

# Climate change conferences and their sustainability concepts

**Best practice examples from recent sessions of the UNFCCC COP**

Expert Group Meeting on Enhancing Sustainability of Conferences and Conference-related Travel

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## Overview

- Sustainability strategy
- Choice of location
- Travel & transportation
- Virtual participation
- Venue and operations
- Emissions offsetting



## Sustainability strategy – objectives & foundations

Climate neutrality is integral part of the host's responsibility  
under all COP Host Country Agreements

” Article 4:

- *In providing the Conference space, premises, equipment, utilities and services the Government shall endeavour that climate neutrality is achieved locally for the duration of the Conference.*“
- *Government:*
  - a) *to estimate GHG emissions associated with hosting the Conference*
  - b) *to reduce or avoid GHG emissions to the extent possible*
  - c) *to encourage participants to contribute to offsetting emissions related to their travelling and participation, may provide a mechanism for participants to offset*
- *Secretariat*
  - a) *to provide assistance in estimating GHG*
  - b) *to suggest ways and means by which the Government can reduce and/or offset greenhouse gas emissions*



**Sustainability strategy** – management & communications

e.g. COP 15 Copenhagen, COP 17 Durban:

- dedicated host country “green” focal point or team
- pro-active advice and assistance from secretariat
- involve different stakeholders (secretariat, host government & town departments, venue & contractors, local market/contractors and community, participants, etc.)
- dedicated “green” pages on official host country web site
- press/media releases
- local/national awareness-raising campaigns for general public (e.g., COP 12 Nairobi)
- “emissions and offset-o-meter” at conference venue (COP 17 Durban)



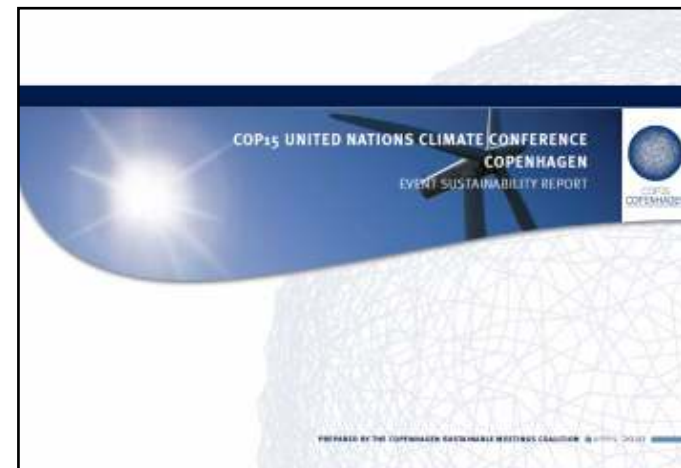
## Sustainability strategy – elements & reporting

### Elements:

- UNEP Green Meeting Guide (2009)
- draft UNEP Sustainable Events Guide (2011)

### Reporting:

- e.g. COP 15, Copenhagen, Denmark
  - covers social and environmental aspects
- Report for COP 17, Durban, South Africa
  - under preparation



## Choice of location

- Choice of host country/city (and, implicitly, venue) is a political decision of the COP, environmental considerations are not normally a priority criterion
- Preferably: layout, existing local infrastructure and local standards conducive to sustainability
- If not: opportunity for host to improve environmental performance
- Elements to consider:
  - a) Short distances (compact lay-out, e.g., COP 13 Bali, COP 16 Cancun)
  - b) Infrastructure in place (e.g., COP 14 Poznan, COP 15 Copenhagen, SBs Bonn):
    - Public transportation system
    - Waste separation & recycling facilities and capacities
    - Certification common in local market (products, suppliers, hotels, ...)
    - Legal standards



## Travel & transportation

### Long-distance travel:

- Measures taken by UNFCCC secretariat:
  - a) Reduce travel: limitations on number of staff assigned to service the conference
  - b) Reduce emissions:
    - Travel by train (reduction by 80-90%): COP 14 Poznan; COP 15 Copenhagen
    - Travel in economy class (reduction by 50%): COP 18 Doha
- Measures taken by participants:
  - a) delegations offset own travel related emissions (voluntary)

