



Practice what you preach

Carbon footprinting
by climate change watchdogs

*Transparency and quality of carbon reporting of
UNFCCC, EEA, WWF, FOE and Greenpeace*



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Carbon reporting of watchdogs below expectations

Summary

Do they walk the talk?

When it comes to taking action to mitigate climate change, there are organizations from which we expect more than from others. Organizations who we would expect to “walk the talk” are the campaigners [WWF, FoE, Greenpeace] and the organizations that support governments to combat climate change [UNFCCC, EEA].

The question to be answered is: how do these organizations manage the climate change issue for their own offices and business travel? Do they measure, reduce and offset carbon emissions that are the result of their own operations?

The surprising answer is that transparency and quality of their carbon management systems is often below what is now the quality that we expect from industry.

Monitoring of emissions

The only organization which provided a detailed overview of its carbon emissions is the secretariat of the UNFCCC. Unfortunately, it issued only one emission report in its 17 years of existence. Also, it contains many errors and a separate annex of this report has been devoted this. EEA is not monitoring its carbon emissions. Friends of the Earth and WWF do not make emission report available at the central level, but refer to their country offices instead. These offices may or may not have monitored and managed their carbon emissions. Greenpeace published emission reports in which undisclosed underlying assumptions were changed.

[Partial] adherence to an internationally accepted standard for calculation of carbon emissions is only visible in the emission reports of Greenpeace and the secretariat of the UNFCCC.

Emission reductions

Ambitions for reduction of carbon emissions ranged from ambitious [WWF offices United Kingdom and the Netherlands] to very modest [secretariat of UNFCCC]. Surprisingly, UNFCCC uses fairly carbon intensive electricity, but only aims at “...modest energy efficiency actions and some “green” procurement” to reduce carbon emissions. A FoE member and Greenpeace report reduced emissions, although it is not clear whether these reductions are the result from active emission reduction measures.

Emission offsetting

The emissions of greenhouse gases cannot always be reduced to zero. All organizations with the exception of Greenpeace said they were using carbon offsets to neutralize the unavoidable carbon emissions. The offsets did not always cover all remaining carbon emissions. The secretariat of the UNFCCC, for example, claimed an offset for one meeting [COP9] only. This claim could not be substantiated, since the claimed emission reduction is not covered by verification reports.

Conclusion

Although all organizations promote transparency and stakeholder involvement, greenhouse gas related information from their own operations is sometimes surprisingly hard to find. UNFCCC, EEA and Greenpeace do not respond when more information or clarifications are asked for.

All organizations claim to pursue emission reduction measures, but since the emission reporting is often fragmented or non-existent it is hard to evaluate the concrete results of these efforts.

A summary table is presented below.

Summary table

Organization	Emissions reporting	Emission reductions	Offsetting
Secretariat of the UNFCCC	2004/2005 only. Partial application of ISO 14064-1 standard for emission reporting.	Initial steps were announced, such as modest energy efficiency measures and some “green” procurement.	Carbon emissions for one event claimed [CoPg] to be offset, unclear whether this has happened at all.
European Environment Agency EEA	No monitoring system for carbon emissions.	Unquantified emission reductions mostly through procurement of carbon neutral energy and energy efficiency measures.	Air travel is compensated.
WWF	No centralized reporting. Limited quantified carbon emission information available [Netherlands and UK only], no standard for quantification of carbon emissions stated.	Ambitious targets for emission reduction, results hard to assess in view of limited quantified information on carbon emissions.	Offsetting takes place [Netherlands, UK], unclear whether all remaining emissions were offset.
Friends of the Earth International FOEI	No centralized reporting available. Country office Netherlands had quantified emission estimation available. No standard for carbon reporting stated.	Emission reductions reported by the FOE member which had carbon emission information available.	All carbon emissions were claimed to be compensated [Netherlands FOE member only, other FOE members unknown].
Greenpeace	Emission report according to GHG Protocol categories [scope 1, 2 and 3] available.	Emission reductions reported. Not clear whether this is the result of active measures or due to a change in reporting assumptions.	No information on carbon offsetting.

Emission reporting of non profit organizations

Carbon management of non profit organizations

Non profit organizations play an important role in the climate change debate. Non Governmental Organizations like WWF, Friends of the Earth International [FOEI] and Greenpeace function as watchdog and campaign against policies and companies that in their eyes contribute to global warming or do not enough to avoid it. The European Environment Agency [EEA] helps the Community to make informed decisions about the environment. The secretariat of the UNFCCC supports states to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

The questions to be answered are: how is *carbon footprinting*, *emission reduction* and *carbon offsetting* set up in these organizations? How do they measure and manage the carbon emissions that are the result of their own operations?

