

Sustainability Policy for Events

Basel Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions Secretariat

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1 PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

The Basel Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions Secretariat (BRS) is committed to improve sustainability across its operations, including at its events, in order to contribute to the *Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System 2020-2030* and support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Since 2012, the Secretariat has advanced efforts to reduce the environmental impact of its meetings. In 2023 this approach evolved to integrate UNEP's Environmental Management System (EMS) into Secretariat operations. This process led to the creation of an EMS Risk Register for the Secretariat and an Environmental Action Plan (EAP) for Events. Creation and implementation of this Sustainable Event Policy is a direct result of the EAP for Events.

Oversight of this Policy is the responsibility of the Executive Secretary of the BRS Secretariat. All Secretariat staff are expected to contribute, through their professional actions and decisions in the workplace, to the objectives of this Policy.

Day to day coordination of the Policy and associated procedures are managed by the BRS Secretariat's Sustainability Focal Points (SFPs). The SFPs are responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating BRS Secretariat integration with the UNEP Environmental Management System (EMS) process, and will ensure the Sustainable Event Policy is maintained through the following:

- Documentation of policies, procedures and audits
- Awareness and training among staff
- Communication and engagement of suppliers and meeting participants
- Auditing, evaluation and reporting of progress

The BRS Secretariat's SFPs shall coordinate with the Environmental Management Group (EMG) and UN Environment's Sustainable UN (SUN) which provides technical expertise and coordination on collective approaches to EMS, including for event management. At a minimum, this will occur through completion of the Greening the Blue Annual Environmental Inventory and survey.

2 SCOPE OF THE POLICY

2.1 ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARY

This Policy applies to and is managed by the BRS Secretariat. It stipulates procedures for staff who manage event-related activities. While the Secretariat is not able to control the activities of all event participants, such as event guests, suppliers and host-country partners, the Policy does provide for procedures to influence decisions made by these parties regarding their involvement in event-related activities.

2.2 ACTIVITY BOUNDARY

This Policy shall apply to all event activities hosted by the BRS Secretariat that include more than 300 participants. An event is defined as an organised occasion such as a meeting, convention, exhibition, special event, gala dinner, etc., whether held online, in-person or as a hybrid event. The boundary includes all logistics that the Secretariat directly organizes and/or pays for in support of these events: accommodation, audio visual, catering, communications, exhibits, registration, technology, transportation, and venues. Although the Secretariat hosts events that are smaller than 300 participants, they are often co-located within larger events. Therefore, they are subject to the Policy by proxy. Section 8 includes guidance on how to apply this Policy for smaller events that are not co-located with large ones.

2.3 ENTITY BOUNDARY

The physical boundary of this Policy corresponds to the location of events hosted by the BRS Secretariat. The entity is therefore not fixed: it varies depending on where events are held. Location is assumed to include the event site, i.e.: the venue, hotel, and/or office where event production activities happen, and participants congregate. Note events that are held fully or partially online may have multiple, distributed locations. In these cases, the Policy applies to venues contracted by the Secretariat, but not others such as participant homes or offices or viewing locations that are organized by third parties.

3 VISION AND PRINCIPLES

This Policy aligns with the Vision for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System 2030, which states:

"The United Nations system is a leader in integrating environmental and social sustainability considerations across its work in a systematic and coherent way, practicing the principles that it promotes and leaving a positive legacy. Fundamental to this vision are objectives to embody the Sustainable Development Goals at all levels of management; lead by example; ensure harmonization of internal sustainability initiatives; manage risks; strengthen

business resilience; enhance credibility and accountability; and achieve financial savings through optimal resource efficiency."

This Vision upholds the following Principles:

- Stewardship of the environment with respect to all operations.
- Efficiency in resource use and operations.
- Continuous improvement of environmental performance.
- Stakeholder engagement at all levels.
- Adaptation and resilience.