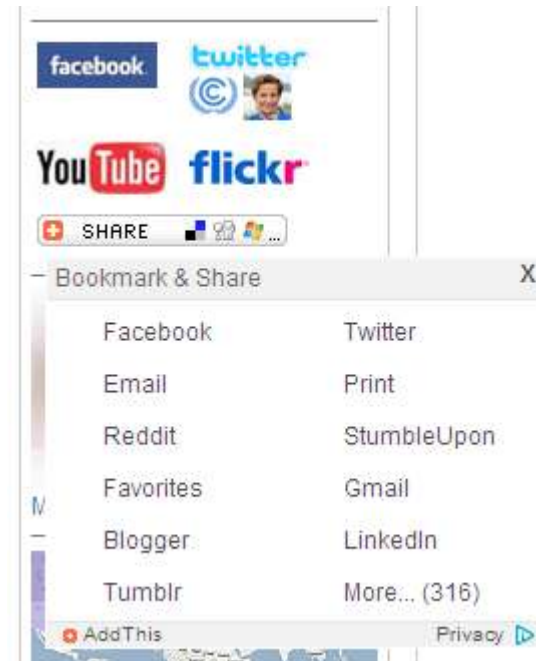
### Local transportation:

- free public transportation or dedicated shuttle service for registered participants - all COPs
- environmentally-friendly shuttle buses: COP 14 Poznan (natural gas)
- free bicycles: COP 13 Bali



## Virtual participation

- *arguably* reduces need for travel
- *definitely* maximizes participation *without* generating travel
  
- webcasts (live and archived) of all plenary meetings, press conferences
- web site
- social networks and communication platforms
- video links into plenary
- video conferencing facilities for informal meetings, to touchbase with the capital, etc.





## Venue and operations

- eco-certification (e.g., LEED) of conference centre as a building (e.g., COP 18 Doha)
- waste reduction
  - a) water dispensers not bottled water (e.g., COP 13 Bali)
  - b) no delegate gift bags (e.g., COP 15 Copenhagen)
  - c) degradable containers (e.g., COP 15 Copenhagen, COP 17 Durban)
- waste management
  - a) separation, recycling (e.g., introduced at COP 12 Nairobi)
- food and beverages
  - a) local suppliers (e.g., COP 12 Nairobi, COP 15 Copenhagen)
  - b) organic food (e.g., COP 15 Copenhagen)
- electricity
  - a) from renewable sources (e.g., Bonn SBs)
  - b) maximally efficient equipment (e.g., air-conditioning COP 13 Bali)



## Venue and operations

- reduce paper use (currently: 5 – 8 million sheets!)
  - a) though electronic documents and increased use of mobile devices (e.g., COP 17 Durban):
    - “Information for Participants” online only
    - Side Events programme online only
    - shortened Daily Programme online
    - limited distribution of printed plenary statements
    - ... to be further expanded at COP 18 Doha
  - b) centralized photocopying/printing/scanning
- recycled/certified paper (e.g., Bonn SBs)



## Emissions offsetting

- measuring COP carbon footprint since COP 10 Buenos Aires
- offsetting COP carbon footprint since COP 11 Montreal
- for all emissions *or* a subset (venue & operations, local transportation, staff travel, participants travel, ...)
- through self-determined (e.g., afforestation) projects (e.g., COP 13 Bali, COP 14 Poznan) *or* financial support to CDM project (e.g., COP 15 Copenhagen) *or* purchase & cancellation of CERs
- by host government (e.g., COP 13 Bali, COP 14 Poznan, COP 15 Copenhagen) *and/or* sponsors (e.g., COP 17 Durban – Centre for South-South Cooperation Shanghai)
- opportunity for participants to purchase carbon credits at conference site
- secretariat is in the process of purchasing Adaptation Fund CERs to offset all secretariat-generated emissions, including funded travel of staff and participants