Methodology for assessing carbon management

The web sites of UNFCCC, EEA, Greenpeace, WWF and FOEI were scanned for greenhouse gas [carbon] related information, such as emission reports or sustainability reports. If the information was not available or unclear, additional information was asked. Only FOEI responded to these questions and was able to provide answers.

The findings were shared with the organizations, who were invited to submit their comments and flag any omissions or errors. None of the organizations involved used this opportunity.



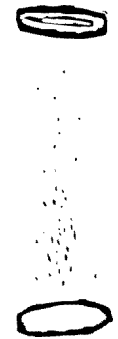
Carbon footprinting:

The carbon footprint is the amount of emissions that can be attributed to the activities of an organization. The emissions can be direct, such as combustion of fuel, or indirect, such as the import of electricity or business travel.



Emission reduction:

Organizations can identify, implement and monitor emission reductions such as procurement of green energy, discouraging use of cars, energy efficiency etc.



Carbon offsetting:

The GHG emissions that remain after implementation of reduction measures can be offset. This takes place by purchasing emission reductions from projects.

Secretariat of the UNFCCC



About the secretariat

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol are serviced by the secretariat, also known as the Climate Change Secretariat, whose mandate is laid out in general terms in Article 8 of the Convention [source: www.unfccc.int].

Frequency of emission reporting: once per 17 years

The secretariat started operations in 1991. It published its first emission report in 2006. This report covers the 2004-2005 emissions of both the UNFCCC meetings (COP and subsidiary sessions, workshops and other meetings) and the UNFCCC Secretariat itself. The website of the UNFCCC announces that the 2006 emission report will be posted soon, but in March 2009 this has not happened yet. In summary, the Secretariat has reported GHG emissions over 2 years in its 17 years of operations.

Emission report: material errors

The emission report 2004/2005 reports a total of 57314 ton CO₂eq. The scope of the report covers both the operations of the secretariat itself as well as the carbon emissions that are related to sessions of the Conference of the Parties and subsidiary bodies.

The report contains 3 tables: GHG from sessions of the Conference of the Parties and subsidiary bodies (table 2); GHG emissions from the operations of the secretariat (table 2) and a summary table (table 1). Table 2 contains a series of calculation errors, table 3 contains inconsistencies and the sum of both tables does not match with summary table 1. A selection of errors, omissions and inconsistencies are discussed in annex A of this report. All in all, 3100 to 3800 tCO₂eq seem to be missing in the summary table.

Emission reductions: modest ambitions

The emission report describes reduction measures in paragraph 8. The paragraph describes only planned actions, not actions that have been carried out already. This is disappointing, since the secretariat existed about 15 years when it wrote the emission report. For example, the secretariat uses power with an emission factor of 0.638 kgCO₂/kWh (table 3, footnote b), which is fairly carbon intensive. One wonders why the secretariat has not proceeded to purchase green electricity, as this would have reduced half of the emissions of the secretariat operations. Instead thereof, the initial steps included development of a sustainable transport policy, actions to reduce paper usage, modest energy efficiency actions and some “green” procurement.

Carbon offsetting: questionable claims

The emissions attributable to COP9 were estimated at 8000 tCO₂eq by a NGO, and this amount would be cancelled in the form of emission reductions from a Hungarian district heating project (FCCC/SBI/2005/9). This project started in January 2003 and emission reductions were verified by SGS and by ERM. The reductions verified between 1/1/2003 and 30/4/2007 amounted to 6537 tCO₂eq. In other words, the Secretariat cannot claim that the COP9 emissions are offset, since the emission reductions do not amount to the required 8000 tCO₂eq.

Ambitions on carbon offsetting of the UNFCCC process are low. The note on climate neutral UNFCCC meetings (FCCC/SBI/2005/9) concludes that an average voluntary contribution of EUR 29 per participant for offsetting is “...rather high”. This amount should really not be that material to participants of which we may assume sufficient awareness both climate change and the “lead by example” role they should play.

About the EEA

“EEA’s mandate is: to help the (European) Community and member countries make informed decisions about improving the environment, integrating environmental considerations into economic policies and moving towards sustainability; to coordinate the European environment information and observation network (Eionet).” (source: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/who>).

Frequency of emission reporting: carbon not reported

The EEA started activities in 2004 and published its first annual environmental report in 2005. EEA does not identify GHG emissions related to its activities as a significant direct or indirect environmental impact. None of the annual reports contain a quantitative estimation of the GHG emissions related to EEA’s activities.

