

TO: See distribution List

DATE: 31 December 2018

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REFERENCE:

THROUGH:

S/C DE:

for
FROM: Christian Saunders, Assistant Secretary-General

DE: Office of Central Support Services
Department of Management

SUBJECT: **Implementation of the Secretary-General action plan to integrate sustainable development practices into UN Secretariat operations**
OBJET: **development practices into UN Secretariat operations**

1. In a memorandum dated 23 March 2018, I had brought to your attention, in my capacity of chair of the UN Secretariat Steering Group on Environmental Sustainability Management (ESM), that the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to implement his action plan to integrate sustainable development practices into UN Secretariat operations (A/72/82). I had called on your help in meeting the goal of a United Nations that does not impact negatively on the climate, which is essential to the credibility of the Organization in its leadership on climate action.

2. While this year has been intensely focused on the reform agenda, significant progress has been made throughout the Secretariat on this important mandate.

Environmental Management Systems (EMS)

3. Environmental Management Systems are progressively being established throughout the Secretariat, systematically addressing local environmental impacts through a process of planning, coordination of sustainable actions, monitoring and reporting on results. Although environmental priorities differ by location, the main challenges across the Secretariat are to reduce and better manage waste, increase energy efficiencies, improve the sustainability of meetings and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from travel activities.

ESM mainstreaming in planning and budgeting processes

4. Only by acting as “one” can the Secretariat meaningfully improve its environmental performance and meet the climate neutral goal the UN sets itself for 2020. In support of the execution of the Secretary-General’s action plan and in complementing the mainstreaming of environmental management in the Peacekeeping budget documents, the Steering Group on ESM had proposed that environmental considerations be integrated into the preparation of the Proposed Programme Budget for 2020. As noted in Mr. Ramanathan’s memorandum of 26 December 2018 on the budget preparation, all Departments are now required to highlight, under the ‘Execution Direction and Management’ section of the budget document, a particular achievement and planned improvement in environmental sustainability management. To supplement the budget guide, please find attached more detailed guidance in annex 1 on this new requirement.

As you plan the delivery of your specific mandates, I would encourage that the focus of your departmental sustainable initiatives be aligned with System wide, Secretariat wide and particularly local environmental sustainability efforts where an EMS is in place. For those Departments and Offices headquartered in New York, UNHQ EMS priorities, as endorsed by the local Steering Group on ESM, are waste generation and management (general waste and E-waste), air travel, hosting visitors (conferences/events), purchasing of products/services when feasible within existing rules, training and awareness and renewable energy generation.

Secretariat wide environmental policy

5. At its last meeting, the Steering Group on ESM endorsed a draft environmental policy articulated around 5 guiding principles with respective objectives: “Stewardship of the environment”, “Efficiency in resource used and operations”, “Continuous improvement of environmental performance”, “Stakeholder engagement at all levels” and “Adaptation and resilience”. A related ST/SGB is under review through the appropriate channels.

Environmental performance reporting and climate neutrality

6. UN Secretariat entities have, over the years, joined the 2007 UN system greenhouse gas (GHG) reporting initiative aimed at measuring, reducing and offsetting the UN carbon footprint. The inventory results for the UN system are communicated in the Greening the Blue report, of which 2018 edition was published on 7 December.

7. With the support of the Climate Action Team in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the UN Secretariat Headquarters reached climate neutrality for the first time this year, adding to UNOG, UNON, ECA, ESCWA and ESCAP’s commitment to compensate for the greenhouse gas emissions of their respective operations. This was an important milestone toward a climate neutral Secretariat and, ultimately, a climate neutral UN. The Secretariat represents 59% of all reported UN greenhouse gas emissions.

Going forward

8. As directed by the Chef de Cabinet, the next step is to develop proposals for a Secretariat-wide central financial offsetting mechanism to cover, as a first step, the GHG emissions from extrabudgetary-funded travel. The new mechanism is expected to be simple, not labour intensive and fully leveraging Umoja capabilities. The Steering Group on ESM will assist in coordinating this effort and seek your inputs over the coming months.

