focused on collaboration with other relevant bodies in the UN (such as the HLCM procurement network) on the provision of tools to UN agencies to understand sustainable procurement, to be able to implement it concretely and to inform staff at all levels on the need for the organisation to green its activities (including office

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<sup>1</sup> The final version of this strategy can be found in Annex 2 of this document.

<sup>2</sup> The final version of this statement can be found in Annex 1 of this document.



behaviour). Exchanging practices and learning from previous experiences both in the private and public sector would be the knowledge base for such work.

34. The Chair then opened the floor for discussion, and suggested to make use of examples from existing experiences of business and national governments, who have more experience in the field of sustainable procurement. He also highlighted the fact that while concrete product guidelines are very important, it was also important to differentiate what was sustainable in different locations. He also stressed the need to take into account market realities, in terms of working locally to promote the offer for sustainable products and services
35. In the discussions that followed, it was highlighted that it would be important to continue this work in close harmony with the Procurement Network of the HLCM. Also, the need to inform, educate and train relevant staff was mentioned. The need for improved cost analyses was also mentioned – to highlight the potential of sustainable procurement to also save costs over time – as well as the need to use life-cycle analyses.

**36. The Chair then concluded that the EMG:**

- (a) **Approved the plans for work in the area of sustainable procurement, as described in the document prepared by the secretariat, and requested the secretariat to complete the work outlined within the next two years, focussing on those elements, where the EMG can produce success stories; and**
- (b) **Further requested the secretariat to ensure that work on this matter is undertaken in full cooperation with the Procurement Network of the HLCM, and that issues that require system-wide decisions of a managerial or administrative character are prepared for action by the HLCM, as appropriate.**

**E: System-wide coherence on International Environment Governance**  
(Agenda Item 4)

37. A representative of the EMG Secretariat (Ms. Paola Deda) introduced the work undertaken by the Group on the issue, including:
- (a) the process leading to the questionnaire circulated to EMG members in August on the informal consultative process on the institutional framework for the UN environmental activities (Co-Chairs' Options Paper) to which 29 agencies responded;
- (b) the results of the First Meeting of the Issue Management Group convened on 5 September 2007 in Geneva; and
- (c) the subsequent transmission of a number of first key pointers and ideas to the informal consultations held during the General Assembly (GA) 61<sup>st</sup> Session on 10 September 2007, convened to gather the first reactions of Member States to the Options Paper circulated in June.
38. The Secretariat subsequently presented four areas that emerged from the results of the questionnaire and the discussions on 5 September as of possible interest to the future work of EMG. These were:
- (a) Establishment of platforms for issue- or theme-based cooperation that could result in enhanced systemic coherence;



- (b) Development of an issue based approach to enhance coherence and synergies with MEAs;
  - (c) Clarification of the mandates, roles and specificities of the different intergovernmental institutions dealing with environment and sustainable development;
  - (d) Identification of ways to increase policy coherence between the three pillars of sustainable development, including enhanced coherence between the environmental and economic/trade agendas.
39. In his initial remarks, the Chair cautioned about the dangers of the EMG entering an open ended process such as the one on IEG. He also invited the Group to be realistic as there were some points emerging from the responses to the questionnaire that were of interest to the EMG. He then invited the discussion to follow to address whether and how the EMG could play a useful role in the IEG debate. He also invited participants to express their views and preferences on issues where the group could focus on.
40. During the discussions that followed, it was noted that the Co-Chairs' paper presented options that yet have to be considered by Member States. Thus, the group felt that the establishment of an IMG on IEG might be premature for the group at this stage of the debate. However, the group found the four areas identified in the Secretariat's note of interest, and worth exploring further.
41. In this context, and in particular on the issue of cooperation amongst MEAs, some participants were of the opinion that the EMG should identify issues where it could come up with practical results and suggestions, and specific examples should be identified. In particular, the group should be encouraged to look at what has been already done, such as the clustering undertaken amongst the Stockholm, Rotterdam and Basel Conventions, and has resulted in concrete proposals that could lead to effective synergies. This would also facilitate the identification of areas where cooperation might be needed
42. In addition to the four areas highlighted in the note from the Secretariat, other areas of interest were identified by some participants. For instance, the issue of a thematic cooperation around the issue of 'land' was discussed by some participants, as this would help grounding conservation issues into sustainable development agendas, and vice versa.
43. It was also noted that EMG Secretariat should help in information flow and bring issues and questions to the attention of the Group, and to identify the right network within the EMG where best to address those questions. The establishment of an IMG on information exchange was also proposed.
44. In the concluding remarks, the Chair also highlighted that there might be merit in having the EMG look at the 'economics of sustainability', as we are permanently confronted with the issue of the affordability of sustainable development. This would allow the group to better develop the environmental understanding that underpins its work.
- 45. The Chair then concluded that the EMG:**
- (a) Agreed that given the open-ended nature of the intergovernmental process on the IEG, it was not the right time yet to establish a formal IMG on this topic;**
  - (b) Agreed that the four areas identified are of interest to the group and should be further explored. The Secretariat was asked to prepare a 'watching brief' on those four areas, and,**



