



## **MOVING TOWARDS A CLIMATE NEUTRAL UN**

**The UN system's footprint and efforts to reduce it**

*Summary of 2010 edition*



# Moving towards a climate neutral UN

In October 2007 the UN Chief Executives Board (CEB) approved the UN Climate Neutral Strategy, which committed all UN agencies, funds and programmes to move towards climate neutrality within the wider context of greening the UN. In signing it, the heads of all UN organizations agreed to:

- estimate their greenhouse gas emissions,
- undertake efforts to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to the greatest extent possible, and
- analyze the cost implications and explore budgetary modalities of purchasing carbon offsets.

*Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN 2010* presents the results of the 2009 greenhouse gas inventory, measures taken in 2010 to reduce emissions and plans for improving the sustainability performance of the UN in the coming years.

## Statement from the United Nations Secretary General



*“The United Nations is strongly committed to doing its part to adapt to a changing world. Sustainability can make us a better organization – more efficient, more effective and less exposed to risk. 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.”*

**Ban Ki-moon**  
New York, January 2011

From the Foreword of *Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN 2010*

## Greenhouse gas emissions for 2009

In 2010 staff worked together to calculate the greenhouse gas emissions from the UN system. The results reflect emissions in 2009

from 52 UN organizations – based on the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, a widely used greenhouse gas inventory 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 heating and cooling of buildings and travel of staff members.

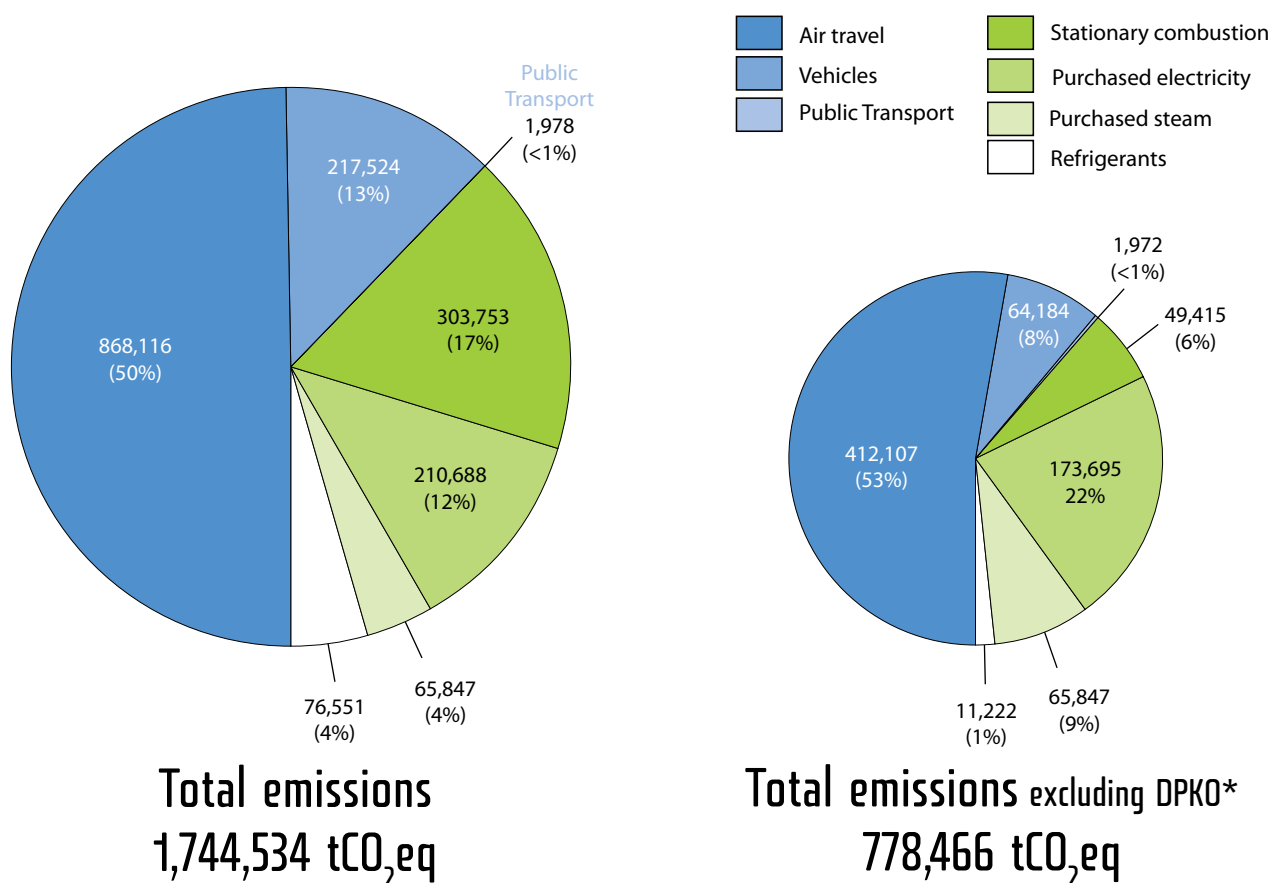
The results show that the UN emitted 1.7 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent or 8.3 tonnes per capita.

