

Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee Meeting
Wednesday 27 February 2019
2:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
United Nations Office at Nairobi, Gigiri
Conference Room 4

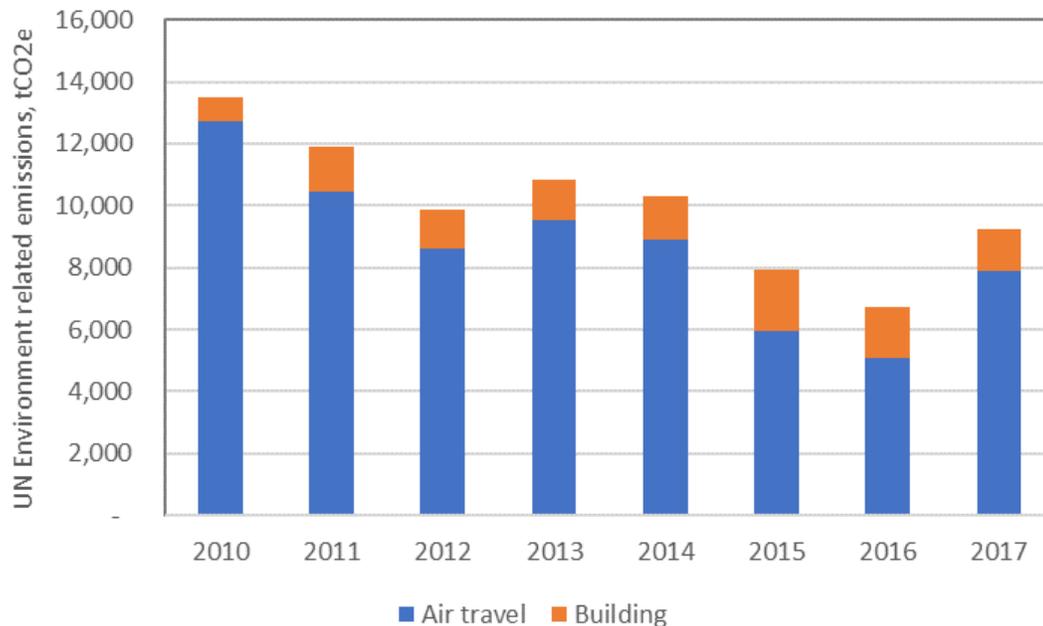
Background Document for Agenda Item 6:

Briefing on the UN Environment Programme's performance on reducing climate emissions

This document serves as the background document for Agenda Item 6: Briefing on the UN Environment Programme's performance on reducing climate emissions.

Briefing on the UN Environment Programme's performance on reducing climate emissions

1. In June 2007, on the occasion of the World Environment Day, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon called on UN agencies to “move toward climate neutrality”. There was a two-fold response by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to this directive: first to start measuring its own climate footprint as a means of attaining climate neutrality, and second to set up a task team (Sustainable UN) to create tools and support other UN agencies to tackle their internal climate emissions.
2. UNEP has measured its climate footprint for the last 10 years and has been climate neutral since 1 January 2008. This climate neutrality has been achieved by initially measuring emission, reducing emissions where possible and then purchasing offsets (Certificate of Emission Reduction managed UN Climate) to render it climate neutral. Activities that are systematically measured for climate emissions include: electricity usage, cooling & heating, refrigerant use, mobile & public transport, and also all flights by staff and participants. Initially, the measurement of emitted Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) saw a number of data gaps that were then closed giving UNEP a complete baseline in 2010.
3. UNEP being a small headquartered focused agency serving a large number of member states, has the majority of its emissions attributed to flights. Flight emissions have been responsible for 94 % of all emission in 2010 base year, falling to 75 % in 2016 and rising again in 2017. It should be borne in mind that some 54-56 % (depending on year) of all flights are from UNEP meeting participants. This is typical of small secretariat-type agencies that build consensus amongst nation states on various issues, and is very different from larger UN agencies such as peace keeping operations and the World Food Programme whose vehicle/ terrestrial emissions are the largest emission source.
4. Progress on mitigating UNEP's GHG emissions has been positive, although in 2017 saw a large increase as reported by the Office of Internal Over Sight's (OIOS) report last year. Despite the 2017 emission-spike, a net reduction of 35 % was realized from the 2010 base year until 2017. An average reduction of 5 % per annum outperforms climate targets set in April 2010 based on a Kyoto Protocol target of roughly 3 % mitigation year on year for Annex 1 countries. The graph on the next page illustrates this trend.



UNEP's Climate Emissions, 2010-2011

5. There have been several factors in the overall reduction of emissions at UNEP. First, the change in UN travel rules in moving business class travel entitlement from a threshold of 9 to 11 hours has meant that a large number of flights from UNEP Headquarters to Asia and Europe are no longer in business class (N.B. business class produces twice the emissions of economy class for the same route) – this has translated into a drop of business class usage from 22 % to 10 % of all flights. Second, a general atmosphere of austerity has meant less funds for travel; some units choose to fly less or in economy class only to save funds. Lastly, a general sensitization of staff and the comparison of per capita emissions in UNEP's internal divisions have brought awareness and action at the divisional level. With the aforementioned in mind, the 15 % increase of flights in 2017 were due to more participant travel (responsible for 63 % of the increase) and staff travel (37 %) in addition to a general culture of flying more to deliver UNEP's mandate.
6. A Climate Neutral Fund set up by UNEP to procure climate offsets and green UNEP's operations was set up in 2010. This fund is fed by a carbon tax levied on divisional emissions. As per the OIOS 2018 report, the Fund's balance has continuously declined due to the cumulative reductions of emissions in UNEP and hence the carbon tax amount. At the present rate of expenditure, the Fund will be exhausted in 2021. UNEP is looking at measuring of bolstering this fund.
7. Efforts to further mitigate UNEP's climate emissions are under way. New targets using the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTI) to reduce emissions at a pace to keep climate temperature rise to below 2 degrees Centigrade have been investigated for UNEP's internal use. The main thrust of the mitigation effort at UNEP will be in reducing flight emissions.