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where it sees the crystallization of an issue that is of interest to a number of EMG members, then the Secretariat should put it forward as a proposal to the EMG.

### **F: Issues related to the future work of the EMG**

(Agenda Item 5)

46. A representative of the EMG Secretariat (Mr. Hossein Fadaei) presented a set of initial, draft criteria that could be used as a basis for the selection of EMG issues. He recalled the rich discussions and a number of proposals under previous agenda items, and opened the floor for further proposals.
47. The issues identified during the discussion of agenda items 1-5 included:
- (a) Identification of how to collectively address the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building;
  - (b) Development of a common approach to the implementation of the Nairobi Work Programme on Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change;
  - (c) Analysis of existing cooperative frameworks and concrete proposals for MEAs synergies, in particular lessons learned and successful examples, and identifications of areas where cooperation might be needed;
  - (d) Facilitation of exchange of information amongst EMG members, and identification of right networks within the Group where best to address questions;
  - (e) Thematic cooperation around the issue of 'land', with a focus on conservation and its relationship to sustainable development;
  - (f) Analysis of the 'economics of sustainability', as a way to better develop the environmental understanding of the work undertaken by the group;
48. During the discussion that followed, while acknowledging the importance of additional issues, the Group suggested that at this stage the EMG should put focus on the further development and the finalization of its current programme of work including in particular the work on the C-neutral UN and Sustainable Procurement.
- 49. The Co-Chair then concluded that the EMG:**
- (a) Agreed to focus its work at this stage in the further development and the finalization of its current programme of work including in particular through the two IMGs on the C-neutral UN and Sustainable Procurement, and**
  - (b) Agreed that the secretariat would continue to explore the issues raised in the discussions, and when ripe will bring them back to the Group for further consideration, as appropriate.**



**G: Any other business**

(Agenda item 6)

50. A representative of the EMG Secretariat (Mr. Hossein Fadaei) introduced a background document containing some ideas in relation to structural issues, including the EMG's terms of reference (ToR), reporting modalities, working approach, and the EMG support structure. He recalled that the paper was prepared for advance information and advice of members to prepare for a more thorough consideration at later stage in 2008. Consideration of these issues was important as it would help the EMG and its Secretariat to better address the evolving expectations from EMG.
51. In the discussion that followed, members suggested some preliminary ideas on some of the above structural issues. It was felt that experience with work in IMGs, such as C-neutral and Sustainable Procurement would provide useful experience for the secretariat to develop ideas for consideration by the Group at its next annual meeting.
- 52. The Co-Chair then concluded that the EMG:**
- (a) Agreed that experience with the implementation of the current work programme, such as the C-neutral UN and Sustainable Procurement, would provide a good basis for the secretariat to develop ideas in relation to the ToR of the EMG for consideration at the next annual meeting.**
53. The Director of the EMG Secretariat also mentioned that the Secretariat would prepare the report of the meeting which would reflect the essence of the discussions and the agreed conclusions. The draft report would be circulated to the members for comments in order to finalize the report before the end of October.
54. The draft statement on C-neutral UN prepared for the CEB would be revised and shortened, and circulated for final comments within 24 hours after the meeting, before submission by the EMG Chair to the CEB Secretariat.

**H: Date and agenda for the next meeting**

(Agenda item 7)

55. The Director of the EMG Secretariat suggested that the regular, annual meetings of the EMG could be held closer to the "middle" of each year – typically during the months of June or July, taking into account the broader calendar of meetings. The secretariat would aim to finalize the date of next year's meeting by the end of 2007. If there are members who may wish to host the EMG's next annual meeting, they should contact the secretariat as early as possible to start making advance arrangements.
56. Other meetings of the EMG, or of specific IMGs could be held during the year as appropriate. He also suggested that there will likely be a special EMG meeting on the margins of the next UNEP GC/GMEF (February 2008 in Monaco) additional information on which would be communicated to the members in due course.



