

Report on Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in the Secretariat of the Basel and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions and the UNEP-part of the Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention

December 2013

Highlights

- The total BRS GHG emissions have decreased by 29% in 2011 and 50% in 2012 compared to the 2010 baseline.
- The 2012 BRS per capita footprint (7.55 t CO₂/staff) is below the UN average.
- 99% of the BRS carbon footprint is due to air travel.
- From 2011 to 2012, staff travel has decreased by 13%.
- The recommendations included in the STF report of 2012 have shown positive impacts on the organization's carbon footprint. BRS Secretariat should aim at continuing implementing the 2012 recommendations and stabilizing emissions at the 2011-2012 levels, at least those related to staff travel, while respecting the requests for activities by Parties.
- The target level of stabilization of emissions should be revised further to implementing better data collection processes and refining emission estimates, including, for instance, activities organized via the regional centres etc.
- The new travel policy will impact GHG emissions (less travel in business class, but more fragmented flight itineraries). It is difficult to predict at this stage whether the overall trend will show increased or decreased emissions.

1. Introduction

The Secretariat of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions and the UNEP-part of the Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention is based in Geneva, Switzerland, and employs 61 staff members as at 31 October 2013.

In April 2012, the Secretariat published its first sustainability report covering the period 2010 to 2011¹. The report presented an assessment of the Secretariat's sustainability performance with regards to travel, water, energy and paper consumption, waste management and procurement, and included a list of recommendations which would enable the Secretariat to continue to minimize the environmental footprint of its operations. The report was conducted by a sustainability task force (STF), comprised of Secretariat staff.

One of the thematic areas where actions were called for relates to the reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in the frame of "Towards a Climate Neutral United Nations"². To this end, the Secretariat's report contained recommendations to establish GHG emissions inventories for subsequent years, in particular to track air travel emission trends, develop emission reduction plans and explore carbon offsetting options.

¹ <http://synergies.pops.int/ManagementReports/Sustainability/tabid/2756/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

² In 2007, the UN Chief Executives Board of Coordination (CEB) adopted a decision to move towards a climate neutral UN, and committed to estimate GHG emissions consistent with accepted international standards, undertake efforts to reduce GHG emissions, and analyse the cost implications and explore budgetary modalities of purchasing carbon offsets to eventually reach climate neutrality.

The Management Team of the Secretariat endorsed the recommendations of the STF and called for further assessment of GHG emissions and trends for the years 2011 and 2012 and an investigation of possible options to offset emissions.

The present report has been developed by the STF, and in particular by a sub-team on GHG emission inventories, which compiled and analyzed data on air travel and office operations provided by the Administrative Services Branch (ASB). The GHG emission inventories have been produced based on the methodologies adopted under the United Nations Climate Neutral Initiative³. The findings of the inventories have been reviewed by the Sustainable United Nations (SUN) unit and the UNEP Climate Neutral Officer, who provided guidance for the finalization of the report.

2. Inventory boundary

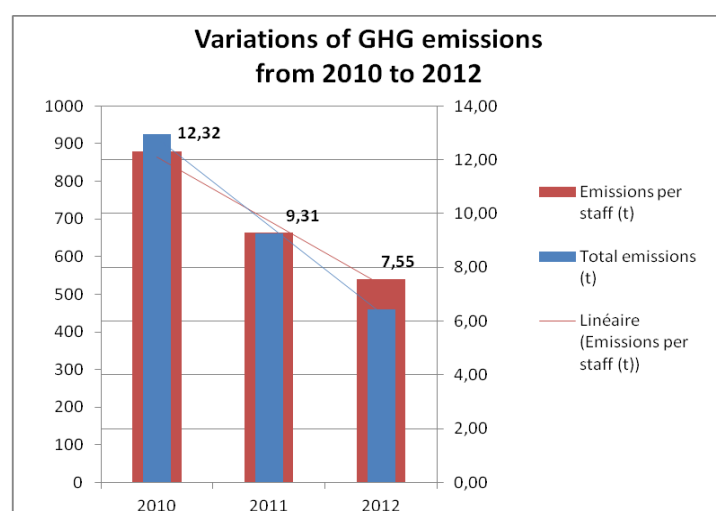
The inventory is limited to emissions from travel and facility operations (the “common minimum boundary” according to the UN methodology). Such emissions include those associated with the purchase and production of electricity and heat (such as steam), the use of refrigerants (for air-conditioning as well as refrigeration) and transportation. The inventory includes all six greenhouse gases covered by the Kyoto Protocol: CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, HFCs, PFCs and SF₆. The emissions are reported both in terms of their mass, and aggregated using the common comparable unit of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_{2eq}).