Emission reductions: no monitoring system in place

Although climate change is not recognized as a priority by the EEA’s environmental management system, it has put into place measures that will reduce GHG emissions. These measures include energy efficiency measures and procurement of renewable energy.

There is no monitoring system for carbon emissions in place, although the 2008 Environmental Statement announced a monitoring system for flights in 2008. There is therefore no baseline against which emission reduction measurements can be measured. There is an unquantified target for reducing CO₂ emissions from business travel. This is specified as “Reduce quantity of CO₂ emissions caused by EEA missions and meetings”.

Carbon offsetting: not transparent

EEA has introduced a carbon credits scheme in 2007. This seems to refer to carbon offsetting rather than a scheme where emission reductions are bought and sold.

The EEA claimed an offset of 637 tCO₂ in its 2007 statement. The 2008 statement did not further elaborate on this. Since there is no carbon monitoring system in place, it is unclear how the claimed emission offset is calculated.

Also, the 2008 report announced a monitoring system for missions and meetings, but further explanation refers to staff flights only. There is no quantification of CO₂ emissions related to staff travel; there is only an overview of the number of trips.

About Friends of the Earth International

“We are the world’s largest grassroots environmental network, uniting 77 national member groups and some 5,000 local activist groups on every continent. With over 2 million members and supporters around the world, we campaign on today’s most urgent environmental and social issues. We challenge the current model of economic and corporate globalization, and promote solutions that will help to create environmentally sustainable and socially just societies. “ (<http://www.foei.org/en/who-we-are>).

Frequency of emission reporting: fragmented

Friends of the Earth International (FOEI) could not provide any information regarding the GHG emissions that are attributable to its operations. FOEI argued that “FOE is a federation of 77 independent member organisations which are not ‘incorporated’. The small FOEI secretariat, located in Amsterdam, is neither mandated nor able to keep a detailed overview of these 77 organisations, their carbon footprint, or their staff, or revenues and so on “.

This argument is questionable. Although the member organizations are not “incorporated” they do campaign together, like during the UN climate meeting in Bali [Australia, United Kingdom, Malaysia and Indonesia]. Also, member organizations that take climate change seriously will track their own carbon emissions, whereas the impression left now is that this does not take place.

One member of FOEI reported carbon emissions

FOEI has referred to Milieudefensie, a Friends of the Earth member in the Netherlands. Milieudefensie claims a CO₂ emission compensation of 142 tonne in 2007 against 155 tonne in 2006. Milieudefensie does not state what calculation methodology it was using [e.g. GHG Protocol] and how the emission reductions were achieved. No carbon emissions were reported over 2005.

Emissions related to natural gas consumption, commuting and business travel were compensated with Hivos Klimaatfonds offsets. This fund started operations in 2007 by purchasing emission reductions from renewable energy projects.

About Greenpeace

“Greenpeace is an independent global campaigning organisation that acts to change attitudes and behaviour, to protect and conserve the environment and to promote peace by: Catalysing an energy revolution to address the number one threat facing our planet: climate change.....” Source: <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/about>.

Frequency of emission reporting

Greenpeace has been active since 1971. It started reporting GHG emissions related to its activities in 2005. GHG emission data are available for 2005 to 2007 at the time of writing.

Emission report: changed assumptions

The emission report is included in the annual report and specifies the scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions as required by the WBCSD/WRI GHG Protocol.

The emissions over 2005 have been recalculated in 2006. The 2006 annual report stated that “... we are happy to note that the 2006 figures subsequently show a reduction in our emissions, and therefore a clear improvement in our efforts to reduce our own environmental footprint”.

The GHG Protocol requires that “Appropriate context for any significant emissions changes that trigger base year emissions recalculation” is given. This context is not given (“some underlying assumptions were changed”) and it is therefore not possible to evaluate how the claim of reduced emissions in 2006 vis-à-vis 2005 can be substantiated.

Notable is also that emissions attributable to commuting are only reported in 2005. In later years, business travel is the only emission category in scope 3 that is reported.

Emission reductions: good results, but why?

The only target mentioned in the Greenpeace annual reports is a 20% cut in business travel in 2007 compared to 2006.

GHG emissions due to helicopter use dropped from 34.5 to 6 tCO₂. Carbon emissions related to office electricity uses dropped from 179.5 tCO₂ to 66.9 tCO₂. The emission report does not explain this, but instead produces a verbatim copy of the text of the preceding year.

Carbon offsetting: allowed or not?