**I: Closure of the meeting**  
(Agenda Item 8)

57. The Director of the EMG Secretariat thanked the WHO for their excellent hospitality, and for the professional support in organizing the meeting. He further thanked EMG members for a very strong and effective participation in this year's meeting. Last, but not least, he thanked his colleagues in the EMG secretariat for the support they have provided in making this meeting a success.
  
58. The Co-Chair thanked the members for their participation and useful contributions and declared the meeting closed.

**Annex1: Moving towards a climate-neutral UN****Draft text of a statement on moving towards a climate-neutral UN for consideration by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination at its meeting on 26 October 2007**

*Having taken note* of the report<sup>1</sup> “Strategy for a climate-neutral UN” prepared by the Environment Management Group;

*Conscious of* the need for our broader engagement to integrate the principles of sustainable development into our daily work routines and activities;

*Recognizing* that “leading by example” will contribute to the UN’s ability to better support developing countries – those most vulnerable to climate change;

*Commending* efforts by those who have already taken initiatives to offset their emissions before the adoption of this common approach; and

*Noting* that there can be significant cost savings to the UN from energy efficiency and other mitigation measures,

We, the Heads of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, hereby *commit* ourselves to moving our respective organizations towards climate neutrality in our headquarters and UN centres for our facility operations and travel.

In particular, by the end of 2009 we will:

- Estimate our greenhouse gas emissions consistent with accepted international standards;
- Undertake efforts to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to the extent possible; and
- Analyze the cost implications and explore budgetary modalities- including consulting with governing bodies as needed - of purchasing carbon offsets to eventually reach climate neutrality.

We make this commitment with a view to achieving the goal of climate neutrality at a date to be set in the future, by reducing emissions first and then offsetting the remainder through the purchase of offsets from the CDM, that meet high international standards of additionality, transparency and verification and which promote sustainable development in developing countries.

We support the further development and implementation of a UN system-wide strategy reaching climate neutrality; for monitoring our collective efforts; and for reporting back on progress and difficulties encountered.

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<sup>1</sup> Can be found as annex 2 of this document



## **Annex 2: Strategy for a climate-neutral UN**

### **Objectives**

1. This paper outlines a strategy for making UN agencies, funds and programmes climate-neutral<sup>1</sup>. It includes an overview of the basic steps that need to be taken, including in areas where there is agreement on a common approach and methodology. It identifies the elements or criteria necessary for ensuring the highest standards possible for attaining a credible climate-neutral approach. It also lists areas where additional work will be required as the UN moves into the implementation phase.

### **Background**

2. There is growing urgency for the UN system to lead by example by reducing its greenhouse gas emissions. The UN Secretary-General has on several occasions stated the high priority he is giving to this issue. Upcoming high-level events and UN-hosted negotiations make it more important than ever for the UN to move quickly to develop and announce a common approach.
3. Following the meetings in 2006 and 2007 of the UN Secretary-General's Policy Committee, requests were made to the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) to take a leading role in greening the UN and making the UN climate-neutral. The Secretary-General announced on 5 June 2007 his commitment to lead by example on these issues.
4. In response, the EMG Secretariat constituted an open-ended Issue Management Group (IMG) on a climate-neutral UN and reconvened the IMG on sustainable procurement that was established in 2004. These Issue Management Groups met from 25-27 June 2007, hosted by the World Bank at their Headquarters in Washington, D.C. The meetings were organized back-to-back given the inter-linkages between the issues.
5. In letters dated 9 July 2007, the Secretary-General wrote to the executive heads of UN agencies, funds and programmes restating his pledge to make in-house practices more climate-friendly and environmentally sustainable. He outlined his intention to develop an outstanding, climate-neutral approach for the Organization's premises and operations. He invited heads to join him and make common cause in this effort, affirming that a climate-neutral United Nations system will increase public awareness about the need for more sustainable patterns of consumption, and will demonstrate the United Nations is taking steps to practice what it preaches.
6. The Secretary-General has also requested the UNEP Executive Director, Chair of the EMG, to accelerate work on proposals to make the UN climate-neutral as part of its broader project of moving the UN towards sustainable management practices.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "climate-neutral" has been used rather than "carbon neutral" to indicate the intention to take as comprehensive an approach as possible (see also paragraphs 21 and 22 below).