4 OBJECTIVES

The Sustainable Event Policy supports the following objectives, aligned with the UN System:

1. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions at our events wherever possible.
2. Ensure no solid waste from our events is causing pollution or other harm to the environment and local populations.
3. Ensure event activities do not contribute to or exacerbate local air quality issues.
4. Ensure water conservation at our events and avoid the release of untreated wastewater into the environment.
5. Avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity from event operations.

5 TARGETS

The BRS Secretariat will support progress against these objectives by pursuing the following targets for events that are within the scope of this Policy:

Event targets:	100% of events with over 300 participants follow the sustainable event procedure by 2026.
	100% of suppliers reporting compliance with sustainable event guidelines by 2026.
	100% of minimum event organizer sustainability guidelines achieved for events with over 300 participants by 2028.
Climate Neutrality Target:	100% of unavoidable event carbon emissions are offset yearly via UN-approved, certified carbon credits by 2024.

6 IMPLEMENTATION

The BRS Secretariat will implement the Policy at meetings of more than 300 participants through the following procedures and guidelines. (Certain procedures are included as appendices for information only. Please use the template documents provided in the network folder when working on individual events.)

- **Sustainable Event Planning Procedure:** These steps shall be followed by the meeting manager and BRS SFP for each event (see Appendix 1).
- **Minimum Organizer Sustainability Guidelines:** BRS Secretariat staff, led by the meeting manager and SFP, shall implement these guidelines at every event over 300 participants (see Appendix 2).
- **Sustainable Travel Guidelines:** These guidelines are provided to assist in communicating preferred personal travel practices to Secretariat staff and event participants. They shall be shared for each event (see Appendix 3).
- **Sustainable Exhibitor Guidelines:** These guidelines shall be provided to any organization setting up an exhibit or display at a BRS Secretariat event (see Appendix 4).
- **Sustainable Procurement/Supplier Surveys:** The Secretariat shall send event sustainability surveys to applicable suppliers for each event and request them to disclose their preparedness to meet sustainability guidelines. Surveys are provided for: AV, Catering, Print/Graphics, Transportation, and Venues. These should be shared as early as possible. Venue and catering checklists are essential to share for all events. Other supplier checklists can be shared as applicable to the event. Supplier surveys may also be of use when discussing sustainability during site visits and as a basis for the Event Audit. Compliance should be noted in the Event Review. In situations where there is a host member country that may be coordinating suppliers, these surveys will be provided to the Host Country to use.

7 MONITORING AND REPORTING

This Sustainability Policy is monitored to enable continuous improvement.

Evaluation of events of more than 300 participants include the following steps:

- **Attendee Sustainability Survey:** The meeting manager and SFP shall invite participants to share how they are acting on sustainability through a web-based survey. Results from this survey will be added to the Event Review (see Appendix 5).
- **Event Sustainability Audit:** The BRS SFP shall conduct and document an onsite audit for all events for the purpose of the Event Review. The primary purpose of the onsite audit is to check compliance and identify non-conformities (see Appendix 6).

- **Event Sustainability Review and Report:** The SFP shall complete a Review for each event to document outcomes and areas for improvement (see Appendix 7).

In addition, the BRS Secretariat will include outcomes of the Sustainable Event Policy in the Annual Environmental Inventory reported to SUN.

The Policy will be reviewed every four years at a minimum, following the dates of the EMS cycle.

8 WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY?

The **BRS Sustainability Focal Point** has primary responsibility for coordinating activities under this Policy. However, all Secretariat staff and contractors are expected to be familiar with the Sustainable Event Policy and participate based on their existing roles and responsibilities. You may be:

- A **decision maker** who is able to opt for products and services that comply with sustainability guidelines.
- A **communicator** who is able to share policies and guidelines with others.
- An **ambassador** who can be a role model in your actions
- An **auditor** who can help evaluate and improve EMS outcomes.

