

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT V

Follow up to Secretary General's call to Moving to full implementation of the United Nations Climate Neutral Strategy

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Purpose

The purpose of this note is to provide background and some threads for discussions of the Environment Management Group (EMG) technical segment on agenda item 4 on Sustainability Management in the UN system and, in particular, the *follow up of the Secretary General's call to the UN system to become climate neutral*.

Context

The UN's Chief Executive Board (CEB) adopted in 2007 the UN Climate Neutral Strategy, committing all United Nations organizations to move towards climate neutrality with three specific targets to be achieved by December 2009:

1. All UN organizations have to prepare annual greenhouse gas inventories.
2. All UN organizations have to start reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.
3. All UN organizations have to consider the implications of purchasing offsets to compensate for emissions they cannot avoid.

The UN climate neutral strategy covers UN-system emission related to Buildings and Travel. Within these boundaries, the strategy concerns all activities causing emissions over which the UN has **financial** and/or **operational control**, i.e. activities that are being paid or controlled directly by the organization.

In addition, in early 2013 the High Level Committee on Management (backed by the CEB) further detailed the engagement of UN heads towards climate neutrality and emissions reductions by integrating in its "Strategic plan 2013-2016" that "[I]n considering innovative business models, HLCM will seek to achieve measurable progress to enhance environmental sustainability of UN operations, through joint initiatives possibly focused on facilities management and procurement".

The implementation of these two decisions is the responsibility of each UN organization, but is coordinated by the EMG via an Issue Management group on Environmental Sustainability Management supported by the Sustainable UN (SUN) facility (hosted by UNEP).

That UN organizations adopt more efficient management approaches is also a clear demand from member states:

- a) The GA resolution on "Sustainable Development: Promotion of New and Renewable Sources of Energy" "[C]alls upon the Secretary-General to promote renewable energy and related

sustainable practices in all United Nations facilities around the world, from within existing resources”¹. A/RES/67/215 (para 18)

- b) The Rio +20 outcome document and the Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) “Calls upon the United Nations system to improve the management of facilities and operations by taking into account sustainable development practices, building on existing efforts and promoting cost-effectiveness, [...]”² (GA/Res/67/226, (para 15) January 2013)

Current Situation

While the overall implementation of the UN Climate Neutral Strategy is satisfactory, the progress varies between organizations and between different elements of the Strategy. This fact suggested that there is need for renewed emphasis to bring the Strategy to full implementation:

- a) **Annual greenhouse gas inventories:** EMG and SUN release annual updates about the state of implementation of the strategy. In 2013, 64 UN entities represented by the 47 members of the Environment Management Group were reporting their climate footprint. However, not all organizations are reporting emissions on a yearly basis, and the annual reports contain some dated information.
- b) **Emissions reductions:** Significant progress has been made in this area, and many organizations have taken measures to reduce emissions from facilities and travel. 11 organizations have established emission reduction strategies approved by senior management; and several other organizations are undertaking emission reductions but they have not a coherent emission reduction strategy established yet. Over 300 stories of emission reduction or greening measures are reported on the web portal www.greeningtheblue.org. However, since the main source of greenhouse gas emissions in the UN system is travel, and this is also a main vehicle for UN to deliver many of its mandates, it is not possible to achieve climate neutrality only through emission reductions. In 2012, travel was responsible for 51% of total greenhouse gas emissions from the UN system, with a few organizations having travel contributing to more than 90% of their individual climate footprints.
- c) **Offsetting:** As of June 2014, six organizations out of the 47 members of the EMG offset the remaining part of their climate footprint so as to become climate neutral for the full, or part, of their facilities and operations.

Based on this, on the occasion of the UN Climate Summit the UN Secretary-General sent a letter on 3 September 2014 to all UN heads of organizations, urging that organizations:

- a) continue to reduce their climate footprint and report greenhouse gas emissions annually from this year onwards, so as to enable a complete picture of the entire United Nations system’s climate footprint by 2015 (COP21);*

¹ UN General Assembly Resolution can be accessed at [A/RES/67/215](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/215)http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/215

² UN General Assembly Resolutions 66/288 ‘The future we want’ and GA/Res/67/226 can be accessed at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/futurewewant.html> and http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/226

- b) commit to achieve a net-zero climate footprint (climate neutrality) by 2020 and consider to accelerate this to become climate neutral already by end of 2015;*
- c) establish administrative routines to ensure that the climate neutral commitment can be sustained, including by working and agreeing with governing bodies as may be required on how costs and savings may be handled in respective budgets.*

UNEP and UNFCCC are tasked by the Secretary General to provide technical support to enable UN organisations to reach these goals taking advantage of the existing and well working inter-agency mechanisms (EMG and also for some aspects HLCM).

Possible next steps for EMG

As the inter-agency mechanism appointed to follow the implementation of such strategy, the EMG and the Issue Management Group (IMG) for Environmental Sustainability Management are invited to consider and transmit to the Senior Officials segment the following steps forward :

- a) Note and collect reactions from EMG members on the letter of Secretary General. A round of comments is welcome at the technical segment so some initial conclusions on the system reactions to the letter can be transmitted to the Senior Officials segment;
- b) Request the IMG, with the technical support of both UNEP and UNFCCC, to submit to the next meeting of the EMG technical segment a road map for how –as a system- the call of Secretary General will be implemented. Such road map should also indicate where possible the division of responsibilities and joint multi-agency projects on specific topics (examples are the UNEP/UNDP sustainability tutorial, or the UNEP/UNOPS/ILO/ITCILO capacity building package on Sustainable Procurement or the UNEP/FAO joint project on waste management). Initial ideas on the elements of such roadmap include:
 - i. identification of shortcomings of the current GHG emission inventory methodology, including how it is applied by agencies (data improvement);
 - ii. classification of organisations by types of challenges and priorities and agreement on how they can best be supported in overcoming their specific challenges;
 - iii. development of a new UN GHG (and other emission) inventory and training for organisations on how to use it;
 - iv. reinvigoration of the Greening the Blue campaign so staff is keep informed and fully engaged;
 - v. definition of strategies for an eventual closer involvement of member states in this effort (including possibly, through provision of expertise; funds for some aspects of the UN interagency greening work; support by governing bodies for allocating funds to the purchase of offsets and developing partnerships)
- c) Because most of the work of monitoring, reducing and offsetting the UN environmental footprint involves in the first place organizations’ internal management, the EMG membership could request the EMG secretariat and SUN to liaise closely with the HLCM and the CEB for the design of such road map so as to anchor it in UN internal management structure and in the HLCM strategic planning for years ahead.