

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**  
**COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**  
Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials  
“Environment for Europe”

Fourth meeting  
Geneva, 29 August 2007  
Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Information Paper No. 1  
21 August 2007

**CARBON NEUTRALITY OF THE BELGRADE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

Prepared by the UNECE secretariat

**Introduction**

Following the request by the fourth meeting of the Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO) for preparing the sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, the secretariat has developed a note on possible options for making the sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” to be held in Belgrade, Serbia (Belgrade Conference) carbon neutral.

This paper provides information on the concept of the carbon neutrality and its possible application for the Conference. The paper is submitted to the WGSO for consideration and further guidance on options to be chosen.

**How to achieve Carbon Neutrality of the Belgrade Conference**

Carbon Neutrality is the concept of reducing or offsetting any greenhouse gases produced by any type of activity to neutralise the effect on global warming.

A two-step approach is normally applied:

1. Calculation of how much GHG emissions are generated
2. Offset GHG emissions through climate change mitigation actions elsewhere

1. Calculation of the GHG emissions

Existing methodologies take into account carbon emissions from:

- (a) Travel of participants;
- (b) Energy consumed and waste generated at the conference venue;
- (c) Local transportation;
- (d) Hotel accommodation;
- (e) Pre and post-conference activities.

*Air travel*

According to the paper FCCC/SBI/2005/9 prepared by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the air travel of participants proves to be the main source of GHG emissions. It accounts for up to 95-99 % from the total amount of GHG emissions.

The GHG emissions from air travel can be calculated via on-line GHG emissions calculators based on the participants registration data.

In many cases calculations assume that participants are traveling from their home cities. If there is no airport in the home city, the car ride is being added from the home city to the nearest airport. No distinction is made between the different types of planes and fuel used.

*Hotel accommodation*

The GHG emissions produced through the accommodation of the participants would include the amount of energy consumed (mainly electricity) and amount of waste produced.

The data on the hotels may also include the distance to the Conference venue, in which case estimations may also include the number of shuttle bus rides per day.

*Venue*

The GHG emissions produced at the venue would include the energy (electricity) consumption and amount of waste produced. The number of cars parked at the designated parking slot may also be considered in the final calculations.

The type of equipment (e.g. if the equipment has the energy saving mode) and cars (hybrid) used during the Conference could be considered in the final calculation.

*Pre and post-conference activities*

The GHG emissions associated with the pre and post-conference activities would include the shipment data, production of the Conference documents, as well as energy (electricity) consumption and amount of waste produced during the installation and dismantling of exhibition and other stands.

*Calculation*

According to the UNFCCC Secretariat all calculations should be done in two steps. Preliminary estimates could be done based on the registration data for the participants and would be limited to air travel.

A second estimate is done after the event, when the exact number of Conference attendees, the amount of energy (electricity) consumed and waste produced are known.

Preliminary estimates conducted by the UNECE secretariat show that the Conference will most probably produce up to 3 000 tones of GHG emissions.  
More precise estimates could be done by a so-called “off-set company” specialising on carbon offsetting activities.

## 2. Offset the GHG emissions

Two major issues associated with the offsetting are:

- (a) Provision of funds;
- (b) Choosing the offsetting activity (-ies).

### *Provision of funds*

Provision of funds may be arranged in several ways: the funds may be raised from several major donors or every participant may provide his donation. In the latter case donation may be voluntary or obligatory, it may be fixed at a certain level or calculated according to the actual contribution of a certain participant.

### *Choosing the offsetting activity (-ies)*

The actual offsetting may be done in several ways:

- (c) The certified emission reduction (CER) units may be purchased via brokerage at the Carbon Stocks;
- (d) The funds may be directed to one or more specific projects aiming at the climate change mitigation.

While the purchase of the CER is a rather difficult and costly option, many companies specialising on carbon offsetting activities nowadays are proposing packages of the activities that would include both calculations of the GHG emissions produced by the Conference and proposing the offsetting projects. A wide variety of offset projects are in use — while tree planting has initially been a mainstay of carbon offsetting, renewable energy and energy conservation offsets have now become increasingly popular, and purchase and withdrawal of emissions trading credits is also seen.

Consultations held with the UNFCCC Secretariat, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and some other international organisation that made their events carbon neutral have indicated that the services of the **CarbonNeutral** Company (ex Future Forests) were widely used by them and that in a specific case of the large conference the criteria that this company apply for estimates of the GHG emissions are the most suitable.

According to previous experience of the above mentioned international organisations, carbon offsetting activities for an event taking place in Europe, having about 1000 participants and running for 3 days may account for approximately 17 000 euro.

The CarbonNeutral Company was requested to run preliminary estimates for the Conference and provide an approximate budget required.

There may also be actions taken by the organizers and participants on the spot and later accounted for the reduction of the GHG emissions. These actions may include sorting and recycling waste, use of re-usable materials (e.g. no plastic caps and other throw-away goods), use of the energy saving equipment, use of non-bleached paper, arrange a tree planting ceremony during the event etc.

**Issues to be considered by the WGSO**

In the light of the presented information, the WGSO is invited to consider and give guidance on few major issues:

- (e) To mandate the UNECE secretariat to request the CabronNeutral Company to run preliminary estimates of the GHG emissions to be produced by the Belgrade Conference;
- (f) As the UNECE secretariat does not have capacity to engage in the carbon stocks trading, to ask the CabronNeutral Company to identify possible projects for the offsetting of the GHG emissions to be produced by the Belgrade Conference;
- (g) How should the required funds be raised?