At a minimum everyone can make any event more sustainable, regardless of size or location, by prioritising six basic things:

- Use online meeting technology where suitable to achieve purpose
- Communicate and encourage sustainable travel guidelines
- Reduce and eliminate disposable plastic
- Go paperless
- Offer or make sustainable food choices
- Practice responsible waste management

9 CONTACT

Should you have questions or feedback regarding this policy or the BRS Secretariat EMS please contact: (add email).

APPENDIX 1: EMS PLANNING PROCEDURE FOR EVENTS

The BRS Secretariat will follow these steps to improve sustainability at each event over 300 participants where applicable.

	PROCEDURE	GUIDANCE	RESPONSIBILITY	
P R E - E V E N T	1	Review Organiser Minimums and plan to implement.	See Minimum Organiser Sustainability Guidelines.	Lead PO
	2	Send a Host Country Sustainability kit	Share Sustainability Policy and tools with the host country during initial hosting discussions when relevant.	Lead PO
	3	Send supplier event sustainability surveys to applicable vendors and request them to complete.	See supplier surveys for: AV, Catering, Print/Graphics, Transportation, and Venues. Share these as early as possible, during first discussions. Venue and catering checklists are essential to share for each event. Other supplier checklists can be shared as applicable to the event.	AMB
	4	Ensure sustainability information on the website is up-to-date.	This should include the current Policy, Organiser Minimums, supplier survey templates, exhibitor guidelines and green travel and event tips.	SFP
	5	Include sustainability information in exhibitor/side events communications.	This should include a link to the sustainability web page and the exhibitor sustainability guidelines.	Communication's officer PAO
	6	Prepare and share sustainability letter with participants.	This should include any updates about the Event Sustainability Policy and its outcomes and any "know before you" go information. Recommend sending one month prior to the event.	Lead PO
	7	Include a link to the sustainability web page in registration confirmations.	Include a brief sentence with a link in the auto-generated registration email.	Lead PO
	8	Review supplier surveys during the site visit.	Use the venue and catering surveys as a starting point. Discuss any gaps and improvements that may be possible and take action where applicable.	AMB
	9	Send sustainability reminders to the internal event team prior to the event.	Recommend sending an event sustainability email to employees and suppliers within one month of the event, including updates and expectations.	SFP

O N S I T E	10	Send the attendee sustainability survey.	Refer to the attendee survey. Consider sending a reminder if the response rate is very low.	Lead PO
	11	Complete an onsite sustainability audit during the event.	See Audit Form.	AMB
	12	Review/update supplier surveys with information from the onsite sustainability audit.	Refer to supplier surveys.	AMB
	13	Review/update Organiser Minimums with information from audit.	See Minimum Organiser Sustainability Guidelines.	SFP
P O S T - E V E N T	14	Compile attendee sustainability survey results.	See Sustainable Reporting Form.	SFP
	15	Complete any measurement calculators (i.e. GET).	See Sustainable Reporting Form.	SFP
	16	Record any data from the venue (waste, donations).	See Sustainable Reporting Form.	SFP
	17	Conduct and document the Event Review.	See Sustainable Reporting Form.	SFP

APPENDIX 2: MINIMUM ORGANIZER SUSTAINABILITY GUIDELINES FOR EVENTS

The BRS Secretariat will monitor the extent to which each of the following were implemented at each event over 300 participants.