Greenpeace does not give any information on whether or not it offsets emissions. In a press release about carbon offsetting, Greenpeace UK stated that “...offsets shift the responsibility for reducing our carbon footprint from Western governments to ordinary people in the developing world”. It is therefore surprising to see Greenpeace International as an official supporter of the Gold Standard, a carbon offset scheme. There is no information about offsets in the annual reports, and therefore it is assumed that remaining carbon emissions were not compensated.

About WWF

“WWF’s ultimate goal is to build a future where people live in harmony with nature”. Source: <http://wwf.org/>.

Frequency of emission reporting: none

The annual review of WWF gives the vision of WWF and what it expects from others. For example, the 2007 annual review says “We are also enlisting the support of business on a global level, urging companies to speak out in favour of an international agreement and to lead by example”. WWF International itself does not report carbon emissions that are resulting from the operations of its members.

There are country offices that report on GHG emissions. A sample has been taken from WWF offices of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France.

WWF office The Netherlands

The website of the WWF Netherlands contains annual environmental with a climate change paragraph. The footprint principle is “No/low CO₂ emissions policy”. The report does not contain a quantification of the CO₂ emissions that can be attributed to WWF. There is no reference to the GHG Protocol or an other standard for assessing carbon emissions; the WWF office claims to be carbon neutral. The paragraph “sustainable transport” states that 762.36 tCO₂ were compensated with Gold Standard CO₂ credits.

WWF office France

The WWF website for France did not contain any information regarding the GHG emissions that are attributable to the operations of this office.

WWF office United Kingdom

The Environmental Report 2007 claims that CO₂ emissions were reduced from 800 tonnes to 559 tonnes. The target for FY2007 to reduce CO₂ emissions to the irreducible minimum was therefore reached.

There was offsetting of emissions using Gold Standard offsets, but the quantity thereof is not mentioned.

The previous Environmental Report covers 2004/2005; the targets here were [i] go carbon neutral [page 3], [ii] reduce emissions from staff travel from 518 tonnes [2004/2005] to 490 tonnes [page 5], [iii] offset emissions from all UK staff travel. Since the WWF UK does not quantify its emissions or emission reductions it is hard to evaluate whether these targets were reached after 2004/2005.

Summary of WWF reporting

There is a lack of structured, transparent and quantified information on GHG emissions, reductions and offsetting. The differences in reporting between country offices is remarkable and there is no summary information on GHG emissions available at the headquarter level. Nevertheless, it is obvious from the published information that WWF UK and The Netherlands are serious about minimizing its carbon footprint - whatever the exact amount may be.

Annex - emission report of the secretariat of UNFCCC

Summary table

Emissions for electricity, waste and water are identical in 2004 and 2005 and appear therefore not to be monitored. The energy indirect emissions of the secretariat amounted to 817 tCO₂ and the 172 tCO₂ energy indirect emissions from the UNFCCC meetings do therefore not seem to be included.

Travel for 2005 sums to 28622 tCO₂, not 24894 tCO₂.

Table 1. Summary of UNFCCC greenhouse gas emissions
(tonnes CO₂ equivalent)

Category of emissions	2004	2005	Total
Direct emissions and removals			
UNFCCC cars	3.7	2.18	5.88
Energy indirect emissions			
Electricity	817	817	1 634
Indirect emissions			
Travel	28 061	24 894	52 955
Conference venue	1 236	1 216	2 452
Waste	50	50	100
Water	84	84	167
Subtotal	29 430	26 244	55 674
Total emissions	30 251	27 063	57 314

This table would summarize table 2 (UNFCCC meetings) and table 3 (operations secretariat). The total of table 1 is 57314 t, that of table 2 is 57795 t and that of table 3 is 2460.7 tCO₂eq. Comparing the totals of table 2 and table 3 with this summary table shows that there is 3122 tCO₂eq missing in action.

Secretariat of the UNFCCC

Carbon footprint: UNFCCC meetings

Table 2. Greenhouse gas emissions from sessions of the Conference of the Parties and subsidiary bodies and participation statistics^a

Activity	2004				2005			
	SB 20		COP 10		SB 22		COP 11	
	Distances (km)	GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)	Distances (km)	GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)	Distances (km)	GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)	Distances (km)	GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)
Travel of participants								
Short haul	64 354	12	61 446	11	71 407	13	122 394	22
Air ^b Medium haul	548 492	69	487 788	61	602 118	76	2 147 150	271
Long haul	10 544 395	3 132	81 006 651	24 059	12 186 714	3 619	79 933 566	23 740
Car	84 988	14	210 149	35	92 564	15	607 086	109
Train	103 068	5	55 463	3	89 831	4	586 524	61
Subtotal travel	11 345 297	3 232	81 821 497	24 169	13 042 634	3 728	13 042 634	24 203
Electricity consumption								
Conference venue		41		61		41		29
Others (incl. hotels, local transportation, waste)		130		1 004		151		1 187
Total GHG emissions		3 403		25 234		3 920		25 418
Number of participants^c	1 351		6 193		1 589		9 437	
GHG emissions per participant		2.51		4.07		2.46		2.69

Electricity related emissions are identical for SB20 and SB22 and may therefore not be monitored.

