



14th Senior officials meeting of the Environment Management Group
10 December 2008, 8:15-10:45
Poznań, Poland, International Fair Centre of Poznan¹

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Distribution: EMG members

Note

Background information and suggested action

Introduction

1. This note prepared by the secretariat of the Environment Management Group (EMG) provides background information and suggested actions on the substantive agenda items 3 and 4 of the provisional agenda (Annex I) of the 14th Senior officials meeting of the EMG. Documentation and suggested action for agenda item 3, “Commitment by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination on moving towards a climate-neutral UN” is based on the outcome of the meeting of the Issue Management Group on Climate Neutral UN convened in New York, 24 November 2008 and inputs from the UNEP Sustainable United Nations facility (SUN). The documentation and suggested action for agenda item 4 “Future work of EMG, including a possible strategic process and new proposals by members (e.g. the strategy for the implementation of the UNCCD and the 2010 biodiversity targets)” is based on the stocktaking exercise initiated by the last EMG Senior Officials meeting, 7 October 2007 and contributions from the secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

A. Provisional agenda item 3: Commitment by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination on moving towards a climate-neutral UN

a) Review of progress and guidance on implementation support

2. In October 2007, the Chief Executives Board for Coordination committed, by the end of 2009, to estimate their organizations greenhouse gas emissions consistent with accepted international standards, to undertake efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the extent possible, and to analyze the cost implications and explore budgetary modalities — including consulting with governing bodies as needed — of purchasing carbon offsets to eventually reach climate neutrality. One year later, there has been significant progress, but action needs to be intensified if these commitments are to be met.

3. Almost all of the forty-six UN system organizations of the EMG have designated their climate neutral focal points. Thirteen organizations have established internal task forces to address climate neutrality within their institution, while sixteen have designated a “senior-level champion” to drive the process. Both these steps are highly recommended by carbon management best practice, and experience has shown these to be not only effective, but necessary measures. Nine organizations have prepared a strategy document outlining how they intend to move the organization towards climate neutrality.

4. Good progress has been made by organizations in estimating their greenhouse gas footprints, with some twenty-four agencies having begun the process, thirteen of which have preliminary data, and six of which have final or near-final numbers.

¹ Room to be announced on the screen at the entrance of the conference centre from 7 AM

5. Some thirteen agencies have developed strategies outlining how they will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. At least twenty-five have already begun implementing some measures. Eight organizations have made specific events that they have organized climate-neutral through the purchase of offsets.

6. A UN Climate Neutral Knowledge Management website is being developed to provide a platform for sharing experience, tools, methods, guidelines, bench-marking and documenting best-practice (www.unemg.org/climateneutralun). It will also document individual agency's greenhouse gas emissions and reductions.

7. Suggested action by the EMG under this sub-item is contained in paras. i.- iii. of Box 1 below.

b) Policy guidance on greenhouse gas inventories

8. The statement adopted by the Chief Executives Board on Coordination on moving towards a Climate Neutral UN commits the UN system to estimate by 2009 its greenhouse gas emissions in a manner consistent with accepted international standards. In adopting the "UN Climate Neutral Strategy"², the EMG agreed to consider the six gases included in the Kyoto Protocol.

9. Preliminary data suggest that air travel is responsible for the main part of the CO₂ footprint from UN headquarter and UN centers. However, the full climate impact of air travel goes beyond the effect of CO₂ emissions alone. For example, aircraft emit nitrogen oxides (NO_x) which tend to increase the level of ozone and reduce the level of methane, both of which are greenhouse gases. Aircraft also contribute to water condensation in the atmosphere which has a warming effect. There is still considerable scientific uncertainty about the scale and dynamics of these effects.

10. The "Special Report on Aviation and the Global Atmosphere", prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1999, estimated the overall climate impact of aviation to be between two to four times larger than that of the CO₂ emissions alone. It used a Radiative Forcing Index (RFI) in these estimates. The RFI for aircraft in 1992 was estimated to be 2.7 with aviation's total contribution to radiative forcing being approximately 3.5%.

11. More recent data in the 2007 IPCC "Fourth Assessment Report" suggests an RFI of 1.9 for aircraft in 2005 and aviation's contribution being at 3.0%. The report also noted that the RFI should not be used as an emission metric since it does not account for the different residence times of different forcing agents. Other metrics such as Global Warming Potential (GWP) and Global Temperature Potential (GTP) could be considered as alternatives. However, to date, the IPCC has not provided further guidance on these issues.

