Greening the Blue Report 2021

The UN System’s Environmental Footprint and Efforts to Reduce It

2020 Data Highlights


The Report highlights the 2020 environmental impacts of over 315,000 personnel in 56 UN system entities across Headquarters, field offices and operations on the ground. The 2021 edition is the first to reveal impacts from COVID-19.

The full Report and entity-specific data are available on greeningtheblue.org

“Facing a triple planetary emergency — a climate crisis, a nature crisis and a pollution crisis — we need urgent and determined action from everyone, everywhere. The United Nations is committed to lead by example in reducing our carbon and environmental footprint in all our operations around the globe. Together, let’s achieve a sustainable, net-zero and resilient world for all.”

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

Climate Neutrality

99% of the UN system’s reported 2020 greenhouse gas emissions are offset

Water and Wastewater

38 m³ per UN personnel per year

— 256,000 personnel in 51 entities are included in this system-wide data

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

~1.5 million tonnes CO₂eq

Total Emissions 2020

5 tonnes CO₂eq

315,000 personnel in 54 entities are included in this system-wide data

Air Pollution in the lower and upper atmosphere

OZONE DEPLETING SUBSTANCES IN THE UPPER ATMOSPHERE (STRATOSPHERE)

62% of UN offices did not know which refrigerants they use

26% of UN offices use non-ozone depleting refrigerants*

12% of UN offices use ozone depleting refrigerants

Air Pollutants in the Lower Atmosphere (Ground-Level)

The UN system utilized in 2020 ~350 million litres of fuel to run its vehicle fleets as well as its facilities’ generators and boilers.

Waste

AVERAGE WASTE GENERATED

369 kg/person

for the whole UN System

184 kg/person

for the UN System excluding Peacekeeping and Special Political Missions

Peacekeeping and Special Political Missions have a higher waste generated average than other entities as their waste generation includes living quarters

Disposal Routes of Waste Generated by the UN System

62% Controlled Disposal

26% Closed Incineration

12% Open Incineration

Other/Unknown

55%

100

75

50

25

0

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Procurement

For the 39 UN organizations that submitted data to ASR¹:

The adoption or planned adoption of sustainable procurement policies by UN entities increased from 59% in 2019 to 85% in 2020.

The adoption of measurable sustainability targets increased from 36% in 2019 to 41% in 2020.

With regards to the type of sustainability considerations addressed, 92% of reporting entities stated they addressed environmental sustainability aspects.

Social and economic sustainability considerations are reportedly addressed by 80% of reporting organizations each.

¹ Data available from the 2020 Annual Statistical Report on UN Procurement (ASR).

Human Resources

Environmental Training for Personnel

Contributing Entities