Distances add up to 83396720 km, not 13042634 km. Difference is factor 6.

Much lower emissions per participant are claimed in comparison with COP10. Given the mileage calculation error above, this claim may not hold.

Footnotes

b: emission report covers 2004-2006

c: not clear whether secretariat and local staff are included in secretariat emissions (table 3)

^a For details see FCCC/SBI/2005/9

^b Until 31 December 2006.

^c Secretariat and local staff are not included. They are, however, considered in the GHG emissions (e.g., for COP 10 they accounted for 4.5 per cent of the total GHG emissions).

Secretariat of the UNFCCC

Carbon footprint: UNFCCC secretariat

General note:

IPCC emission factors have only 3 significant digits. The outcome of a calculation with these factors can therefore not have more than 3 significant digits either. The level of accuracy suggested here (+/- 0.1 tCO₂eq) does not exist. Correct rounding is 2.46 kt CO₂eq.

Energy consumption, the most relevant parameter for this sort of organization, is identical for 2004 and 2005 and does therefore not appear to be monitored.

Footnotes:

Reporting period is 2004 and 2005. Footnotes "a" and "e" do not appear in the table.

Table 3. Greenhouse gas emissions from operation of the secretariat

Activity	2004		2005		Total	
Travel of staff	Distances		Distances		Distances	
Non-UNFCCC vehicles	(km)	GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)	(km)	GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)	(km)	GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)
Short haul	29 186	5	14 590	3	43 776	8
Medium haul					290 786	36
Long haul	146 060	18	144 726	18		
Air					4 366 603	1 297
Car	2 126 909	632	2 239 694	665	4 46 111	8
Train	24 520	4	21 591	4	30 241	2
	22 250	1	7 991	1		
Subtotal travel	2 348 925	660	2 428 592	691	4 777 517	1 351
Number of travels	361		302		663	
UNFCCC vehicles	21 516		12 410		33 926	
Energy consumption^b	GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)		GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)		GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)	
	(MWh)		(MWh)		(MWh)	
HC electricity	406	260	406	260	463	390
HC heating	460	295	460	295	690	442.5
OBS electricity	121	77	121	77	181	115.5
OBS heating	n.a	185 ^c	n.a	185	n.a	277.5
Subtotal energy	987	817	493	817	1 334	1 226
Waste generated	GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)		GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)		GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)	
	(m ³)		(m ³)		(m ³)	
HC	161	49.8 ^d	161	49.8	322	74.7
OBS	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	
Water usage	GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)		GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)		GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ eq)	
	(m ³)		(m ³)		(m ³)	
HC	1 211	83.6	1213	83.71	2424	167.31
OBS	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	
Total GHG emissions	1 614.1		846.6		2 460.7	

^a Until 31 December 2006.

^b 0.638 kgCO₂/kWh (Germany, electricity mix D). Estimated based on occupied space at the two office buildings (HC and OBS) and staffing ratio. For HC the estimate includes the share for common areas, building technologies and canteen. For OBS does not include emissions for building technologies and common areas. The values for 2005 were estimated as 50 per cent of 2004 values.

^c Estimated based on the surface occupied by UNFCCC using HC as reference.

^d Municipal solid waste incineration, 40 per cent carbon content of waste, 95 per cent efficiency of combustion (IPCC default) and 208 kg/m³ specific weight of the waste. Includes biogenic and fossil CO₂. Using the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories this value is about 39.3 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year (6.1 tonnes of fossil CO₂ equivalent per year).

^e 0.003 t CH₄/t waste water (FCCC/WEB/SAI/2005, page 158, table 6.1, emission factors for Germany considering domestic/commercial waste water handling).

Train travel decreased with factor 3 and yet the CO₂ emissions related to this remained the same.

The totals of 2004 and 2005 for both MWh and ton CO₂ do not add up to the total. E.g. 260 tCO₂ HC electricity 2004 + 260t CO₂ in 2005 is 540 tCO₂, not 390 tCO₂.

Total of 2005 is 1569 tCO₂eq, not 846.6 tCO₂eq. Grand total is 3183 tCO₂eq, not 2460.7 tCO₂eq.