

In Focus



The Palais des Nations in summer.

■ Greening the United Nations Office at Geneva

“ Put simply, climate change will rewrite the global equation for development, peace and prosperity in the twenty first century. ”

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
The Road to Copenhagen: Meeting the Climate Challenge
(3 October 2009)

Climate change is a defining challenge of our age. Together with the wider United Nations system, UNOG is working towards climate neutrality in its operations to set an example by limiting our collective carbon footprint in line with the Secretary-General's priorities.

As a major service provider, UNOG integrates the greening dimension in all areas of its work, from conference management to administration, and library



Sheep grazing on the lawn of the Palais des Nations.

and information services. Over the past eight years, UNOG has cut electricity and fuel consumption by 20 per cent and water consumption by just over 40 per cent. This impressive reduction in CO₂ emissions has been achieved through a combination of institutional measures, innovative partnerships with the host country and civil society, and a transformation of work processes – installing solar panels, restricting air conditioning, improving thermal insulation, buying fuel-efficient vehicles, providing incentives to staff to use sustainable modes of transport, separating waste and using sheep to cut the grass. Creativity and a readiness to embrace change have been critical.

With the firm commitment and active participation of staff, UNOG continued building on these accomplishments throughout 2009, as its efforts took on added significance in the run-up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, which took place from 7 to 18 December 2009.

From early 2009, the Palais des Nations has been heated with natural gas instead of fuel, which has significantly reduced emissions of carbon dioxide, as well as oxide, dioxide and sulphur dioxide. In addition, there is no longer any need for delivery of oil in vehicles, which added to greenhouse gas reductions. The Natural Gas Project is the result of a partnership with the main utility provider in Geneva, Services Industriels de Genève.

Advantages and savings in the context of the Natural Gas Project

Advantages	Reduced carbon dioxide emissions
Without Natural Gas Project	5 500 metric tons of CO ₂ /year
With Natural Gas Project	4 220 metric tons of CO ₂ /year
Savings	1 280 metric tons of CO ₂ /year
Savings (percentage)	23.27%

On 28 March 2009, UNOG together with United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations offices, switched off all lights for one hour as part of Earth Hour 2009. Led by the World Wildlife Fund, the Earth Hour initiative reached over 1 billion people in 4,000 cities in 88 countries worldwide, sending a clear message to world leaders of concern over climate change.

In June 2009, the Geneva-Lake-Nations (GLN) project became operational and was officially launched on 29 July 2009 in a ceremony in which the Director-General and Mr. Robert Cramer, Councillor of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, participated. On this occasion, the Director-General also signed the Copenhagen: Seal the Deal campaign. Through GLN, the Palais des Nations is now supplied with water from Lake Geneva for cooling of the premises and uses 100 per cent renewable energy. As in the case of the Natural Gas Project, GLN represents



The Director-General signs the Copenhagen: Seal the Deal campaign (29 July 2009).

an innovative partnership with the Services Industriels de Genève. It is estimated that the global reduction of costs for the Palais des Nations, calculated over a 16-year period, will come to approximately 60,000 SwF per year.

Advantages and savings in the context of GLN

Advantages	Reduced electricity consumption	Reduced water consumption	Reduced maintenance costs
Without GLN	15 100 MWh/year	150 000 m ³ /year	SwF 45,000
With GLN	14 610 MWh/year	142 000 m ³ /year	SwF 30,000
Savings	490 MWh/year	8 000 m ³ /year	SwF 15,000
Savings (percentage)	3.25	5.33	33.33
Estimated cost avoidance (2007 prices)	SwF 64,778	SwF 21,256	SwF 15,000

In a second phase, the GLN grid will be used to supply heating for the new buildings in the Nations area, including the Sismondi College, the "Maison de la Paix" and the planned extension of the World Trade Organization.

Also in June 2009, UNOG was awarded the prestigious Nature Reserve Certificate by the Swiss non-profit organization, Fondation Nature Et Economie. This well-known environmental quality label is awarded to entities

that protect nature and contribute to biological diversity by managing at least 30 per cent of the green areas around buildings in a natural manner. The many initiatives of UNOG to qualify for the Certificate include, among others, avoiding pesticides, utilizing compost and making use of sheep instead of lawnmowers. As a result of these concerted efforts over several years, visitors can enjoy the rich biodiversity of the 46-hectare park, with trees over 100 years old, more than 68,000 m² of lush grassland and a large variety of flowers.