12. During discussions at the recent meeting of the Issue Management Group (IMG) on a Climate Neutral UN, EMG members expressed differing views on how to treat emissions from gases other than CO₂. Scientific uncertainty, reputational risk, the need to follow the precautionary approach, the need for maintaining high environmental standards, and legal and budgetary considerations were invoked during the discussions as important elements to guide decision-making. There was no final agreement on whether to take into account greenhouse gas effects other than those from CO₂, whether to use the RFI as a metric, and, if so, what value of RFI ought to be used. There was, however, an agreement that a common approach would be strongly preferred given the significant share in totals of emissions from air travel. The ICAO Carbon Emissions Calculator was also presented, with an interface to facilitate its use by the UN system organizations. This Calculator's methodology uses two cabin class factors ("economy" and "premium") when allocating emissions to passengers, with a ratio of 1:2.

13. The IMG on a Climate Neutral UN also agreed on further clarifications on the minimum agreed boundary of the UN. These clarifications are that all activities implemented by the UN system including those funded through extra-budgetary sources are within the minimum agreed boundary, while grants provided to other institutions are not part of the footprint. However, the CEB decision limits the minimum agreed boundary to "facility operations and travel". The reference in the decision to "headquarters and United Nations centres" is to be interpreted as including field offices, and that where data gaps exist for

² Document EMG/AM/07, Annex 2

these offices, efforts will be made to estimate emissions based on proxies. The minimum agreed boundary does not include emissions from electricity losses, courier, mail, shipping etc., noting that emissions from these sources may be included on a voluntary basis by organizations.

14. Suggested action by the EMG under this sub-item is contained in paras. iv.- vi. of Box 1 below.

c) Policy guidance on emissions reductions and analyses of cost implications and budgetary modalities - including consultations with governing bodies - of purchasing carbon offsets

15. At least 25 organizations or offices are in the process of reducing emissions. In some cases, measures are being implemented without a baseline inventory having been established. In some cases, regional and field offices have moved ahead, while the headquarters has yet to take action. In duty stations where offices are co-located, there are benefits from coordinated action at the local level.

16. While many opportunities for emission reduction are individual and specific, there are areas where policy changes or policy recommendations at the level of the UN system would be very beneficial. These include, in particular, travel, information and communication technology, staff policies and procurement. For example, existing travel policies could be enhanced by adding a consideration of the footprint of the mission, instead of basing choices exclusively on the most economical mode and routing.

17. Information and communication technologies present important opportunities for reducing travel and improved efficiency through better alternative means of communication. Promising measures include a unified approach to providing access to modern means of communication, such as mobile equipment including laptops with web cameras, personalized video links, and voice-over IP phones), as well as equipping larger UN offices with standardized high-quality video-conferencing equipment.

18. Current UN procurement policies could be strengthened to better support sustainable procurement. Work underway in cooperation with the HLCM procurement network could be made more effective by considering ways of addressing concerns that sustainable procurement criteria might constitute a barrier to access to the UN market for some countries.

19. With regard to offsets, based on useful contributions from several EMG member organizations, a template for the terms of reference for a request for quotation is under preparation, tailored to the UN format and prepared in consultation with the Purchase and Transport Section of the UN Office in Geneva (UNOG). This text will be made available to EMG members for their use on the knowledge sharing website. In addition, to retain full impartiality and avoid bias in the process of selection of companies providing offsets to the UN, the step of identifying and registering vendors as potential recipients of solicitation documents and advertisements is being carried out independently by the Purchase and Transport Section of UNOG.

20. Suggested action by the EMG under this sub-item is contained in paras. vii.- ix. of Box 1 below.

Box 1: Suggested action by the EMG under provisional agenda item 3

Review of progress and guidance on implementation support

- i. *Welcoming* the work of the Issue Management Group on a Climate Neutral UN and the climate neutral focal points in the UN agencies, funds and programmes, the actions undertaken so far to move towards climate neutrality, the sharing of knowledge and expertise and the pooling of resources, especially a common UN greenhouse gas calculator, the climate neutral knowledge sharing website and the other tools,
- ii. *Welcomes* with appreciation the contribution by the ICAO of the ICAO Carbon Emissions Calculator for air travel, and efforts to prepare and interface with this Calculator for use by the UN agencies, funds and programmes, and *invites* the ICAO secretariat to further develop this interface,
- iii. *Stresses* that, in order to develop, implement and monitor a coherent strategy for moving their organizations towards climate neutrality, all EMG members should put into place a task force, chaired by senior-level champion with overall accountability, and with representation from facilities management, travel, ICT, procurement, conference services, HR, and which undertakes consultation with staff representatives with the support of a dedicated person to act as climate neutral focal point.