9. Another priority will be to ensure that environmental performance reporting, which initially evolved as a voluntary process, covers the full scope of the Secretariat. It has become evident that some entities and locations have not been included in previous inventory exercises and reporting methodologies vary. Comprehensive reporting will be crucial to measure and improve environmental results for the Secretariat globally in future.

10. To aid in the reporting process and support mainstreaming efforts on ESM, I would

request that each entity without a designated environmental focal point, nominate one. Their contact information should be communicated to haeringer@un.org and will be shared with the Environmental management teams in DOS and DMSPC who will provide support in this cross-cutting area under the new organizational structure.

11. Finally, I would propose that, where the environmental impact of your operations is significant, you incorporate environmental considerations in the personal objectives of your Senior Manager Compact for 2019 as a commitment to environmental sustainability in the delivery of your programme of work. Annex 2 provide some suggestions that you may find helpful.

12. I take the opportunity to thank you for the progress made this year, which reflects the importance that many of you place on reducing operational impacts on the environment and on managing related risks. Ahead of the Secretary-General's Climate Summit in September 2019, it is incumbent upon all of us to accelerate our environmental sustainability efforts and lead by example.

13. I look forward to continue supporting UN efforts toward a sustainable organization in my new role as ASG of the Office of Supply Chain management in DOS and assist your operation in meeting its environmental objectives with innovative solutions.

Attachments (2)

cc: Mr. Patrick Carey
Ms. Ann De La Roche
Mr. Charles Katoanga
Mr. Miguel Mourato Gordo
Ms. Renu Bhatia
Ms. Sevil Alirzayeva
Mr. Enrique Calzada
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Ms. Andrea Marquez, Director, Division of Administration, ECLAC
Mr. Carlos Haddad, Director, Administrative Services Division, ECA
Ms. Anne Matthews, Director, Administrative Services Division, ESCAP
Mr. Johannes Kratzheller, Director, Administrative Services Division, ESCWA
Mr. Michael Sylver, Executive Officer, ECE
Mr. John Hocking, Registrar, MICT

Annex 1 – Guidance on the integration of ESM in the 2020 regular programme budget

The UN Secretariat has been mandated to integrate sustainable development considerations into its own management practices in alignment with the aims and goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and international agreements on climate change and protection of the environment. In resolution 72/219, the General-Assembly endorsed the Secretary-General action plan to integrate sustainable development practise into its operations, aimed at creating a Secretariat that does not have a negative impact on the climate (A/72/82). The new mandate was communicated in a memorandum dated 23/03/18 to all Departments by the Assistant-Secretary-General of OCSS and chair of the UN Secretariat Steering Group on Environmental Sustainability Management (ESM) which was established to coordinate in-house sustainability efforts.

Critical to achieving this goal is the establishment of an environmental sustainability management framework and implementation of Environmental Management Systems (EMS) in accordance with CEB decisions, system wide guidance from the Environmental Management Group and international standards. An EMS integrates environmental considerations into existing management systems, including programme planning, budgeting and reporting, to ensure continuous improvement of operational environmental performance and management of related risks. The main environmental aspects of UN Secretariat activities are energy consumption, travel and transportation, material and water consumption, hosting of conference and events, solid and e-waste management as well as training and awareness. Every office, in the management of its programme of work, has an obligation to address the negative impact of those aspects and contribute positively to the environment where relevant.