The inventory excludes several potentially important sources of GHG. These include: “optional emissions”, such as emissions associated with decisions for which staff members are responsible (e.g. staff commuting to work); emissions from projects implemented by external entities; emissions of couriers and postal services; embodied carbon in products and equipment used by the organization; and emissions from the decomposition of organic wastes and wastewater treatment.

3. An overview of current emissions and trends

The first consolidated GHG inventory developed for the BRS Secretariat was for the year 2010 and is therefore considered to be the baseline for comparison. The inventory includes GHG emissions from air travel including travel by staff, consultants and meeting participants and from office operations (heating and electricity).

3.1. Total GHG emissions and emissions per staff member



In 2011 and 2012, the total GHG emissions of the BRS Secretariat accounted for approximately **661 and 460 tonnes per year**, respectively. This represents a **decrease of 29% and 50% compared to the 2010 baseline** where 924 tonnes CO_{2eq} were estimated to have been emitted.

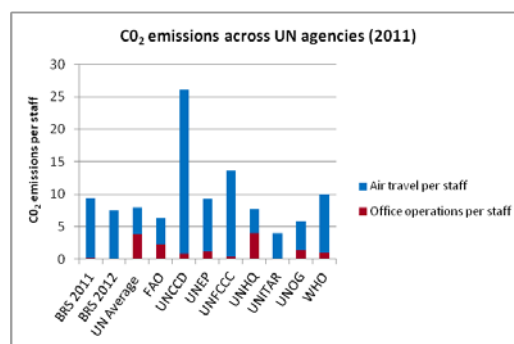
For 2011 and 2012, the per capita footprint is **9.31 and 7.55 tonnes CO_{2eq} per staff member** respectively.⁴ Compared to the 2010 estimate of 12.32 tonnes of GHG per staff member, these

³ A description of the UN-wide adopted methodologies that were used for conducting the inventory is set out in the Report on sustainability performance of the BRS Secretariat, 5 April 2012, p. 6-7.

⁴ The “per capita footprint” figure is calculated by dividing total emissions generated (including those generated by meeting participants) by the number of staff members (not the total number of travellers).

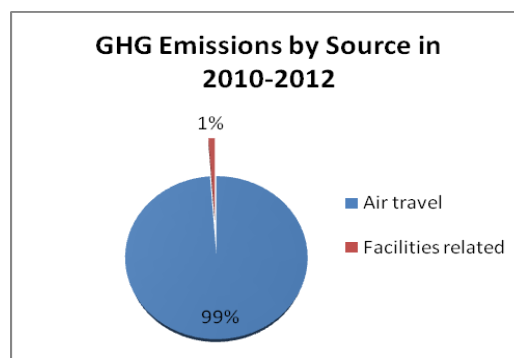
figures represent a **decrease of approximately 25% and 39% respectively.**

The 2011 per capita footprint of the BRS Secretariat (9.31 tonnes GHG/staff) is above the UN average of the 60 UN organizations reporting under the Initiative “Towards a Climate Neutral UN” (7.9 tonnes GHG/staff), while **the 2012 BRS Secretariat per capita footprint of 7.55 t GHG/staff is below the UN average**⁵.



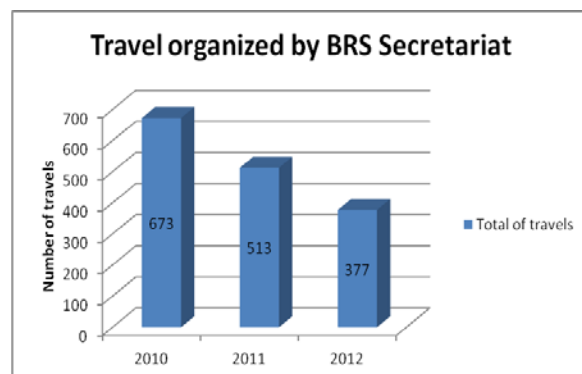
3.2. GHG emissions by source

Unsurprisingly, over the three years considered, the main source of GHG emissions in the BRS Secretariat is air travel, **representing 99% of total emissions.** 1% is attributed to office operations. The total emissions of the Secretariat related to transport via rail and road are not included in this report as their impact is negligible⁶.