	The organiser shall...	Guidance on minimums	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1	Communicate Sustainable Event Policy to participants.	1.1) Post Sustainability Policy on the BRS website and post the Minimum Organiser requirements, exhibitor guidelines and supplier survey templates on Teams.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1.2) Link to event sustainability web page in registration confirmation and/or participant letter.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Encourage participation in sustainability by attendees.	2.1) Post green travel and event tips to the website.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		2.2) Link to green travel and event tips from registration confirmation and/or participant letter.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		2.3) Communicate opportunities to participate while onsite, either through slides, signage, moderator comments, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		2.4) Request participants to complete the attendee sustainability survey.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Communicate Event Sustainability Policy and guidelines to suppliers and request compliance.	3.1) Share Sustainability Policy, Organiser Guidelines and supplier survey templates with the host country, when applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		3.2) Share Sustainability Policy and applicable supplier surveys with the venue and caterer at a minimum, and other suppliers as applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		3.3) Request supplier sustainability surveys to be completed in order to assess compliance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Communicate Sustainability Policy to exhibitors and request compliance.	4.1) Share sustainable Exhibitor Guidelines with exhibitor kits.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Ensure paperless meetings. <i>The Secretariat will reduce paper use with a goal to eliminate it wherever possible. Where paper use by participants or the Secretariat is deemed</i>	5.1) Electronic-first strategy for event communications and documents.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		5.2) Participants are able to access computers onsite in order to print documents.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		5.3) Where printing is necessary (i.e. name badge cards), materials must be recycled.	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<i>necessary, paper must be recycled.</i>		
6 Reduce or ban single-use plastics. <i>Where disposable plastic use is deemed necessary, materials must be recovered from landfill through recycling or donation. (Exception: Safety protocols may require single-use disposables to be used in the event of an emergency, including public health orders. For reasons of public health, incineration may be necessary.)</i>	6.1) No polystyrene or PVC-plastic under any circumstances.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	6.2) For attendee hydration stations: Do not hand out single use disposable bottles of water. Offer refill stations that permit attendees to use a refillable drinking vessel.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	6.3) Reduce use of disposable plastic items and packaging by organiser. Ensure any packaging is fully recyclable or compostable.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	6.4) Reusable signage is preferred. Signs are to be recycled or donated at the end of their useful life.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	6.5) Preference for a plastic-free name badge where feasible. Name badge system must be able to be recycled or donated post-event.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	6.6) Participants informed of the necessity to bring a refillable drink container.		<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Offer sustainable food options.	7.1) At least one vegan/plant-based and/or one vegetarian (dairy-permitted) option available for each meal.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	7.2) Request caterer to complete a sustainability survey.		<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Ensure sustainable waste management.	8.1) Reduce use of organiser-generated handouts, giveaways and packaging.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	8.2) Include waste reduction guidelines in materials shared with the host country, suppliers and exhibitors		<input type="checkbox"/>
	8.3) Venue recycling program in place and visible.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	8.4) Venue requested to disclose waste diversion rate (annual diversion rate or previous audit rate, if event-specific rate is unavailable).		<input type="checkbox"/>
	8.5) Promote donation of leftover event materials, where applicable.		<input type="checkbox"/>
9 Measure and offset the air travel of participants.	9.1) 100% of participant travel measured and offset.		<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX 3: SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL GUIDELINES

Did you know that if you...

- ***Pack just one less pair of shoes you can eliminate 2.5 kgs of CO2 when traveling by air?***
- ***Use a mobile app instead of printing an event program you can save 197 litres of water?***
- ***Participate in a hotel's linen-reuse program it saves 35 ml of laundry chemicals per night?***

Attendees are faced with a multitude of choices when participating in an event. As these examples illustrate, simple actions can really add-up!

While the BRS Secretariat is already offsetting the carbon impact of all participants at our meeting, you may be in a position to consider other ways to reduce your footprint. Action is not required, but encouraged where possible. Consider getting started by picking one new step, and building your efforts over time. Each action, even just one, makes a difference!

- ✓ Replace short flights with rail trips, if possible.
- ✓ Opt for direct routes that avoid additional emissions associated with multiple take-offs and landings.
- ✓ Voluntarily lower your flight class to avoid the higher-footprint of business class trips.
- ✓ Shift meals to plant-based alternatives where possible.
- ✓ Use public transit or share rides for local trips.
- ✓ Seek out accommodations that have a green guest program or have earned an eco-certification.
- ✓ Stay at accommodations that are within walking distance of event venues.
- ✓ Participate in your hotel's linen reuse program.
- ✓ Bring a refillable tumbler for beverages to use at our plastic-free hydration stations.
- ✓ Download any electronic documents for use onsite. Print outs will not be provided, but device charging is available.
- ✓ Participate in the venue's recycling program.