As evidence of their own commitment to the SDGs and in support of the execution of the Secretary-General action plan for integrating sustainable development practices into the UN Secretariat, Offices are requested, under the “Executive Direction and Management” component of the budget document, to highlight a particular achievement or best practice in environmental sustainability management during the reporting period. Offices are also requested to outline one improvement they are planning to achieve for the 2020 budgeting period. Each paragraph should be concise (no more than 10 lines), address one or more of the main environmental aspects listed above and be in alignment with System wide, Secretariat wide or local environmental sustainability efforts. Examples may be reducing or mitigating the environmental impact of organizing an event, considering GHGs in establishing travel itineraries for advisory services, increasing the use of video-conferencing, improving waste separation in accordance with local waste procedures, improving inventory management of ICT devices, enforcing energy saving measures such as turning off ICT devices, reducing water bottle consumption in the delivery of programmed activities, repurposing supplies and increasing staff awareness on ESM through communication or development of trainings. For coordination and assistance on this component of the budget submission, please contact the [focal point](#) at your location or email greeningUNHQ@un.org.

The largest impact of UN Secretariat activities on the climate is the emission of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) from air travel. To further address this area of priority, Offices should make all efforts possible in planning their activities to reduce travel related GHG, including through the use of alternative

means of communication and careful choice of meeting locations and mode of transportation. ICAO provides helpful [tools](#) to both calculate and minimize travel related GHG emissions.

In the justifications of proposed programmed resources and increases/reductions from previously budgeted levels, offices are encouraged to highlight, where applicable, environmental efficiencies and benefits in their submissions that may be associated with their operational requirements. Examples, for illustration purposes, include: proposed reductions for photocopy paper, printing of documentation, fuel consumption, travel cost, etc which would also lower the Organization's footprint as well as resource increases such as for the development of online tools that would result in both programmatic and environmental benefits (such as delivering a capacity building activity to a larger audience while reducing the need to travel and consume paper). This is particularly relevant for those sections of the budget with the mandate to operate facilities and manage capital assets. Investments in operations that mainstream environmental management should be underlined and information on the expected environmental benefits and return on investment, when applicable, should be included. Capital requirements for conversion of incandescent or fluorescent lighting to LED, replacement of end of life equipment with high efficiency options, renewable power generation and improvements to waste management systems are example of such projects. It is encouraged that proposals be coordinated through the local EMS where established and also be in line with the relevant strategic capital plans.

Annex 2 – Suggestions for personal objectives in the 2019 Senior management Compact

Objective	Expected accomplishment	Performance measure
<p>To contribute to the goal of a United Nations that does not, through its operations, have a negative impact on the climate</p> <p>or</p> <p>To achieve further improvements in quality, cost effectiveness, timeliness and environmental efficiencies of service delivery in the area of (departmental/office responsibility)</p> <p>or</p> <p>The effective, efficient and sustainable management of the (Department/Office) operations</p>	<p>Reduced operational impact on the environment, including through resource efficiencies</p>	<p>Number of environmental sustainability measures undertaken to reduce the environmental impact of the Department/Office operations <i>(i.e support to local or Secretariat wide initiatives, encouragement to staff to follow waste management guidelines, departmental actions on use of alternatives to travel, reduction of plastic pollution, etc)</i></p>
	<p>Reduced <u>air travel related Green House Gas emissions</u> <i>(by maximizing the use of alternate mode of communications and integrating environmental considerations in the choice of meeting locations.)</i></p>	<p>Reduction in commercial air travel greenhouse gas emissions relative to total programme expenditure</p>
	<p>Improved <u>sustainability of conference/events</u></p>	<p>Increase in proportion of conference/events organized using sustainable event tools</p>
	<p>Improved environmental <u>sustainability of facilities</u></p>	<p>Decrease in energy consumption/increase in renewable energy</p>
	<p><u>Increased awareness and engagement</u> among staff on the SDGs and the UN climate neutrality goal</p>	<p>XX activities organized or facilitated to promote in-house sustainability efforts</p>
<p><i>[For USGs/ASGs who are members of the UN Secretariat Steering Group on ESM]</i></p>	<p>Progress is made in the development of a Secretariat-wide Environmental Sustainable Management framework</p>	<p>Active participation in the work of the UN Secretariat Steering Group on Environmental Sustainability management</p>
		<p>A local ESM governance is established and planning of an Environmental Management System completed <i>(OAHs)</i></p>