3.3. Trends in air travel

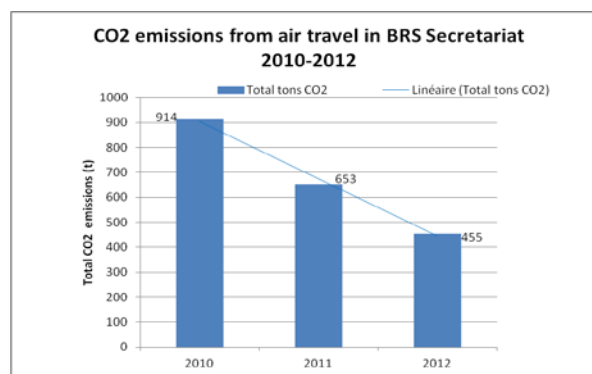
3.3.1. Total emissions



Since 2010, the **total amount of travel** (which includes staff, consultant and meeting participant travel) has decreased significantly with 513 travels organized in 2011 and 377 travels in 2012, which represents respectively a **decrease of 24% and 43% compared to the 2010 baseline.** It should be noted that 2011 was a “COP-year” with more travel expected to be arranged as compared with the baseline. 2010 was the year of the “ExCOPs” but the data for participant travel were not available for inclusion in the emission inventory for that year. Likewise, the

part of the Secretariat-funded travel to meetings/workshops channeled via sub-contracts (e.g. through the regional centres) in 2011-2012 was also not available for inclusion in the assessment.

Overall, **GHG emissions** generated by air travel **decreased by 29% in 2011 and by 50% in 2012** compared to the 2010 baseline. It should be noted that there is no linear relationship between the proposition of decrease in travel and the decrease in GHG emissions, as the calculation takes into



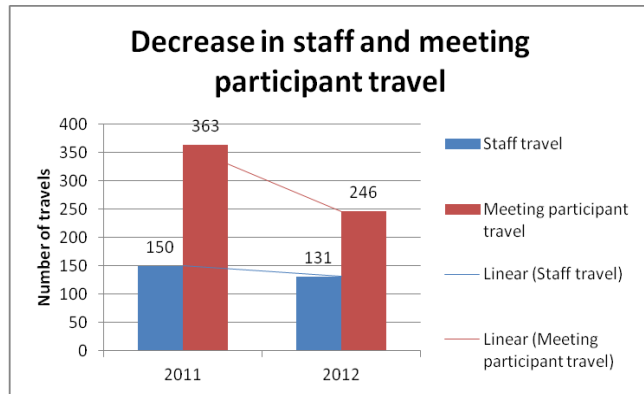
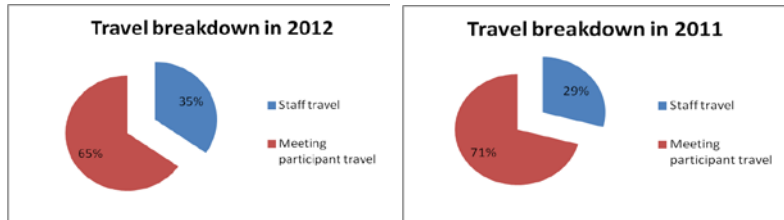
⁵ Figures provided in the publication “Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN: The UN System’s Footprint and Efforts to Reduce It” (2012 edition).

⁶ It is recommended that a procedure be put in place to track non-air travel transport-related emissions (e.g. train travel for missions, transport of staff to and from work, etc. See Recommendations section).

account various travel parameters, e.g. travel class, type of aircraft etc.

3.3.2. Staff travel versus meeting participant travel

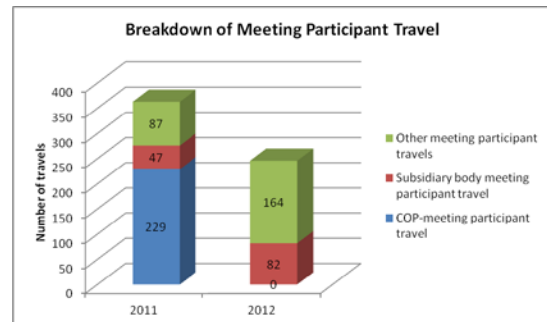
As shown in the pie charts, **staff travel⁷ accounted for 29% of total travel in 2011** (a “COP-year”) and **35% in 2012** (a “non-COP year”).



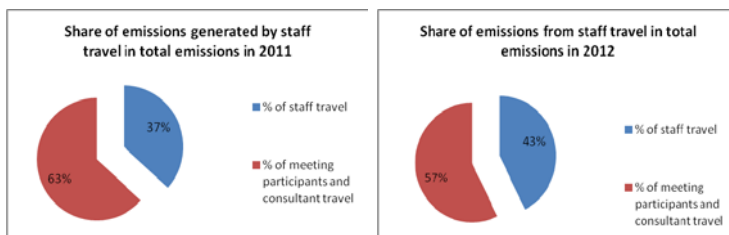
The amount of staff travel decreased by 13% between 2011 and 2012. As a matter of comparison, meeting participant travel **decreased by 32% between 2011 and 2012** which is unsurprising given 2012 was a “non-COP year”, although other factors such as the increase in holding online training and meetings may also have contributed to this reduction⁸. The part of the Secretariat-funded travel to meetings/workshops channeled via sub-contracts (e.g. through the regional

centres) was not available for inclusion in this report⁹.