7. Based on the conclusions of the Washington, D.C. meeting, the EMG secretariat prepared for the 8 October 2007 annual meeting of the EMG the following:
  - a) a draft statement by the Secretary-General and by as many Executive Heads as possible committing themselves to move the operations<sup>2</sup> of the organizations of the UN system towards climate neutrality (document EMG/AM.07/05/Rev.1)<sup>3</sup>;
  - b) a background paper in support of the decision which outlines some of the issues, provides guidance on areas where there is broad agreement on a common approach, describes options that have been identified in discussion, and identifies areas where additional work is needed (Document EMG/AM.07/06/Rev.1); and
  - c) an initial, first-order estimate of the greenhouse gas emissions inventory by source, including information on the boundaries used, which will provide an indication of the first-order assessment of the emissions of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations as a whole (see document EMG/AM.07/07).
8. The draft statement and the background paper with the strategy were also presented to the 20 September 2007 meeting of the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) of the Chief Executives Board (CEB). Valuable inputs were provided, and both documents were adjusted to take these into account, before presenting them to the annual EMG meeting on 8 October.
9. At its meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, the EMG considered these documents, and provided useful feedback on them. The draft statement was considerably revised to take into account the views of EMG members. A number of changes were also made to the strategy document to take into account the discussions, and which are reflected in this document.

### Approach

10. “Climate neutrality” is defined by the entire set of policies that an institution uses when it estimates its known greenhouse gas emissions, takes measures to reduce them, and purchases carbon offsets to “neutralize” those emissions that remain. To achieve an outstanding approach, the UN must define these components of its climate-neutral policy to attain the highest standards possible. The following elements are proposed:
  - a) a commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions as part of an integrated and comprehensive environmental management approach;
  - b) the preparation of consistent, comparable and transparent inventory data, according to agreed methodologies, which subsequently undergo periodic independent verification;

<sup>2</sup> The term “operations” is used here to include facilities operations, official vehicles and the official travel of staff and meeting participants financed by the organization.

<sup>3</sup> All EMG documents referenced in this paper can be found on the EMG website ([www.unemg.org](http://www.unemg.org)), under the 8 October 2007 annual meeting of the EMG.



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- c) the development and implementation of a package of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
  - d) a decision to offset the remaining emissions through a reasoned choice of offsets that satisfy a list of agreed criteria, ensuring their high quality;
  - e) regular transparent reporting combined with the public communication of each organization's emissions inventory, together with any targets or goals for emissions reductions;
  - f) the development and implementation of a knowledge-management system serving the entire UN, to document initiatives, data, lessons learned and best practice; to post guidelines and methodologies; to post model strategies and workplans; to provide e-training courses; to host Q&A; to provide technical assistance; and to host e-discussions.
11. Adopting such an approach will make the UN credible, contribute to bench-marking and inspire other bodies to do likewise, both in the public and private sector.
  12. A common approach within the UN system brings several advantages:
    - a) The more agencies that have agreed to take this step, the greater the impact on the media, raising both the action's profile and public awareness.
    - b) Overall transaction costs to the organizations will be reduced, and there will be other efficiencies of scale.
    - c) A common approach makes practical action on the ground easier. The administration of UN organizations' physical facilities, energy arrangements and travel is complex, and often location-specific. Policy makers and administrators need tools to support this effort.
    - d) The use of agreed methodologies ensures the comparability of data across agencies and over time, allowing aggregation of data across UN agencies.
    - e) A joint approach on technical issues will enable the pooling of expertise to reach credible and better-informed decisions. The criteria that the UN selects to ensure high quality in its approach to climate neutrality may be expected to serve as a reference for others.
  13. There are, however, fundamental differences in the structure, geographical location, financing and nature of operations of the agencies of the UN system. In addition, each has a different mandate, different constituents and different priorities. Any common approach should leave enough flexibility to take into account the specific circumstances of the individual organizations and entities; for example, each organization should have some leeway to set some of its own boundary conditions.



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### **Climate neutrality, an environment management system and sustainable procurement**

14. The climate-neutrality plan of the UN should be part of a broader effort to “green” the way the UN works, or part of a comprehensive environmental management system (EMS). Each organization’s climate efforts should also be part of its own integrated environmental management approach.
15. For larger offices, a dedicated staff person is necessary. In addition, senior management champions are needed to secure buy-in from their fellow managers.
16. Some aspects of each organization’s environmental impacts should be addressed through a set of policies and programmes separate from the climate-neutrality programme. For example, there could be separate policies on sustainable procurement, waste recycling, water consumption, recycling, sustainable transport for commuting, etc. An EMS approach would enable different elements to be brought together in an integrated manner.
17. The EMG is also carrying out activities on sustainable procurement in parallel to its work on climate neutrality. A paper outlining a strategy and next steps is being prepared.
18. Additional work within the EMG on the overall environmental performance of United Nations operations and the environmental responsibilities of the Organization could be envisaged in the future.

