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Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon Welcomes New Report on Efforts to Green the UN

Report calculates UN's total CO₂ emissions and highlights successful efforts in reducing organisation's carbon footprint

Nairobi, 1 April 2011– The United Nations has released details of its greenhouse gas emissions for 52 institutions, covering 200,000 employees, in a new report published as part of ongoing efforts to reduce the organisation's carbon footprint.

The report, co-ordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), calculates the UN's total greenhouse gas emissions for 2009 at 1.7 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, or 8.3 tonnes per capita.

Over 50 percent of UN's emissions are from air travel (4.1 tonnes per capita) making this the biggest challenge for the organisation in reducing its overall carbon footprint. Around 37 percent of emissions are from buildings and 13 percent are from vehicles.

The report, *Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN* was presented at the meeting of the UN Chief Executives Board of Coordination, in Nairobi, Kenya, where UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon met with the heads of UN agencies, funds and programmes.

In the report's foreword, Mr. Ban states that improving the UN's in-house sustainability performance will make the organisation more efficient, more effective and less exposed to risk.

“The United Nations has played a key role in elevating the profile of climate change on the international agenda, and continues to support Member States in their efforts to reduce emissions, strengthen adaptation and respond to this immense global challenge,” writes Mr. Ban.

“Such work has a natural complement in our in-house drive to reduce the UN's own carbon footprint. What we demand of others, we must do ourselves.”

The report provides a progress update on implementation of UN's Climate Neutral Strategy. In October 2007, the strategy was approved the UN Chief Executive Board and committed, all agencies, funds and programmes to move towards climate neutrality within the wider context of greening the UN.

The Strategy requires UN bodies to estimate their greenhouse gas emissions, undertake efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and analyse the cost implications of purchasing carbon offsets.

The emissions calculations in the report are based on the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, a widely used methodology developed by the World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. The UN greenhouse gas inventory includes emissions from all activities that are under the direct financial control of the organization, such as the heating and cooling of

buildings and the travel of staff members. The International Civil Aviation Organization's Carbon Emissions Calculator was used for computing the air travel portion of the greenhouse gas inventory.

Successful efforts in 'Greening the Blue'

The report describes recent highlights of the organisation's 'greening' efforts and details the myriad ways in which UN organisations, staff associations and individual employees worldwide are continuing efforts to reduce their CO₂ emissions

- UNEP which has been climate neutral since 2008, became the first UN organization to publish an Emission Reduction Strategy last year, including a target to reduce emissions by 3% per annum in 2010-12 (from 2009 levels). Implementing the efficiency measures could save UNEP an estimated US\$800,000 per year
- UNEP published the 2010 report – *Sustainable Travel in the UN* – which provides advice to organizations on how to reduce emissions from travel, building on existing UNEP guidelines on sustainable buildings, sustainable procurement and green meetings.
- Peacekeeping operations account for over half of the UN's total greenhouse gas emissions. In 2010, greening programmes included training sessions for peacekeeping staff, a sustainability assessment of peacekeeping camps in South Sudan and a new contract for field missions to procure solar panels.
- At the United Nations office in Geneva, staff members promoted the use of tap water over bottled water, led efforts to make cafeterias more sustainable and helped improve access to green transport. In New York, staff members worked together to promote more efficient light bulbs, while in Beijing, UN employees implemented plans to reduce energy consumption in each office.
- The World Bank initiated programmes to reduce resource consumption in its US offices. From 2008-09, the organisation saw a decrease of 7% in greenhouse gas emissions, 8% in waste to landfill and 15% in paper consumption.
- A new website - *Greening the Blue* - was launched by the Secretary General in June 2010 to highlight work that is underway to make the UN more sustainable. In September last year, greeningtheblue.org won the 'best website' award at the International Visual Communications Association's Clarion Awards.

Towards a zero carbon future

Despite the successes to date in enacting the UN's Climate Neutral Strategy, there is still work to be done before the strategy is fully implemented.

"Looking forward, I am determined to see sustainability embedded throughout our operations – in how we procure and use energy and other resources, in our modes of transport, our buildings and our waste disposal," writes Mr. Ban in the report.

Among the immediate priorities outlined in the report is the development and adaptation of Emission Reduction Strategies for all UN organisations, in order to help map progress towards greater sustainability.

These include greenhouse gas inventories and efforts to reduce emissions, as well as other aspects of sustainability, such as greater use of recycled materials and implementing greener procurement procedures.

Many UN organisations are also calculating the financial implications of emission reduction measures. Short-term investment may be required in most cases, but the payback time is likely to be short. One UN agency estimated that up-front investment for video-conferencing equipment would total US\$3.3 million, but that the resulting 10% reduction in air travel would lead to year-one cost savings of US\$4.6 million and a reduction of 1225 tonnes of CO₂

Notes to Editors

The UN Climate Neutral Strategy was approved by the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in October 2007.

The first UN greenhouse gas inventory, *Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN*, was published in December 2009.

The work of implementing the UN Climate Neutral Strategy is coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme. Data is collected by the Issue Management Group (IMG) on Sustainability Management which includes representatives from most UN organizations. The IMG reports to the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) and is supported by the Sustainable United Nations facility.

The inventory for 2009 emissions includes data for 52 UN organizations. Of these, 46 have reported data directly or indirectly for 2009, two for the first time. Six organizations reported their greenhouse gas emissions for 2008 but failed to do so for 2009. For these organizations the 2008 emissions results have been used.

To read the summary and full report of *Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN*, visit www.greeningtheblue.org

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