In 2011, a “COP-year”, 63% of the meeting participant travel related to COPs, while 13% related to subsidiary body meetings and 24% to other meetings (expert group meetings and/or workshops).



In 2012, a “non-COP year”, the large majority of meeting participant travel (67%) is made for other meetings, and 33% for subsidiary body meetings .



Staff travel accounted for 37% and 43% of total GHG emissions for 2011 and 2012 respectively (40% on average).

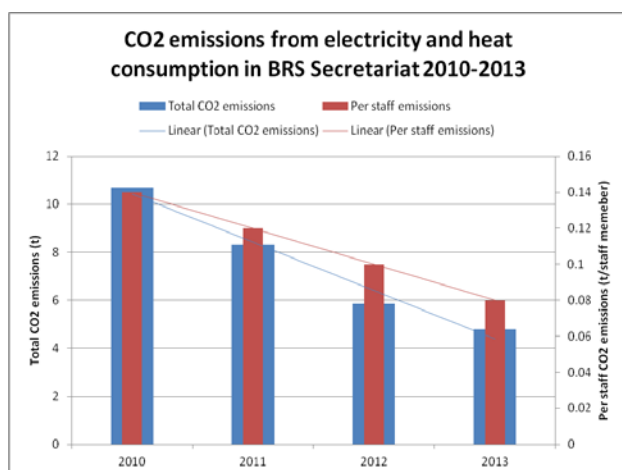
On average, **57% of staff travel was estimated to be in business class** over the period 2011 to 2012. While business class travel only represents 17% of the total number of travels made by both staff and meeting participants, it accounts for 36% of all GHG emissions related to travel. The new UN travel policy limiting business class travels will most likely have significant impacts on air travel related emissions (see section 4 below).

⁷ Staff travel also includes travels made by consultants.

⁸ In 2011 and 2012, approximately 464 and 369 participants respectively attended webinars and other online meetings organized by the Secretariat.

⁹ In 2011 and 2012, an estimated 440 trips were organized by a third party for BRS meetings or workshops.

3.4. Office operations



GHG emissions generated by electricity and heat consumption decreased by 22% in 2011 and by 45% in 2012 compared to 2010 baseline. This is due to a decrease in energy consumption in the building over the last years¹⁰, coupled with a reduction of the surface occupied by the Secretariat in the building (from almost 2000 sq.m in 2010 to 1500 sq.m in 2012 and 1,200 sq.m in 2013).

Assuming the same consumption pattern as in 2011, the emissions generated by electricity and heat consumption will continue to decrease in

2013 reaching an estimated level of 4.8 tonnes of CO_{2eq} and marking more than 50% reduction as compared with 2010 levels.¹¹

Data on the use of refrigerants in the building were not available and thus this emission source is not covered in the inventory.

4. Limitations of the assessment

Several limitations may reduce the quality of the data used in this assessment. The following limitations were noted:

- Data collected on air travel from the UN financial system (IMIS) did not include all the details required by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) calculator, such as travel class and a complete itinerary for each travel. Assumptions were made to fill these information gaps (e.g. retrieving similar itineraries from travel agents on the internet and assuming that travel of over 8 hours for a staff member would be via business class);
- The UN methodology for calculating tonnes of CO₂ per staff member places BRS and similar organisations which have a high number of meeting participants at a disadvantage, particularly in the case of air travel: the “per staff member” figure is derived by including total emissions generated (including those generated by meeting participants) and dividing by the number of staff members (not the total number of travellers);
- Data provided by ASB did not include travel paid for by BRS but organized by a third party (e.g. regional centres) for meetings or workshops
 - In 2011: an estimated 175 trips were organized by a third party for BRS meetings or workshops;
 - In 2012: an estimated 268 trips were organized by a third party for BRS meetings or workshops;
 - Data on travel organized by a third party can be extrapolated from the number of participants that attended international and regional workshops, excluding staff. To facilitate the collection of all travel data, data owners of travel organized by a third party could be identified upfront so that this information can be collected in advance and integrated into the reporting system;
- The inventory is limited to the “common minimum boundary” (travel and office operations) and did not explore additional emissions categories, such as staff commuting to work or the home leave paid through lump sums.