### **Inventories and calculation of greenhouse gas emissions**

#### **Methodology**

19. The UN will calculate its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions based on the GHG Protocol of the WRI/WBCSD (which is compatible with the new standard ISO 14064 for GHG accounting). New methodological information will be taken into account in the future through consultations within the EMG.
20. The GHG Protocol is one of the most commonly used formats for reporting GHG emissions. It not only provides basic tools and methods, but also addresses an array of related questions, such as a recommended process and internal organization, budgeting, reporting systems etc. In conjunction with the methodology, several calculators or Excel spreadsheet tools have been developed. More information may be found at [www.ghgprotocol.org](http://www.ghgprotocol.org) and [www.wri.org/climate/pubs\\_description.cfm?pid=3756](http://www.wri.org/climate/pubs_description.cfm?pid=3756).
21. Several agencies have already adapted versions of these Excel sheets or developed similar models in order to facilitate data collection from different field offices. While there should be the flexibility for individual UN agencies and programmes to make minor modifications tailored to their specific needs and structures, it will be important to preserve a broad compatibility of data to allow for the meaningful aggregation of data across the UN system, and to retain compatibility with the GHG Protocol and ISO 14064 and 14065 standards.
22. Default emission factors for geographical regions are provided, allowing specific estimates to be made. The emission factors recommended in the GHG Protocol should be used to



- calculate emissions, except in specific cases where more accurate and documented data are available, or if linked to the organization's environmental strategy (for example, choice of electricity supplier).
23. When deciding how to frame the Organization's greenhouse gas commitment, using the term "climate neutrality" allows a more comprehensive approach than the commonly used term "carbon neutrality". While carbon dioxide is the greatest contributor to global warming, there are several reasons for opting to include the six gases covered by the Kyoto Protocol, namely CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>O, HFCs, PFCs, and SF<sub>6</sub>. Such coverage corresponds more closely to the approach being taken in the international climate change process under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol.
  24. A climate-neutral approach also provides a fuller, more environmentally credible perspective. A practical example is the case of air travel where the full greenhouse effects of aircraft emissions are significantly higher than those from CO<sub>2</sub> alone, according to the IPCC.
  25. To ensure the highest standards, the inventory should be reviewed and verified once completed by an independent external party, consistent with the ISO 14064 and 14065 standards.

#### **Setting the boundary and coverage**

26. Decisions taken regarding the boundary determine which GHG emissions the organization chooses to count and report when calculating its inventory. Geographical, organizational and operational boundaries need to be addressed when developing the inventory.
27. Organizations should agree on basic principles regarding the boundary, but should retain the flexibility to set more minor details of their own boundary conditions, provided that these decisions are explained. In general, any greenhouse gas emissions that are not included in the inventory should be documented, together with an explanation of why they are not covered. At this point, the inventory exercise should be limited to the operations of UN offices and staff and not cover projects<sup>4</sup> implemented by external entities.
28. In setting the boundary, key considerations will be data availability and what is practical and manageable. As an overall strategy, organizations should aim to cover large emissions sources first, and to refine and improve the inventory and boundary over time. An initially overly ambitious coverage could become unmanageable in terms of data collection and the staff resources required.
29. When determining the boundary, organizations should include emissions from the UN system's operations which can be influenced by management-level decisions, and exclude emissions associated with decisions for which individual staff members are responsible and that relate to their personal sphere. Applying such a criterion excludes, for instance, emissions from commuting. While these emissions should not be included in the organization's boundary, organizations should have an active policy of promoting sustainable

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<sup>4</sup> As agencies prepare detailed inventories, further work will be needed by EMG members to clarify what activities are included in "projects".





transport, local circumstances allowing – e.g. car sharing, public transport, cycling, infrastructure for soft modes of transport etc.

30. At the same time, building on the enthusiasm and commitment of many staff in all the UN agencies, managerial decisions should promote and encourage staff involvement – both in the office, and elsewhere.