Half of the UN’s emissions come from air travel making this the biggest challenge for the UN in reducing its emissions. Other major contributors include vehicles and buildings.

### Key figures for the UN System 2009

Number of staff (including peacekeeping operations)	210,927
Number of reporting institutions	52
Total emissions	1,744,534 tCO <sub>2</sub> eq
Emissions per capita	8.3 tCO <sub>2</sub> eq
Air travel per capita	4.1 tCO <sub>2</sub> eq

## Emissions by source (in tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)



\* Department of Peacekeeping Operations

## Looking to the future

There is still a long way to go before the UN Climate Neutral Strategy is fully implemented. Since work began in 2007, effort has been mostly focused on setting up a system for developing consistent greenhouse gas inventories. However, in the coming years more energy will go into reducing emissions and broadening the scope of the work to include other sustainability issues relating to the UN's operations.

The next immediate step for all UN organizations is to develop and adopt Emission Reduction Strategies. Based on their greenhouse gas inventories and coupled with internal priorities, the Emission Reduction Strategies will be maps for UN organizations, guiding them towards ever greater sustainability.

Complementing the work on the UN's in-house sustainability management

is the parallel effort by the UN Environment Management Group to develop ways of embedding sustainability into the UN's external work (e.g. in projects and missions) by applying environmental and social safeguards to relevant decision-making processes.

Meanwhile the Issue Management Group on Sustainability Management and the Sustainable United Nations facility will continue to work with various interagency networks to review common policies for travel and facilities management. They will provide guidance on how these can be adapted to be more sustainable, and seek out examples of where this is already happening.

Another key focus for the coming years is identifying ways of integrating sustainability into daily operations. Sustainability management in the

UN should no longer be treated as an individual project with temporarily assigned staff, but should be recognized as a permanent function, fully supported by management and administrative systems. The Issue Management Group's work to develop a strategic plan for sustainability management in the UN, and the work of the Umoja project in integrating sustainability functions within the new enterprise resource planning system, are both contributing to this end.

Arguably more important than any of the above, however, is the work to truly cement the understanding of, and support for, the climate neutral effort among all UN staff and other stakeholders. Without this support, the chances of success are slim. Climate neutrality and sustainability are not only about doing the right thing, but – as Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has pointed out – are ultimately about the UN's credibility as an organization in the twenty-first century.

# Highlights of 2010

- The UN system measured its greenhouse gas emissions for the second year running. The emissions for 2009 were 1.7 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>eq in total and 8 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>eq per staff capita.
- A new website, *Greening the Blue* ([www.greeningtheblue.org](http://www.greeningtheblue.org)), was launched by the UN Secretary General in June to highlight work that is underway to make the UN more sustainable. In September, *Greening the Blue* won the Best Website category at the IVCA Clarion Awards.
- UNEP became the first UN organization to publish an Emission Reduction Strategy. The strategy sets a target of reducing UNEP's emissions by 3% per annum in 2010-2012 (from 2009 emission levels).
- The UN Secretariat's Umoja project seeks to reform and modernize the UN's administrative system by introducing a new enterprise-resource planning system. Umoja established a 'community of practice for sustainability' to ensure that the new system fully supports the UN's climate neutral and sustainability efforts.
- The Joint Inspection Unit released the report *The Environmental Profile of the United Nations System Organizations*, which described the network of Sustainability Management Focal Points as "a landmark asset for a seminal contribution by the UN system towards the adoption of broader in-house environmental management policies". It said the work of the UN in this area would "motivate by example Member States and other stakeholders to undertake more sustainable environmental management."
- The work of staff-led green groups continued across the UN, with support from over 50 Green Champion volunteers. In Geneva, for example, a new green group committed to promote tap water over bottled water, make staff cafeterias more sustainable and improve access to green transport. In New York, staff worked together to promote more efficient light bulbs. Staff in Beijing started to implement plans for reducing energy consumption in each office.
- UN peace operations account for over half of the UN's total greenhouse gas emissions. In 2010, activities were initiated to make these operations greener. These included training sessions for staff, a sustainability assessment of peacekeeping camps in South Sudan and a new contract for field missions to procure solar panels.
- UNEP published a new report – *Sustainable Travel in the UN* – that provides advice to organizations on how to reduce emissions from travel. The report adds to existing guidance on sustainable buildings, sustainable procurement and green meetings.
- Most UN agencies are in the process of developing Emission Reduction Strategies and will be getting these approved in 2011.
- The UN Development Group in Latin America and the Caribbean took a regional approach to its work on sustainability. This included joint trainings, a common inventory exercise including 16 UN agencies in 33 duty stations, and sustainability proofing of the plans for a new UN hub in Panama.
- A number of UN organizations shared their experiences with stakeholders and encouraged them to move towards climate neutrality. The UPU, for example, worked with national postal operators to help them start measuring their greenhouse gas emissions.
- The World Bank launched a new website on its corporate responsibility performance. The website highlights the reductions in resource consumption achieved for their US buildings between 2008-09, including a decrease of 7% in greenhouse gas emissions, 8% in waste to landfill and 15% in paper consumption.

For more information and to download the full report visit

[www.greeningtheblue.org](http://www.greeningtheblue.org)



**GREENING  
THE BLUE.**