¹⁰ 10% decrease in electricity consumption (from 11.4 kwh/sq.m. in 2010 to 10.3 kwh/sq.m. in 2011) and 26% decrease in energy consumption for heating (from 1.96 kwh/sq.m. in 2010 to 1.43 kwh/sq.m. in 2011). Data for 2012 were not available, thus extrapolated from 2011 energy use intensity (kwh/m²/yr).

¹¹ Further offsets from the installation of solar panels as of 2012 and use of solar energy are not factored in.

Possible impacts of the new UN travel policy

The newly implemented changes in rules for travel (ST/AI/2013/3)¹² may result in both positive and negative impacts on emissions. Access to business class travel has been restricted and staff is encouraged to voluntarily downgrade from business to premium economy. In addition, proof needs to be provided that alternatives to travel (remote business practices) have been considered. These changes will induce further reduction of GHG emissions from air travel. On the other hand, official travel is now based on the least costly route available, rather than (as before) the most direct and least costly option: it is therefore likely that more emission-intensive touch-downs and take-offs will be included in travel routings.

5. Next steps

Further activities are recommended in section 6 of this report to improve the Secretariat's performance with respect to its carbon footprint. The following are to be taken into account when considering these recommendations.

General considerations

Following the call of the UN Secretary General for the UN system to become climate neutral and more sustainable; and the adoption of the UN Climate Neutrality Strategy¹³ in 2007 by the CEB¹⁴, numerous UN agencies, funds and programmes are putting in place measures to estimate their GHG emissions, to reduce them, and efforts to purchase carbon offsets to "neutralize" those emissions that remain. Further details are provided in Annex 1.

Any decisions that may be made or action that may be taken as a result of recommendations within this report should also take into consideration the potential impact on quality of service provided to Parties. Should a course of action be open that could reduce emissions but simultaneously negatively affect the service provided by the Secretariat, alternatives should be considered.

Reporting of emissions through the SUN

Since 2009, the publication "Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN"¹⁵ and the website "Greening the Blue" present the efforts undertaken by the UN to inventory their GHG emissions, reduce their emissions and explore modalities for offsetting towards climate neutrality.

As a matter of comparison, three MEAs' Secretariats have been or currently are reporting their GHG emissions in the publication "Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN": the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Issues to consider when deciding the way forward on reporting emissions:

- On 5 June 2007, the UN Secretary General publically called for the UN system to become climate neutral and more sustainable. By taking part in the UN Climate Neutral Initiative, BRS would formalize its commitment to increasing its sustainability performance;
- There would be a higher visibility of the organization with respect to sustainability performance (i.e. trends in its carbon footprint);
- While the current carbon footprint of the Secretariat is within the UN per capita average, even in a COP year, eventual future increases in activities (more meetings, workshops) or including in the assessment additional sources not accounted for in the current report (e.g. travel organized via subcontracts/regional centres) would induce a higher carbon footprint;

¹² http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=ST/AI/2013/3 as decided by the General Assembly on standards of accommodation (A/RES/67/254 http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/254).

¹³ EMG/AM.07/11.

¹⁴ The Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

¹⁵ The fourth edition of "Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN" (2013) presented the 2011 greenhouse gas emissions of 62 UN organizations and their reduction efforts in 2012 (for details, see Annex 1).

- A GHG inventory will need to be compiled every year according to SUN reporting deadlines and further efforts will be needed to develop a strategy with concrete goals and measures for managing GHG emissions;
- There currently is a relatively low participation of MEAs in the strategy. While those MEAs that are directly employed/financed via UNEP are automatically part of the overall UNEP footprint/inventory, those that are only associated with UNEP, having their own governing bodies, decided in most cases not to be part of the UNEP Climate Neutral inventory and offsetting scheme.

Offsetting of emissions

The level of commitment to offsetting within the UN varies from zero (no funds allocated/available) to partial offsetting (for major conferences for instance through extra budgetary efforts usually involving the host country) to full climate neutrality (such as UNEP Climate Neutral Strategy). Offsets are only achieved through purchasing certified emission reduction units (CERs).¹⁶ Some organizations focus on offsets that are directly translated to real-life impacts in specific countries and are in line with their mandates.¹⁷ Targeted fundraising for carbon credit purchasing is often used for specific events or projects, e.g. when a donor agrees to cover the cost of carbon credit procurement to compensate for emissions caused by the specific event/project. An overview of some of the current offsetting practices within the UN is included in Annex 2.