#### *Air travel*

31. One of the Organization's largest sources of GHG emissions is official travel. There are several options in terms of what to include in the inventory, particularly with regard to workshops and meetings organized by the UN. At a minimum, the inventory should include all travel paid for by the UN, including travel of staff members, consultants, experts and participants attending meetings.
32. As a general rule, to facilitate the collection of travel data, data owners need to be identified upfront so that information can be collected in advance as part of the reporting system

#### *Meetings*

33. With regard to meetings organized by the UN, there should be flexibility for each organization to decide on whether or not to include emissions associated with hotels, meeting rooms, local ground transport, waste generation, etc. Standardized methods and figures for geographical locations around the world would facilitate this process.
34. In specific cases, organizations may chose to apply a wider boundary, such as at high-profile events, where organizations could decide to offset the emissions from the travel of all participants attending the meeting: full delegations, representatives of NGOs, the media, etc. Should this wider boundary be applied, cases where national delegations have already offset their own travel would need to be taken into consideration in order to avoid offsetting the same emissions twice.

#### *Field offices and shared space*

35. There is significant variation between UN agencies with regard to the number and size of offices located away from headquarters. UN agencies should include the GHG emissions of all field offices in the inventory. Data collection for inventory purposes may be more difficult in hardship duty stations, or duty stations with rented space. In the case of field offices where data is not readily available, estimates of GHG emissions could be made based on clearly defined assumptions and proxies, such as emissions per square metre of office space. In cases where UN agencies share office space, each organization's share of total electricity consumption can be estimated on the basis of square metres of office space or other emissions-sharing criteria.

#### **A data-collection system**

36. Setting up a data-collection system for the inventory is intrinsically linked to decisions made regarding the boundary, strategy, monitoring and verification. It is one of the most time-



- consuming steps in the process. Data availability and limitations will vary from one organization to another and from office to office. The time required to compile the inventory will depend on the quality of the existing information, but ultimately a standard data-collection system will need to be put into place. This is a longer-term exercise which will be refined continuously as the boundary expands. Data-sharing could contribute to reducing the time required. The scope for adapting existing electronic administrative and management systems to provide a comparable system-wide cost-effective data-collection tool should be explored.
37. Initial experience suggests that, beyond a certain point, time spent on improving the accuracy of data and methodologies for calculating emissions does not lead to significant differences in the numbers. Rules of common sense and scientific treatment regarding significant digits, precision and accuracy in calculating and reporting results should be adhered to.
  38. When calculating the inventory, some organizations have augmented their calculated emissions by a multiplying factor in order to build in a safety margin to take into account scientific and data collection uncertainties.
  39. Examples of smaller source categories that could be added later in the process are electricity losses, courier, mail and shipping.

### **Reducing greenhouse gas emissions**

40. A credible approach by the UN requires that the Organization first undertake an ambitious programme for reducing GHG emissions, and not merely achieve climate neutrality through the purchase of offsets. Each organization should prepare a strategy and programme, and set targets for emissions reductions over time (these need not be quantitative).
41. GHG emissions from buildings operations and from air travel are likely to be the most significant contributors to the overall emissions of the UN. Reducing emissions can be achieved in several ways, including through behavioural changes, engineering solutions and operational and policy changes.
42. Emissions from air travel can be influenced easily by management decisions, and efforts are needed to reduce the impacts from this category. The options include: increased use of video conferencing; restricting travel only to essential trips; considering distance traveled and stopovers and not merely cost factors when determining the routing of air tickets; favouring the use of more efficient aircraft; increased use of the train, etc.
43. A focus on energy efficiency in buildings will be a key strategy for reductions. A professional energy audit of buildings results in a range of options for reducing energy usage, from low-cost options such as energy-efficient lighting, motion sensors and timers, to more costly retrofitting.
44. Energy-efficiency improvements in buildings are often win-win solutions, as the investments pay for themselves over time through reduced electricity costs, and energy-saving measures achieved through staff awareness require little effort. The IPCC Fourth Assessment Report



finds that direct and indirect emissions from the buildings sector are one of the highest contributors overall to global warming. By 2030, about 30% of the projected GHG emissions in the building sector can be avoided with net economic benefits.

45. The purchase of renewable electricity can assist organizations in reducing their GHG emissions. In some areas, renewable electricity can be directly or indirectly obtained through renewable energy certificates (RECs). When purchasing RECs, as with offsets, additionality needs to be considered.