Before you book your flights and accommodation, try these tools to reduce your impact:

- [Find flights with lower carbon emissions.](#)
- [Find hotels with sustainability programs in place.](#)

APPENDIX 4: EXHIBITOR SUSTAINABILITY GUIDELINES FOR EVENTS

Instructions: All exhibitors are requested to comply with the minimum guidelines for sustainable displays that are outlined below. Exhibitors are also encouraged to follow optional preferences to the extent they are applicable and feasible.

M I N I M U M S	EX1	Design booths and displays for reuse.
	EX2	No disposable PVC and polystyrene materials are to be brought onsite, including PVC decals, foamcore signs, and foam packing materials. Non recoverable materials must be packed in and packed out.
	EX3	No single-use plastic giveaways, including disposable bottled water.
	EX4	Reduce use of disposable shipping materials and plastic packaging.
	EX5	Participate in venue recycling programs.
O P T I O N A L	EX6	Provide digital giveaways that reduce waste.
	EX7	Ensure giveaway items are valued and will be reused.
	EX8	Source gifts from charities or social enterprises.
	EX9	Provide gifts that involve guests in CSR, sustainability or volunteering.
	EX10	Source promotional products from suppliers who verify safe and fair working conditions.
	EX11	Ensure promotional products are free of harmful substances like BPA.
	EX12	Source gifts and promotional products locally in the event destination.
	EX13	Ensure messaging is inclusive, respectful and non-discriminatory.
	EX14	Rent durable, reusable event furnishings.
	EX15	Use recycled content materials in exhibit booths (i.e. carpet, signage).
	EX16	Use Forest Stewardship Council certified materials (paper and wood), where applicable.
	EX17	Opt for light-weight exhibit materials where possible.
	EX18	Avoid customizing carpet with logos, dyes and angled cuts.
	EX19	Ensure any exhibits that include lights or electronics use efficient options.
	EX20	Ensure any exhibits that include lights or electronics are powered down when not in use.
	EX21	Ensure any exhibits that use water have a closed-loop recirculation system.
	EX22	Use local, sustainable suppliers for exhibit and décor items such as print, promotional items, floral and other consumable supplies.
	EX23	Donate any left-over exhibit materials that are not otherwise being reused to charity.

APPENDIX 5: ATTENDEE SUSTAINABILITY SURVEY FOR EVENTS

Instructions: Please answer the following questions to let us know how you may be participating in our green event program. (Q1 may not be necessary depending on the situation.)

Q1 Which event are you completing this survey for? (Drop down menu naming each event)

Q2 Did you take any of the following steps to reduce the impact of your travel to and from the event? (Select all that apply)

- Used a flight search tool to find low-carbon flights
- Booked a direct flight to avoid added emissions from connections
- Booked an economy or coach fare instead of a higher-emitting business class fare
- Opted to not fly by taking the train or another lower-carbon form of transport
- Opted to not fly by attending virtually
- Booked accommodations at an eco-certified property
- Booked accommodations within walking distance of the event venue
- Participated in my hotel's linen reuse program
- Used public transit or shared rides for local trips
- None of the above
- Other (please comment):

Q3 Did you take any of the following steps to reduce environmental impacts while at the event? (Select all that apply)

- Used a refillable tumbler for beverages
- Ate at least one plant-based meal per day
- Accessed event documents digitally, avoiding printing
- Participated in venue recycling programs
- None of the above
- Other (please comment):

Optional questions that could be asked from time-to-time to evaluate how the system is impacting participants:

Q4 Are you aware that the Secretariat has a Sustainability Policy for its events?

