

GREEN MEETINGS GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS

OVERVIEW

Since adopting the United Nations Climate Neutral Strategy in 2007, the Economic Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), has worked towards measuring and reducing the environmental footprint of its activities. To this end, Green House Gas (GHG) emissions generated by core operations have systematically been evaluated, monitored, ideally, offset. To accelerate towards comprehensive climate neutrality by 2020, ESCAP is committed to organizing and implementing sustainable environmentally-friendly and carbon-neutral meetings, taking United Nations Environment's definition of a sustainable event as a guiding principle:¹



"A sustainable event is one designed, organized and implemented in a way that minimizes potential negative impacts and leaves a beneficial legacy for the host community and all involved."



CLIMATE NEUTRALITY

ESCAP supports the integration of all sustainable development's dimensions (with particular focus on environmental and social) into the planning of United Nation meetings and events hosted on its premises. This is accomplished through various means; nevertheless, meeting such objectives, implies collective action for all involved stakeholders, including organizers and participants. Individual participants are strongly advised to adopt conscious behaviours and to follow the guidelines set forth below.

CARBON ACCOUNTING

To understand the full carbon-impact of ESCAP meeting and conference operations, an ESCAP methodology has been developed to appreciate carbon accounting on various fronts, including: transportation to-/within-Bangkok, accommodation, conference venue, food and food-waste, paper, plastic, waste and teleconferencing-related emissions. The information will be compiled into a short report and be made visible to inform meeting-related policies to reduce carbon emissions wherever possible, but more importantly, it will inform emission offsetting efforts as related to the meetings.

EMISSION OFFSETTING

Despite efforts to significantly reduce emission load, certain carbon dioxide (CO₂) discharges are unavoidable. To mitigate unintended carbon effects, ESCAP has decided to offset event-related emissions to achieve climate neutrality. The methodology to calculate the emissions covers a multitude of topics, including: conference room operations; food, beverages and catering; accommodation; transportation to the venue; other operational accounting (food waste, energy usage, water usage).

Offsetting projects are located in developing countries that often cannot afford to reduce emissions on their own. Our contributions will help these projects to continue reducing emissions. In addition, many projects also contribute to sustainable development priorities such as education and health improvements in the communities that host them.



TRANSPORTATION

Despite air travel being the most carbon-intensive mode of transport, it is largely necessary. However, many factors influence the environmental footprint of a flight: class of travel; type of aircraft; number of empty seats; amount of luggage transported; etc. To reduce their environmental impact, travelers can make conscious choices, including the selection of the airline carrier, route and travel class.

Choosing one airline company over another can make a difference. Currently, there are carriers which offer the possibility to offset emissions, as well as those with a newer fleet (generally more fuel-efficient). Direct flights are favoured, as the majority of CO₂ is discharged during take-off and landing, accounting for one third to half of all emissions relating to the passenger's journey.

Flying economy class is less harmful to the environment. The World Bank has calculated that the carbon footprint of a business class traveler is three times higher than one travelling economy,² due largely to space occupancy. In business/first class sections, passengers have more space as seats are bigger, resulting in lower passenger density. Moreover, full capacity is rarely reached, especially compared to the economy class. Ergo, sacrificing some luxury pays off!

Travelling within Bangkok

Bangkok is a megacity with heavy traffic and humid, tropical climate conditions which do not encourage walking. Nevertheless, Bangkok has a modern and reliable public transportation system. While the Skytrain (BTS) and underground (MRT) rail system are convenient to navigate most shopping, entertainment and business areas; boats, tuk tuks and taxis are a good way to reach many historical sites as well as the United Nations Conference Center (UNCC), located in the ESCAP compound. Participants are encouraged to ride-share with others, minimizing the amount of CO₂ produced per person.



ACCOMMODATION

The hotel industry alone is responsible for one per cent of the total CO₂ global emissions.³ Participants are strongly advised to choose a Green Leaf certified hotel,⁴ or hotels that are striving towards social and environmental sustainability. A brief list of eco-friendly accommodations has been compiled and follows hereby. Proximity to the ESCAP compound has been taken into account, so as to reduce transportation, as well as efforts to minimize waste, energy and water consumption.

Amari Watergate Hotel
www.amari.com/watergate

Plaza Athenee
www.plazaatheneebangkok.com

Royal Princess Larn Luang
www.royalprincesslarnluang.com

Royal Orchid Sheraton
www.royalorchidsheraton.com

Dusit Thani Hotel
www.dusit.com

The Sukosol
www.sukosolhotels.com

Grand China Hotel
www.grandchina.com

VIE Hotel Bangkok
www.viehotelbangkok.com



FOOD AND DRINKS

Locally-sourced, seasonal and organic products

Carbon emissions associated with food are related to production and transport.⁵ In cooperation with Sodexo, ESCAP's in-house caterer, the food available throughout the UNCC is seasonal, locally produced, community-sourced and, as much as possible, organic. A labelling system displaying such descriptive information (i.e. locally-sourced, organic, vegan and vegetarian) has been introduced, especially to highlight the value of vegetarianism and veganism as carbon-friendly dining alternatives. Initiatives are being pursued to improve the menu's sustainability of the Thai Canteen, located on the ground floor of the Service Building.