### **Offsetting greenhouse gas emissions**

46. Measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be implemented on an ongoing basis as part of a plan with specific targets. To achieve climate neutrality, the remaining greenhouse gas emissions should be offset. The UN's approach to the selection of offsets will be key to the overall credibility of its climate neutral policy.
47. It is essential that the choice of offsets satisfies a set of criteria carefully selected to ensure very high standards of reliability, overall credibility, environmental benefits, sustainable development benefits and more. This is particularly important as there have been cases of offset projects that have failed, of approaches with little real greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and of a lack of verifiability and transparency. There is growing discussion and concern at the governmental level and among civil society as well as the private sector about the need and means to ensure that offset programmes are legitimate and deliver what they promise, with guarantees for the consumer.
48. In parallel with the increase in offset providers, independent standards for ensuring the quality of offsets have also emerged, in addition to those developed under the Kyoto Protocol, with at least four other international major alternatives currently in existence. This paper does not compare and contrast these standards, but instead highlights a minimum set of criteria or principles that should guide the UN's choice of offsets, which should meet the levels defined under the Clean Development Mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol, at the very least.
  - a) *Additionality*  
Offsets must generate real emissions reductions that would not have otherwise occurred.
  - b) *Verification and certification*  
An independent and credible validation or verification process should exist to verify the performance of the offset projects and certify emissions reductions as they occur. The reductions must be real, demonstrable and measurable. Emissions reductions should be certified against validated additionality tests and against the baselines, assumptions and acceptable methodology used for calculating the reductions.
  - c) *Transparency*  
There should be full disclosure of all relevant information in an easily accessible form for potential consumers or purchasers of offsets. This includes information on methodologies, pricing, progress in reductions, etc.



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- d) *Time-frame and permanency*  
The time period within which the reductions take place should be clearly indicated. Emissions reductions must be permanent. After purchase, the offset certificates should be “retired” or removed from circulation and further re-sale.
  - e) *Sustainable development benefits*  
The offset activities should also generate real sustainable development benefits.
  - f) *Intergovernmentally accepted standards*  
The UN’s choice of offsets should be consistent with intergovernmentally accepted standards.
  - g) *Avoidance of own projects*  
Consistent with the goal of benchmarking the highest standards, organizations should voluntarily exclude the purchase of offsets in self-generated or self-supported activities to avoid potential conflicts of interest. The decision to maintain a firewall between the organizations’ own operations and their choice of offsets should be viewed as promoting the institution’s credibility and reputation rather than undermining any schemes or projects it may be supporting.
49. Discussions should begin among the institutions of the UN system to explore the conditions that would need to be satisfied – such as adequate third party oversight – in order for offsets from self-generated or self-supported activities to be included in the future.
50. Applying the criteria above should ensure that the UN purchases its offsets from a regulated and non-chaotic market, providing basic safeguards and guarantees of environmental credibility with independent verification and validation. The urge to seek the lowest financial cost option risks sacrificing the quality and credibility of the climate-neutral scheme as a whole.
51. Individual or committee-based decisions within actual projects could also take into account the following elements, should they be considered desirable:
- a) the promotion of employment;
  - b) the provision of additional social benefits;
  - c) the selection of certain types of projects for their good environmental performance, such as renewable energy and energy efficiency, etc;
  - d) the minimization of unintended secondary negative environmental impacts; and
  - e) the provision of support for a particular geographical region.
52. Some organizations may wish to offset their emissions ahead of the development of and agreement on common, UN-system-wide criteria for offsets. In such cases, these organizations should consider setting aside the necessary funds, based on current market



prices, into a designated trust fund or account, instead of taking quick decisions on offsets that may not ultimately satisfy the quality criteria we are seeking.

53. Some utility companies offer the purchase of renewable energy certificates or allow consumers to stipulate which type of electricity (hydroelectric power, electricity from renewable sources, etc.) they wish to purchase. Care needs to be taken, however, to ensure that opting for these schemes genuinely results in additionality, including how the electricity is produced and distributed to and within the grid.

