Net Zero Carbon Events
The Meetings and Events Industry's initiative to address climate change

Events drive industries and societies. They shape conversations, foster innovation and generate business. They are key to human collaboration. This holds true for every subject – including sustainability and climate change. The events industry has a special role to play in tackling climate change. It provides the meeting places and market places to work on solutions to the climate crisis. At the same time it has a responsibility to minimise its impact on climate change.

A. Action Event – Key Messages

At the COP27 the Net Zero Carbon Events Initiative released its roadmap with the aim to help the meetings and events industry shaping the pathway towards Net Zero by 2050 and emissions reduction by 2030 in line with the Paris Agreement. The Roadmap is the result of a collaborative approach by the 400 plus organisations from 55 countries which have become supporters of the initiative and aims to set out a common pathway to achieve this ambitious goal.

This collaborative cross-industry approach is more important than ever in the current context of economic downturn, challenging global supply chains and increasing costs. Smaller players are already being squeezed financially and, while the economic benefits of decarbonisation will come into play in the medium term, in the short-term economic challenges may prevail. By working together, the full force of the events industry can highlight not only the benefits it brings to the world, but also the support which may be needed to make the required changes in order to achieve Net Zero.

Ina Parvanova, Director, Communications and Engagement Division at UNFCCC underlined the importance of COP27 as the implementation COP by moving from commitments to scaled up actions and that the developed roadmap represents exactly that by engaging numerous stakeholders with different needs and priorities.

According to James Rees, JMIC-President, finding common and unified solutions to climate change is key and the launch of the Net Zero Carbon Events Roadmap is a landmark moment for the industry.

B. Event Outcomes

Besides the release of the Roadmap for the Meetings and Events Industry, the third phase of the project was launched by introducing 8 workstreams, whose task it will be to describe how to possibly implement the roadmap.

The workstreams follow the five priority action areas featured in the roadmap. The Industry Priority Action Areas are the key topics where collaborative action, both within and outside the industry, is required in order for real progress to be made:

1. *Venue Energy*

Energy to power, heat and cool venues accounts for a significant portion of any event's emissions and can be addressed through reducing energy consumption and using renewable energy sources. It is also the most significant element of an event carbon footprint which falls within the Scope 1 or 2 of

an event stakeholder, namely the venue itself. As the proportion of renewables in energy grids increases, this will positively impact the events industry's energy footprint. However, there is also significant opportunity for energy efficiency and generating on-site renewable sources, as well as purchasing renewable energy certificates from suppliers.

2. Waste and Waste Management

The temporary nature of events means that the events industry has evolved over time to be one where infrastructure is specifically designed for short-term use. This has allowed for huge flexibility in terms of how an event is constructed and the ability for bespoke items to be brought in for a single occasion. The production and disposal of items is a significant contributor to an event's carbon footprint. In order to move towards Net Zero the industry as a whole needs to adopt a more 'circular' approach to the production of events, by using reusable items, sustainable materials and designing out the significant amounts of waste.

3. Food and Food Waste

The carbon emissions generated by the production and transportation of food (including beverages), and food waste can make up a significant proportion of the carbon footprint of many events. It also makes up a significant portion of many event budgets. This is particularly the case for corporate events where production elements are lower and banqueting takes on a higher priority. It is important that the events industry plays its part by striving towards sustainably sourced, low carbon food and eliminating food waste as well as waste generated by containers and packaging.

4. Logistics

The transportation of equipment and goods to events is a significant generator of carbon emissions. Although it is recognised that some types of events, particularly those with more 'built elements' such as trade shows, will have a higher logistics footprint than others, the sourcing of items locally and the transportation of them sustainably are practices that will be relevant for most events. This action area is closely linked to Action Area #2 as the less equipment and materials that are required for an event, the less transportation will be needed. This can also lead to significant cost efficiencies.

5. Travel and Accommodation

The emissions generated by attendee and staff travel and accommodation consistently make up the largest proportion of the carbon footprint of an event. There are some actions which can be taken by the events industry to reduce emissions generated by travel, such as partnering with sustainable providers, sharing appropriate information with delegates and building consideration of travel emissions into decisions surrounding event location. In reality the level of control events stakeholders have over this element is low. Nevertheless, so significant are the travel emissions it is critical that the events industry has a clearly defined approach to addressing the challenges they pose. Collaboration with travel industry stakeholders will be key, as will consistent collection of relevant data and, where relevant, managing the offsetting of emissions by attendees themselves, in the short to medium term at least. There is also an opportunity for event organisers to, in certain circumstances, base destination or venue selection on criteria related to minimising attendee travel.

Additional three workstreams were introduced, which are transversal in their nature. They have a strong interconnection with those following the priority action areas and focus on:

6. Measurement

Collecting consistent data across multiple stakeholders and events is one of the most significant challenges for the industry as it embarks on its net zero journey. In order to simplify the challenge, 21 basic data collection items have been identified. These represent the elements that all events should strive to collect, if they are relevant. Additional data points are also identified, where more granular data is available. The data points were identified following a review of existing tools, methodologies and in-house company approaches, and form the fundamental basis of the carbon footprint of events. Further work to provide methodologies for measurement of consistent metrics will be undertaken as Phase 3 of the Net Zero Carbon Events Initiative.

7. Carbon Offsetting

Carbon offsetting in itself is not the answer to Net Zero. However, as an interim measure carbon offsetting is a legitimate strategy to mitigate the impact of carbon emissions and can help companies, and events, achieve 'carbon neutral' status. An outline of how carbon offsetting can be used effectively will be provided. It will also set out a hierarchical approach which, if adopted throughout the industry, would streamline offsetting activities and build significant scale in terms of positive impact and the narrative surrounding it. The central message of the Net Zero Carbon Events initiative in connection with carbon offsetting is that any carbon offsetting activity should be accompanied by a clear decarbonisation plan.

8. Reporting

The Net Zero Carbon Events Initiative will invite all participating companies to complete the annual reporting template on a regular basis. The aim is to collect consistent information across all supporters so that progress can be monitored, common challenges identified highlight learnings and best practices highlighted. Where emissions or reduction data is available it should be shared. All information will be confidential and only shared in aggregated, anonymised formats.