Greenhouse gas inventories

- iv. *Noting* that uncertainty exists on the climate change effects of emissions other than CO₂ from aviation and that the IPCC has indicated in its Fourth Assessment Report that the Radiative Forcing Index should not be used as an emission metric since it does not account for the different residence times of different forcing agents, *invites* the EMG secretariat to request the IPCC to provide further guidance as a priority on the question of an appropriate metric to account for all greenhouse gas effects from aviation,
- v. While *noting* that there are significant effects from gases other than CO₂ from air travel that need to be taken into account, the EMG *decides* on a provisional basis and until further guidance is provided by the IPCC, in keeping with the WRI/WBCSD methodology, to take into account only the effects of CO₂ from air travel for now, and *decides* further to distinguish between cabin class factors “economy” and “premium”, and to weight these with a ratio of 1:2, provided data on class are available,
- vi. *Requests* the EMG members to submit by end April 2009 to the EMG secretariat a preliminary greenhouse gas inventory data for 2009, which will be based on 2008 activities and a final externally-verified inventory together with a progress report on the implementation of the CEB decision by end July 2009.

Emissions reductions and cost implications and budgetary modalities of purchasing carbon offsets

- vii. *Request* the EMG Chair to develop a proposal by July 2009 on common approach to emissions reduction targets and indicators for the UN system, including recommendations for changes to common policies and administrative rules, and proposals for the financing of these measures,
- viii. *Welcomes* the support from the United Nations Office in Geneva in preparing model templates for a request for quotation and invitation to bid, with regard to the provision of offsets by external vendors,
- ix. *Requests* the EMG Chair to prepare for the EMG a schedule of work for 2009, which would lead to a report in the form of a draft EMG submission on the implementation of the CEB statement to the HLCM and HLCP, with a recommendation for action by the CEB at its fall 2009 session.

B. Provisional agenda item 4: Guidance on future EMG work, including a possible strategic process and new proposals by members (e.g. the strategy for the implementation of the UNCCD and the 2010 biodiversity targets)

21. The senior officials meeting of the Environment Management Group (EMG) in October 2007 considered several issues of importance to the way in which the UN system supports the implementation of the intergovernmental environmental agenda. Amongst the issues was a recommendation issued by participants of the High Level Forum on the United Nations Reform Initiatives, Geneva, 3-4 July 2006, to prepare a report which provides an overview of UN system environmental operations, collaboration, and coordination. In response EMG agreed to undertake *a stocktaking exercise* which would provide an overview of UN system environmental operations, collaboration, and coordination, identify constraints and lessons and suggests areas where EMG can play an active role.

22. The stock taking exercise undertaken with the support of UNITAR revealed that at least 44 organizations in the UN system are actively engaged in environmental management activities.³ In a number of thematic areas, mechanisms have been established that facilitate regular information exchange and interaction among the respective UN organizations. Formalized coordinating mechanisms are, for example, in place in areas such as energy, water, oceans, biodiversity, chemicals and biosafety capacity development activities. In addition, information exchange and coordination takes place through a multitude of joint activities, several of which have advisory groups that involve representatives of UN organizations.

23. The draft stocktaking report has been submitted to members for final comments and is now in the process of being finalised and will be posted on the revitalised EMG website by January 2009. The report also identifies EMG member perspectives on the role and future work of the EMG.

24. Several members have expressed the view that EMG need to adopt a practical and forward looking approach to cooperation in assisting member states to address environmental change. The EMG may wish to give guidance on future work, including a possible strategic process and how to proceed with new issue proposed by members. Recent examples include the strategy for the implementation of the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) and the 2010 biodiversity targets.

a) A possible strategic process

25. Upon completion of the stocktaking exercise members may wish to engage in a collective horizon scanning of the environmental agenda with a view to identify agenda points where EMG members' collective efforts are needed and likely to yield clear results. It is envisaged that such a strategic process would follow a transparent and consultative approach scaled to an agreed level of ambition within the EMG. It would build on, but not be limited to the findings of the stocktaking exercise. Such a process could as informally suggested by one member possibly also include the development of models, scenarios and expected accomplishments for potential future areas of cooperation. It is envisaged that the process would identify strategic directions for future work by EMG and modalities for enhanced UN system wide cooperation on environmental activities within the wider UN system wide cooperation efforts.

b) Contribution to the implementation of the UNCCD strategy on sustainable land use

26. In its deliberation on addressing new thematic issues, the last senior officials meeting of the EMG (October 2007) suggested the issue of land for consideration of the Group in its future work. In the context of the UNCCD strategy to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) and the importance of a thematic cooperation around the issue of 'land', the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) suggested that it would be timely for the EMG to work on this issue under the present cycle of the CSD which focuses on agriculture, rural development, land degradation, desertification and Africa.