As part of its Climate Neutral Strategy, UNEP has set up a procedure for estimating, managing and budgeting the offsetting of its emissions it cannot avoid, through its Climate Neutral Fund (for details, see Annex 2). The procedure allows for UNEP-administered MEAs to join at minimal cost (there is no service fee for the procurement of CERs) and offset their emissions in a flexible manner (e.g. a certain % of overall emissions).

In 2008, UNEP invited UNEP-administered MEAs to join the UNEP Climate Neutral effort (inventory or carbon offsetting). Some MEAs Secretariats joined the initiative while others declined including the BRS conventions. However; SBC had put in place its own inventory and offsetting scheme during 2008 and 2009. Later on a number of MEAs decided to opt out of the UNEP scheme, as the budgets required for offsetting were not approved by their respective governing bodies.

Issues to consider when deciding the way forward on offsetting:

- The goal can be from full climate neutrality vs. partial offsets (e.g. % of staff travel only)
- The current market price for CERs is around 2-3 USD, but price volatility needs to be considered when taking a long term commitment. In addition, purchasing CERs via a third party (in the procurement of CERs, UNEP is working with UNOPS) would induce additional costs for the services provided (there is a forbidding USD 4,000 joining fee) that would make this service unaffordable for small MEAs /small offsetting needs. This additional cost could be avoided if UNEP (or some other large offsetting agency) is willing to take on such small offsetting needs.
- Joining the UNEP Climate Neutral Strategy comes with a number of benefits (showing commitment, inventory being automatically done and centralized in IMIS, the scheme is flexible enough to allow partial offsetting, service fees for purchasing CERs would be avoided, etc.).
- The costs of offsetting emissions are presently very low (the cost of offsetting 1,108 t CO₂ emitted in 2011 and 2012 is currently around 3,500 USD). Such costs could be covered via the travel budget.

¹⁶ CERs are the only type of carbon credit recommended in the UN for offsetting. Buying VERs or planting trees are considered climate-friendly, not climate-neutral. For further details, see SUN (2011) Guide to identifying and procuring quality carbon credits as a UN organization.

¹⁷ UNCCD offsetting funds went to tree planting projects. Offsetting costs are included in the fund-raising strategy (voluntary funds) and relevant annexes of Host Country Agreements.

- When joining the UNEP Climate Neutral Strategy, travel related emissions are automatically calculated in IMIS with full itinerary data, which in some cases were not available for the present assessment. Lump sum home leave is also accounted for in the UNEP estimate, which is not the case in the present assessment. Future inventories will include less limitations and be more inclusive (e.g. travel for meeting participants organized via the regional centres), which could increase emissions by roughly 30-40% per biennium.
- The new travel policy will have both positive and negative impacts on GHG emissions from air travel (less travel in business class, but more fragmented flight itineraries). It is difficult to predict at this stage whether the overall trend will show increased or decreased emissions.

6. Recommendations

	Actions	Ongoing	Requires MT decision
Self-reporting, communication, outreach	Communicate the results of the GHG inventories with BRS stakeholders (via the website)		Yes
	Consider reporting GHG emissions through the SUN / “Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN” every year		Yes
Travel	<p>A number of recommendations as included in the STF report of 2012 (e.g. BCRC/SCRC staff representing the Secretariat at meetings in the regions, use of online training and meetings, reducing the no. of staff attending the same meetings), if continued to be implemented, will continue to show beneficial effects and positively impact the BRS Secretariat's carbon footprint. CO₂ emissions have decreased considerably since 2010, with current levels comparable to the UN average.</p> <p>BRS Secretariat should aim at continuing implementing the 2012 recommendations and stabilizing emissions at the 2011-2012 levels, at least those related to staff travel, while respecting the requests for activities by Parties.</p> <p>The target level of stabilization of emissions should be revised further to implementing better data collection processes and refining emission estimates, including, for instance, activities organized via the regional centres etc</p> <p>The new travel policy will have implications for travel related CO₂ emissions, and follow-up inventories will be needed to quantify its impact.</p>	Yes	