### **Assessment of cost implications**

54. To complement this paper, an initial, first-order estimate of the UN system's aggregate greenhouse gas emissions was prepared (document EMG/AM.07/07). While the data in that document was not complete, some initial conclusions are presented below:
  - a. The total reported emissions of the agencies which have provided data amounts to an annual 260 thousand tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. If none of these emissions could be reduced through efficiency and other management measures, and assuming USD 15 per tonne price for offsets (e.g., through CDM), the total cost for becoming C-neutral for those agencies would be approximately USD 4 million. This amount would translate to a very small portion of their overall budgets.
  - b. A qualitative extrapolation to include those agencies that have not yet reported would suggest that the total emissions of the entire UN system may end up being approximately double this amount, or some half a million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, with a potential offset cost of USD 8 million. Assuming further the likely scenario that there are many gaps in the reporting, the actual emissions will be certainly higher – perhaps of the order of 1 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year, with a potential offset cost of USD 15 million.
55. The above figures are approximate and only indicative – some agencies have not reported emissions from all key sectors, and some agencies have not reported at all. In order to make a proper assessment, each agency will need to undertake its own assessment – initially a preliminary analysis, but including all key factors, followed by a detailed, full inventory according to the methodology suggested earlier in this paper.
56. Meeting the costs of offsetting can be done individually by organizations or through a collective approach, as discussed below. In either case, a coordinated approach can bring gains from reduced transactions costs, avoided conflict of interest and greater impacts.
57. Innovative approaches could also be considered, such as:
  - a) new partnerships with the private sector;
  - b) inviting governments to contribute to trust funds for the costs of offsetting; and



- c) inter-agency or intra-organization trading schemes, e.g. in the initial allocation of travel allowances.
58. Innovative options for raising funds for eventual offset purchases would be of particular importance for organizations engaged in humanitarian work, in order to ensure that resources that at present could be used to save lives or heal sickness are not used for carbon offset projects, which, while these clearly having positive impacts on sustainable development, they do so for the future.
59. In committing the organization to future climate neutrality, there are inherent uncertainties in the overall costs which will depend on the fluctuation in the market price of offsets. To protect the organization from fluctuations over time and therefore in costs, contracts could be signed to supply a defined level of offsets over a number of years. The expected cost of offsetting future emissions based on current prices could be increased by a certain percentage as a contingency. Alternatively, an inter-agency working group could be tasked with proposing a suite of options or financial instruments to address this problem.
60. A trust fund with a built-in reserve could also help to insulate against price uncertainties. If price fluctuations are significant, it may make sense for a portfolio approach to be adopted and a fund manager appointed to minimize costs. The actual date the offset takes place also need not be predetermined. For example, offsets could be purchased for the next year's emissions. If governments opt to increase their mitigation beyond the Kyoto Protocol first commitment period, the price of carbon will rise, especially as the "low hanging fruit" carbon reduction options are used up.

### **Administrative arrangements**

61. UN agencies, funds and programmes should develop rapidly any related administrative and procurement procedures that will be needed to handle the purchase of offsets and the management of risk, including the creation of trust funds, the establishment of an inter-agency working group, and so on. Institutional arrangements should be developed to enable a coordinated approach to be taken by the UN system.
62. The task of purchasing offsets could also be assigned to an external institution as part of the package, which may also require lighter internal administrative arrangements and savings with regard to staff costs.
63. The funds, programmes and agencies of the UN should pool efforts for the purpose of fostering and purchasing quality offsets. A coordinated approach ensures:
- a) lower transaction costs;
  - b) comparability and consistency in offset choice; and
  - c) safeguards that the criteria for high-quality offsets are met.
64. A portfolio approach will ensure that collective action provides the flexibility to cater for the specific preferences of individual organizations.

**Self reporting, communication and outreach**

65. The UN's climate-neutral policy will be available in the public domain, with full transparency on the details of inventory coverage, targets for the evolution of this coverage over time, details of emissions reduction policies, criteria for the selection of the offsets, and transparency on the additionality and other criteria necessary to ensure high-quality and credible offsetting. Consultations with NGOs and civil society on the self-reporting mechanism will improve transparency, credibility and effectiveness.

**Knowledge-sharing and support**

66. A knowledge-management system will be developed to:
- a) document initiatives both by the UN and others;
  - b) post relevant inventory and other data;
  - c) post guidelines and methodologies;
  - d) post model strategies and workplans;
  - e) record lessons learned and best practice;
  - f) make available e-training courses;
  - g) host Q&A and e-discussions; and
  - h) provide technical assistance to organizations wishing to become climate-neutral.
67. This system will be linked to each agency's webpage on climate neutrality, and its content and work programme reviewed regularly by relevant technical working groups and management committees.
68. UNEP, as the lead agency supporting the climate-neutral UN project of the EMG, has initiated and will further develop capacity for the provision of technical advisory services to respond to the needs of UN agencies, funds and programmes to become climate-friendly and eventually climate-neutral.

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