Green week menu

At the International Canteen (located on the 1st floor), a sustainable menu will be served throughout the event. Food preparation gives preference to fish and vegetarian proteins over meat-based ones, as meat production not only takes more energy,⁶ but livestock also produces GHGs responsible for global warming.

Avoiding food waste

Approximately one third of the food produced globally for human consumption goes to waste,⁷ comprising of 3.3 Gtonnes of CO₂. In case of a catered side-event, please let us know if you have registered and won't be able to attend so food waste can be avoided. Attendees are also invited to ask for smaller size portions or to bring reusable food containers for leftovers. Biodegradable take away containers are made available in different sizes at the various cafeterias, however an extra 5 baht is requested to discourage over-use and over-reliance.

As part of Sodexo's Waste Watch Program, food waste generated at the consumer-side is digitally monitored, accounted for and displayed on daily basis, to better inform consumers of the consumption habits. Goals are created on a weekly basis to reduce the waste figures and improve collective accountability among all cafeteria users, including both employees and visitors. Currently, efforts are undertaken to strengthen Sodexo's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) commitment by working on integrating food waste produced during meal preparation (producer-side) into its calculations. Food waste factors heavily into carbon accounting so they can be appropriately off-set at the end.

Drinking water

Purified water dispensers are made available throughout the UNCC. Participants are therefore encouraged to bring their own reusable water bottles and refill them as much as they wish. If water bottles are needed, glass bottles recommended. Empty bottles, of either glass or plastic, shall be separated to facilitate recycling.

For certain events, attendees will be given a United Nations ceramic mug to purchase their drinks at the catering services available throughout the UNCC area. Ceramic mugs and thermos are also available for purchase at reasonable price at the UN souvenir shop located on the 1st floor of UNCC. For coffee breaks and receptions scheduled during the meetings, ceramic cups are made available by Sodexo.



CONFERENCE VENUE AND FACILITIES

Reducing waste generation

In order to improve resource efficiency as well as the amount of waste produced in connection with the event, promotional items and any distributed informational materials shall be confined to a minimum and whenever possible, made of sustainable raw material. Participants are warmly invited to embrace the 3 Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) as guiding rules while purchasing or consuming goods during their stay in Bangkok. For certain meetings, USBs are distributed to distribute a large volume of ESCAP publications, knowledge products and reference material.

Paperless initiative

Printed documents is kept to a minimum. If printing is deemed necessary, eco-friendly ink and recycled paper will be made available. Double-sided printing is preferred, to limit the amount of paper utilized.

Attendees will be able to register online and download official documentation and other relevant reports from the event's website. Participants are urged to make use of electronic devices and to consider electronic access to documents before printing. A wireless internet connection is available through the entire UNCC and the agenda, schedule and concept notes for the meetings will be screened on various digital displays located in different areas of the Conference Centre.

Disposable plastic free

In order to reduce microplastic pollution and marine litter, the catering facilities throughout the UNCC will offer durable, reusable and non-plastic alternatives for food and drinks. As of June 1, 2017, Sodexo has committed to offer take away packaging, wrapping material, as well as water bottles made of plant base or other biodegradable materials. Moreover, to prevent waste generation, straws, napkins and plastic bags will be available on-demand, giving consumers the option to refrain from contributing to waste.

Participants are warmly invited to adopt this policy during their stay in Bangkok and beyond ESCAP premises. For instance, reusable shopping bags made of fabric shall be favoured to plastic ones. Unnecessary plastic food wrapping or plastic straws for drinks should also be limited, if not avoided.

Decorations

The majority of the displays employed across the UNCC are reusable. Posters, graphic displays and signage are made easy to update, to encourage repurpose or recycle.

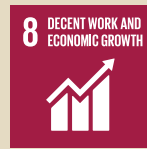


SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Participants are invited to purchase goods and souvenirs locally produced, to support to local businesses and commercial activities. Money going directly to local people through meals, souvenirs and the like means equal distribution of wealth and preservation of traditional culture.

HOW YOU ARE HELPING





ENDNOTES

1. UNEP/UNON/ICLEI/IAMLADP, (2009). Green Meeting Guide 2009. United Nations Environment Programme.
2. Bofinger, H./Strand, J. (2013). Calculating the Carbon Footprint from Different Classes of Air Travel. The World Bank.
3. United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2016). Tourism Highlight. UNWTO.
4. For more information, see:
http://www.greenleafthai.org/en/green_standard/hotel/index.php.
5. Worldwatch Institute, (2011). State of the World. Innovations that Nourish the Planet.
6. Gerber, P.J./Steinfeld, H./Henderson, B./Mottet, A./Opio, C./Dijkman, J./Falcucci, A./Tempio, G. (2013). Tackling climate change through livestock – A global assessment of emissions and mitigation opportunities. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
7. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), (2011). Food wastage footprint. Impacts on natural resources.