- Yes
- No

Q5 Please select the statement that best reflects your feelings about efforts to reduce environmental impacts at this meeting. (Select one)

- Measures to reduce environmental impacts negatively impacted my participation
- Measures to reduce environmental impacts had no impact on my participation
- Measures to reduce environmental impacts positively impacted my participation

Q6 Regarding your response to the previous question, would you like to leave us with any feedback about how your participation was impacted? Or our approach to reducing the environmental impacts of our meeting could be improved? (Open-ended comment box)

APPENDIX 6: EMS AUDIT PROCEDURE FOR EVENTS

Instructions: The event organizer shall conduct and document an onsite audit for the purpose of the Event Review. The primary purpose of the onsite audit is to check compliance with EMS Organiser Minimums and Supplier Surveys for events over 300 participants.

- Set aside sufficient time to observe onsite (recommend daily checks).
- Review the Organiser Minimums and Supplier Surveys as a reminder of what to look for.
- Observe a variety of activities: registration, sessions, exhibits, meals, etc.
- Pay attention to practices front and back of house, if possible.
- Take photos if helpful to record observations for discussion with others.
- Note issues that impact environmental aspects: waste, energy, water, pollution, etc.
- Describe what you observed: 1) Areas working well, 2) Areas for improvement.
- Assign a level of priority to each item listed. Priority should consider the likelihood, severity and significance of harm.
- Discuss the contents of this form during the Event Review.

Things to look for:

F R O N T	Separate bins for waste as expected (recycling, compost, landfill)?
	Is waste being properly sorted in the correct bins?
	Are zero-waste hydration stations provided? (refills possible, recoverable cups if disposables are used.)
	Is catering taking steps to reduce waste? (reusable service ware, reduced packaging)
	Are vegan and vegetarian options provided?
	Has paper use been minimised?
	Are participation opportunities evident through educational messaging?
	Are exhibitors complying with guidelines?
B A C K	Separate bins for waste as expected (recycling, compost, landfill)?
	Is waste being properly sorted in the correct bins?
	Is there evidence of employee education about environmental practices? (signs)
	Is there evidence of workplace health and safety? (first aid kit visible, signage)?
	Is there evidence of a non-idling policy, for example, posted signs and/or vehicles not idling?

Record your observations so that they can be discussed during the Event Review:

ACTON PRIORITY (low, medium, high)	OBSERVATION Describe what you saw to assist with learning and improvement

APPENDIX 7: EVENT SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW AND REPORT

Instructions: The EMS Focal Point shall use this form to review and document the outcomes of the EMS for events over 300 participants.

- Event Name:
- Event Date:
- Event Location:

Was the Planning Procedure fully attempted?		Yes/No. If no, record any gaps in the non-conformity table that follows below.
Percent of Organiser Minimums achieved:	%	Disclose the percentage of guidelines that were successfully implemented. If certain guidelines were not implemented, please include them in the non-conformity table below.
Percent of minimum guidelines for suppliers achieved:	%	Carry over from applicable surveys. Note any major non-conformities below.
Percent of optional guidelines for suppliers achieved:	%	Carry over from applicable surveys. Note any major non-conformities below.
Record any event sustainability metrics (waste, donations, carbon footprint):		If provided.
Any other accomplishments (anecdotes, innovations):	Lessons learned that could benefit other MEAs are particularly relevant to note here.	
Attendee survey results:	Note any results or link to file including results.	

Discuss: the following as applicable to the EMS during the post-event debrief meeting:

- Onsite audit observations
- Attendee survey
- Host country aspects
- Venue aspects
- Catering aspects
- Registration aspects
- Travel and transportation aspects
- Exhibitor aspects
- Print, graphics and other communications aspects

Record:

- Note any non-conformities that will need to be addressed.
- In the Type column, note if they are **procedural** (able to be addressed with the short-term event-cycle), or **system-related** (requiring longer-term solutions, policy change).
- Ensure this document is saved and considered in the next EMS Action Plan discussion.

TYPE <i>(procedural or systemic)</i>	DESCRIPTION OF NON-CONFORMITY	RESPONSIBILITY	COMMENTS/ACTION STEPS