The Nature Reserve Certificate awarded to UNOG.



The Natural Gas Project construction site.

In the area of conference management, materials purchased and production processes comply with modern environmental standards. Publications and documents are printed on uncoated paper whose pulp originates from sustainably managed forests certified by the Forest Stewardship Council and/or the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes and the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme certification. Recently installed digital printing machines, accounting for 40 per cent of overall production, consume 45 per cent less energy and produce 90 per cent less ozone than equivalent machines in their class. The use of outdated films and chemicals has been eliminated from the plate-making process and the computer-to-plate processer uses no chemicals in the production of printing plates. All waste materials are recycled or disposed of in line with Swiss environmental regulations.

Improvements in the field of information and communications technologies include the construction of a new, state-of-the-art data centre supported by a Network Operations Centre and a gradual shift from physical servers to virtualized servers. The innovations will result in significant savings in energy consumption.

In 2007, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB), chaired by the Secretary-General, decided to move all organizations belonging to the United Nations system towards climate neutrality for facility operations

and travel by the end of 2009. In response to the CEB decision, the Director-General has established the UNOG Climate Neutral Task Force, which in 2009 compiled the first-ever Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory for UNOG. As UNOG provides buildings and travel services to a large number of United Nations entities, the inventory included greenhouse gas emissions for travel for 18 United Nations entities and for building management for 19 entities. The inventory was included as part of Copenhagen Climate Neutral UN report presented at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. It will be updated annually to track performance over time.

As it provides an analysis of the current pattern and size of emissions, the inventory is an important tool for identifying potential for reductions and setting priorities for action. Based on the results of the inventory and experience so far in reducing emissions, UNOG will compile a Climate Neutral Strategy to be implemented throughout 2010. The Strategy will be based on input and ideas from all UNOG divisions and services, and will include practical measures, recommendations, reduction targets derived from the baselines determined in the 2009 inventory, and deadlines for implementation.

In the framework of system-wide efforts to incorporate the greening dimension in all aspects of the work of the Organization, UNOG is now a member of the Geneva Environment Network. Bringing together some

Elements of the UNOG Climate Neutral Strategy to be developed and implemented in 2010

Pillar	Areas of operation	Measures under consideration
Physical assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Buildings ■ Equipment ■ Vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Installation of additional solar panels for hot water production ■ Creation of 233 additional parking spaces for bicycles and 64 for motorcycles, as well as additional showers
Management processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Procurement ■ Travel ■ Management systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Suggested use of train to destinations within a certain distance
Organizational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Day-to-day office behaviour and corporate culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishment of green task forces in all divisions ■ Introduction of a printing policy to manage printing and copying ■ Introduction of sustainable procurement training for all buyers

50 organizations engaged in environmental issues within and outside the United Nations system in Geneva, the Geneva Environment Network functions as an inter-agency coordination and partnership-building mechanism in this critical area. UNOG is exploring with the Geneva Environment Network and other United Nations entities based in Geneva the possibility of marking World Environment Day on 5 June 2010 to highlight the United Nations family's collective efforts for environmental sustainability.

The deteriorating state of the Palais des Nations and its energy-inefficient infrastructure continue to limit significantly the extent of achievable carbon emission limitations. Climate neutrality can only be realized through a complete renovation of the buildings to ensure compliance with current energy efficiency standards. This concern is being addressed within the context of the Strategic Heritage Plan, as described above, which is essential for sustainable preservation of the buildings and optimum energy performance.

UNOG continues to share its experience, within and outside the system, to inspire and encourage all who come to the Palais des Nations to apply the same principles in their activities and provide further impetus for a greener United Nations in the collective efforts to combat climate change. UNOG is not only changing policies and practices, but strives to change mindsets and habits. The future of the planet depends on it.

“ At the Palais des Nations, we do face particular challenges in reaching climate neutrality. Close to 80 years old now, the Palais was built long before climate, carbon and emissions became part of the political and public vocabulary. This is another reason that we are committed to the implementation of our Strategic Heritage Plan for the sustainable preservation of the Palais. ”

The Director-General at the inauguration of the Geneva-Lake-Nations Project (29 July 2009)