Offset emissions generated	<p>Decide to offset emissions and ensure funding for purchasing carbon offsets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full offset of emissions during a biennium (1,108 tonnes in 2011-2012) would cost around 3,500 USD at the current market price (or around 22,500 USD at the highest market price). - Partial offset of staff travel only during a biennium (440 tonnes in 2011-2012) would cost around 1,400 USD at the current market price (or around 9,000 USD at the highest market price). - The travel budget could be used to cover offsetting costs. 		Yes
	<p>Decide to offset the GHG emissions generated by travel for funded meeting participant for the next BRS COPs</p>		Yes
	<p>Join the UNEP Climate Neutral Strategy for offsetting emissions in a cost-effective manner</p>		Yes
Improve data collection and reporting	<p>Improve the process for data collection in order to decrease the time required to compile the inventory and the need for assumptions to fill data gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore ways with UNEP headquarters and/or UNON to arrange for retrieving the BRS's GHG emissions estimates in a systematic manner every year through IMIS; If not successful, collect detailed itineraries through other means (e.g. from Amex) - Collect data on travels made by third parties through a specific clause in the SSFAs 	Yes	Yes
Staff incentive scheme	<p>Develop a self-monitoring system to enable staff to track their emissions (e.g. travel to/from the workplace)¹⁸.</p>		Yes

¹⁸ If a self-monitoring system to enable staff to track their own emissions is established, additional indicators could be included in similar future assessments.

Annex 1

Climate Neutrality within the UN

On 5 June 2007, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon publically called for the UN system to become climate neutral and more sustainable. At the October 2007 meeting of the CEB¹⁹, the executive heads of the UN agencies, funds and programmes made a commitment to move their respective organizations towards climate neutrality. In particular, they agreed to:

- Estimate GHG emissions consistent with accepted international standards;
- Reduce GHG emissions to the extent possible, and
- Analyze the cost implications and explore budgetary modalities for purchasing carbon offsets to eventually reach climate neutrality.

The UN system set out its approach in the UN Climate Neutral Initiative²⁰. In this document, the UN defined its “climate neutrality” as the entire set of policies that it uses to estimate its known GHG emissions, measures to reduce them, and efforts to purchase carbon offsets to “neutralize” those emissions that remain, aiming at the highest standards possible. It identifies the following elements that should be included:

- A commitment to reducing GHG emissions as part of an integrated and comprehensive environmental management approach;
- The preparation of consistent, comparable and transparent inventory data, according to agreed methodologies, which subsequently undergo periodic independent verification;
- The development and implementation of a package of measures to reduce GHG emissions;
- A decision to offset the remaining emissions through a reasoned choice of offsets that satisfy a list of agreed criteria, ensuring their high quality;
- Regular transparent reporting combined with the public communication of each organization’s emissions inventory, together with any targets or goals for emissions reductions;
- 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 work plans; to provide e-training courses; to host Q&A; to provide technical assistance; and to host e-discussions.

Implementation of the Strategy, as well as the introduction of sustainability management within the UN, is directed by the UN Environment Management Group (EMG)²¹ and coordinated by the Issue Management Group (IMG) on Sustainability Management²². The Sustainable United Nations (SUN) facility supports the IMG in its efforts to measure and reduce its environmental impact, in cooperation with the EMG. The SUN and the EMG Secretariat are both hosted by UNEP.

The EMG Secretariat and SUN have been working with the UN system to develop common methodologies, tools, guidelines and provide training and technical support. SUN manages the process of compiling annual GHG inventories for the UN.

Since 2009, the publication “Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN” is released every year, detailing the UN’s GHG emissions and some of the activities undertaken to reduce them.

¹⁹ The Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

²⁰ EMG/AM.07/11.

²¹ The agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system together with the secretariats of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are member of the UN Environment Management Group (EMG), which was established by the General Assembly to coordinate environmental issues across the UN system.

²² IMG includes representatives from most UN organizations, each nominated by their head of Organization. These individuals meet several times a year to agree UN-wide processes for improving the sustainability performance of the UN.

Three MEAs Secretariats have been or currently are reporting their GHG emissions in the publication "Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN":

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):

- Administered by UNEP
- Reported in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (no information provided for 2011)
- Emissions per capita: 36.1 t eq CO₂/staff (2010)

Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD):

- Directly administered by a UN Secretariat
- Reported in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011
- Emissions per capita: 26.1 eq CO₂/staff (2011)

Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

- Directly administered by a UN Secretariat
- Reported in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011
- Emissions per capita: 13.6 eq CO₂/staff (2011)

Annex 2

Examples of some UN agencies' approaches to offsetting CO₂ emissions

UNEP

As part of its Climate Neutral Strategy, UNEP created a special Climate Neutral Fund through which CO₂ emission from air travel are offset. Air travel accounts for a massive 90% of overall greenhouse gas emissions. Whenever an air travel ticket request is approved, an estimated offset payment has to be set aside from the same budget line that is paying for the ticket. The CO₂ emissions caused by the trip in question are worked out automatically, using the UN/International Civil Aviation Organization's air travel emission calculator (which has been linked to the IMIS travel administration system), and taking into account the specific route and the travel class (business or economy). Any travel costs which UNEP meets without knowing the specific route, such as lump sums for home leave, are assumed to create CO₂ emissions at the same average rate as other UNEP air travel. The offset payments relating to air travel emissions are transferred to the UNEP Climate Neutral Fund on a monthly basis.