³ There are 44 EMG members with focal points.

27. A number of EMG members are working on issues related to 'Land' as it relates to a problems of desertification, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, climate change and their impacts on livelihoods and development. FAO and IFAD are working to provide adequate responses to land-based problems, such as soil fertility and food production and address the all important issue of rural development in the renewed context of a looming food crisis.

28. Other agencies, directly or indirectly, address land degradation and land-based issues. This includes the CBD on dry-land, wetland or forest ecosystems, UNFCCC on climate change and adaptation, Ramsar on wetlands, the chemical cluster on land pollution issues, and UN-HABITAT on land-management related to urbanization. WHO and WFP are concerned with drought related malnutrition, while IOM and UNHCR do assess the push factors of migrants' flows and address the environmental impact of refugees in drylands. The UN International Strategy for Disaster reduction ISDR closely relates to UNCCD related matters such as drought, sand storms, forest fires or flash floods. UN DESA especially within the current CSD cycle focused on agriculture, rural development and land.

29. The UNCCD strategy could set the foundation for an inter-agency network within the EMG on sustainable land management and land use issues within the UN system. Such an arrangement could serve to facilitate cooperation and resource efficiency and help to avoid duplication/fragmented actions. The land network would initially identify how sustainable use of land can contribute to addressing a range of global challenges, from water scarcity to the energy crisis and poverty eradication. The process for the establishment of the network on land is suggested to be led by UNCCD, in cooperation with, FAO, UNEP and IFAD and with support from the EMG secretariat.

c) Assessing progress towards the 2010 biodiversity target and identifying future biodiversity targets

30. In 2010, the designated International Year of Biodiversity, the Convention on Biological Diversity will review progress made towards the achievement of its strategic plan with the 2010 biodiversity target⁴ and identify future biodiversity targets. The secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the EMG have consulted informally on how the UN system can engage in these processes through the EMG.

31. In CBD [decision IX/9](#) the process and parameters for updating the Strategic Plan were laid out. To ensure that the Strategic Plan of the CBD including possible future biodiversity targets are compatible with processes and activities in the UN system at large and that selected elements and sub-targets are relevant to, and in line with ongoing and planned, activities of sister organizations, agencies and programmes it is proposed to develop a process under the EMG.

32. This process coincides with and feeds into the celebrations of the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) in 2010 (UNGA Resolution 61/203 of 20 December 2006), and the call for a high-level segment of the UNGA at its 65th session in 2010. The outputs of the process can become part of the activities for the IYB and in particular, an input to the high-level segment of the UNGA in 2010.

33. A number of activities are planned or contemplated in the lead-up to the adoption of future biodiversity targets, each presenting opportunities for participation and engagement of sister organizations, agencies and programmes (see Annex II).

34. The aim of an EMG process on the 2010 biodiversity target would be to identify opportunities for synergies in the review of current and formulation of future biodiversity targets and the framework for its implementation. A few examples of areas in which synergies could be identified include but are not limited to:

⁴ In 2002, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted a [Strategic Plan](#) including the target of achieving by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. This target was subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the United Nations General Assembly and subsequently incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals.

- a. Supporting Member States in establishing national biodiversity-related targets and monitoring programmes and in better coordinating implementation of the agenda of biodiversity-related MEAs;
- b. Supporting Member States in the application of tools and guidelines to assess the environmental impacts of planned activities, programmes and policies and to addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss;
- c. More effectively linking biodiversity targets and the goals of the CBD with the MDGs, including mainstreaming in Official Development Assistance and the work of UNDP;
- d. Supporting Member States in integrating biodiversity considerations into relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral policies, programmes and strategies and planning processes;
- e. Ensuring that any future biodiversity targets are mainstreamed (where appropriate) into the work of UNFCCC on mitigation and adaptation;
- f. Contributing to the delivery of scientific evidence, capacity-development, outreach and information activities aimed at highlighting the importance of biodiversity for poverty eradication and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, including those that could be carried out as part of the celebrations of the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010.

Box 2: Suggested action by the EMG under provisional agenda item 4

x. *Notes* the progress on the stocktaking exercise aimed at providing an overview of UN system environmental activities and suggesting areas of work for EMG and *invites* members who have not yet done so to submit their final comments by December 2008.

xi. *Welcomes* the contribution and inputs provided by the Secretariats of the UNCCD and CBD and *requests* the Chair of the EMG to develop proposals for EMG processes on land and the 2010 biodiversity targets for the consideration of a technical meeting of the EMG tentatively scheduled for 13 – 14 February 2009 at the margins of the 24th session of UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

Annex I

Provisional agenda

1. Opening remarks by the Chair, Mr. Achim Steiner
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Statement by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination on moving towards a climate-neutral UN:
 - Review of progress and guidance on implementation support
 - Policy guidance on greenhouse gas inventories, emission reductions, and analyses of cost implications and budgetary modalities - including consultations with governing bodies - of purchasing carbon offsets
4. Future EMG work, including a possible strategic process and new proposals by members (e.g. the strategy for the implementation of the UNCCD and the 2010 biodiversity targets)
5. Any other business

Annex II

Planned activities on the 2010 biodiversity target

1. The following activities are planned or contemplated in the lead-up to the adoption of future biodiversity targets, each presenting opportunities for participation and engagement of sister organizations, agencies and programmes.

- a. The tenth meeting of *the CBD Conference of the Parties, (18 - 20 October 2010, Nagoya, Japan)* is due to adopt an updated strategic plan and post-2010 biodiversity target. The drafts will be prepared by the 14th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-14) which is tentatively scheduled for 13 to 21 May 2010 and the Third meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention (WGRI-3) which is tentatively scheduled for 24 to 28 May 2010. Any information which is to be considered by the Conference of the Parties, in a formal manner, needs to be made available before then, and, if it is to be included in the documentation prepared by the CBD Secretariat, by February 2010.
- b. The third edition of *the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-3)*. GBO-3 will be an important vehicle for informing a variety of audiences of the progress made in meeting the 2010 Biodiversity Target and for providing information on any future biodiversity target(s) the Conference of the Parties may choose to set. GBO-3 will be officially launched on May 22, 2010 (ie during the back-to-back meetings of SBSTTA and WGRI mentioned above). It is anticipated that that a first draft of the publication will be available for review in June 2009. However, efforts will be made to include updated information in the GBO-3 up to the end of 2009, provided this is consistent with the peer-review process (see also <http://www.cbd.int/gbo3/production.shtml>.)
- c. Among the goals of the *International Year of Biodiversity* is to build momentum for the formulation of strategies and actions for future biodiversity targets. Parties have been invited to hold discussions with stakeholders as part of their general plans for celebration for the year and international organizations have been invited to contribute to the dialogue. Through a variety of media partnerships, the CBD Secretariat also intends to contribute to the production of video news releases and documentaries on the issues involved in the establishment of future targets. These products will be disseminated in advance of a high-level segment of the UNGA in the fall of 2010 and the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2010.

2. Given the growing momentum surrounding 2010 there are a variety of supportive processes planned to which the UN system could provide input:

- a. The CBD Secretariat has established an E-forum to allow stakeholders to exchange views on the current and future strategic plan of the Convention (<http://www.cbd.int/sp/post2010forum/>).
- b. The 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, in collaboration with UNEP-WCMC and the Secretariat will undertake an assessment on the use and effectiveness of the targets and indicators related to the 2010 Biodiversity Target. A draft of the report will be circulated for review and consultation in April-May 2009 and an international multi-stakeholder workshop based on the report will be held in June/July 2009. The final report will be available in August 2009.

- c. The Secretariat, in collaboration with a team of biodiversity scientists, is also preparing a review of biodiversity-relevant scenarios which aims to determine uncertainties about projected future changes to biodiversity and to identify dangerous changes (“tipping points”) and policy and management options to address these (“sustainability wedges”). A completed draft of this review is anticipated for early July 2009.
- d. Throughout 2009 and early 2010 the Secretariat and partner organizations, such as Countdown 2010, will be holding a variety of workshops and multi-stakeholder consultations related to the future strategic plan of the Convention and the 2010 Biodiversity Target. Discussions are also in progress regarding the possibility of having a Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity in 2009 at which matters relating to the 2010 Biodiversity Target and the future strategic plan could be discussed.
- e. At the initiative of the German Presidency of COP-9, the COP Bureau will convene in early 2009 a two-day workshop of “eminent personalities” to brainstorm on possible post-2010 biodiversity targets. This workshop, which would be similar to the Potsdam workshop held in December 2006, would focus on the post-2010 biodiversity target and on the development of the future Strategic Plan and the report will be submitted to SBSTTA-14 and WGRI-3. The possibility of Japan hosting a workshop on these issues in early 2010 is also under discussion.