Emissions related to office operations (electricity, official vehicles, air conditioning refrigerants, generators and so on) are handled in a different way. Each duty station tracks and reports these emissions, and the cost of offsetting them is then shared out annually between the divisions represented at that office, on the basis of their staff head count. The smallest offices, with fewer than four employees, do not actually have to do the sums - they are simply presumed to cause the same level of emissions per staff member as the UNEP average – but the offset programme nevertheless covers all of UNEP's 35 offices worldwide. An 'internal invoice' is sent out by the end of the year, and the required payments from each division are transferred to the UNEP Climate Neutral Fund.

Indicatively, UNEP's emissions in 2008 amounted to 11.508 tons CO_{2eq}, 87 % of which was caused by air travel. CERs were purchased under the Clean Development Mechanism at a total cost of US\$225.796 (US\$19.6 per ton CO_{2eq}). The actual price of offsets can't be known until early the following year, when the annual round of offset procurement takes place.

UNFCCC

More than 95 percent of the total UNFCCC Sec. carbon footprint resulted from air travel. This included business and employment travel of secretariat staff, as well as the travel of delegates and experts funded by the secretariat. In 2012, for the first time, the secretariat was fully offsetting all unavoidable GHG emissions by purchasing, and immediately cancelling, Adaptation Fund Certified Emission Reductions (CERs); 5,800 tons CO_{2eq} in 2012. Instrumental in this has been the budgetary authorization from UNFCCC Parties to fund reduction and offsetting efforts.

The Adaptation Fund has been established to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries. The proceeds from the purchase of CERs benefit especially those countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. The Fund is mainly financed from a share of two per cent of CERs that are issued each year for CDM projects. The purchase of Adaptation Fund CERs does not support a particular CDM project or a sub-set of projects, but the widest possible cross-section of CDM projects, including from currently underrepresented countries.

The secretariat has therefore agreed with the Adaptation Fund Board, its secretariat (the Global Environmental Facility), and its trustee (the World Bank) to purchase AF CERs

representing its estimated GHG emissions. The secretariat then cancels the equivalents of emissions actually generated through its activities, thus removing them permanently from the market so they cannot be traded or reused.

UNCCD

The ninth session of the Conference of Parties (COP) in the fall of 2009 was organized to be climate neutral, partly using sponsorship for offsetting its greenhouse gases emissions, and partly relying on voluntary carbon offsets. In view of their mandates, the Secretariat and the Host Country, Argentina, went further than the EMG stipulations. The Secretariat and the Secretary of Environment of Argentina endeavored to link the emission offsets to projects through which the offsets are directly translated to real-life effects on the ground that are related to mitigation of land degradation and preservation of biodiversity. UNCCD is moving from climate neutrality towards full “environmental” neutrality, taking advantage of synergies among Rio Conventions at local level.

The Secretariat provided technical advice in the development and launching of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara initiative, the launching of projects to stabilize sand dunes in China and a reforestation project in Argentina. The projects promoted go a long way in enhancing carbon sequestration through tree planting. The UNCCD Secretariat has also provided funding to a number of African countries for Youth Projects through UNV. The bulk of the funds went to tree planting projects in Ethiopia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Reduction efforts also include offsetting costs in fund-raising strategy (special voluntary fund), relevant annexes of Host Country Agreements.

UNOG

There are currently no budgetary provisions for purchasing carbon offsets.

UNOV

The Secretariat has initiated the greenhouse gas inventory to prepare for offsetting processes in the years to come. UNOV/UNODC will join this process as it crystallizes through administrative guidelines and instructions. In the meantime UNOV/UNODC is working out procedures not only to decrease its footprint but also to find innovative ways to offset its greenhouse gas production, for example by starting a tree-planting campaign funded through parking surcharges for staff members driving to work.

WMO

For the period 2008-2011 the WMO governing body did not authorize use of regular budget resources to purchase carbon offsets. This issue is to be revisited by the Congress on the basis of climate-friendly operations such as increased use of tele- and video-conferencing, progress achieved in actual reduction of emissions, subsequent footprint trend and financial implications for offsetting. WMO started the practice of green (climate-neutral) meetings sponsored with extra-budgetary resources, such as World Climate Conference-3 attended by about 2500 participants. WMO staff are being encouraged to offset their travel on an individual basis.