

“Greening the OAS Strategy”

For over a decade the General Secretariat of the OAS (GS-OAS), through its Department of Sustainable Development (DSD), has been supporting member States in the design and implementation of policies, programs and projects oriented to integrate environmental priorities with poverty alleviation, and socio-economic development goals, as to achieve sustainable development. Recent examples of these efforts include the Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Sustainable Development, and the selection of Energy for Development as the theme for the upcoming General Assembly of the Organization. The GS-OAS has been actively engaged with member States in initiatives in areas such as sustainable consumption and production, environmental goods and services, sustainable trade, water resource management, sustainable energy, sustainable forest management among other areas.

However, efforts regarding sustainable development, the environment, consumption and behavioral patterns are becoming more critical as scientific evidence corroborates that carbon dioxide and other green house gas emissions (GGH) from human activities are causing significant changes in the earth’s climate and that these changes carry significant implications for human health and livelihoods.

While it continues to promote concerted action for sustainable development in the hemisphere, the GS-OAS would like to ensure that the environmental footprint of its own operations is minimized and that its facilities, operations and practices are consistent with its mission of achieving sustainable development in the Americas.

“Fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development.... Governments, relevant international organizations, the private sector and all major groups should play an active role in changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns”

World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

For this purpose, the GS-OAS has began collaborating with the World Bank *Greening Program* in the area of recycling and it is proposing that a *Greening the OAS* strategy be implemented in various phases: the first addressing operations at headquarters in Washington, D.C and the second focusing on operations in the National Offices. The strategy will address the areas of ***Procurement, Energy Consumption, Water, Consumption of paper, Recycling and Transport.***

I. FOCUS AREAS

Procurement: The OAS will promote procurement of environmentally-sound goods and services to be used throughout its premises.

“There is a clear case to be made for governments to articulate strong environmental requirements when purchasing goods and services. The government procurement market is sufficiently large to impact the overall market for certain goods and services and there are affordable ways to reduce the human health and environmental impacts of almost any acquisition. Innovative tools could balance price, performance, and environmental considerations for products and services ranging from building and maintenance products to office equipment and fleet vehicles.

Organizations buying recycled-content paper can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 37 percent, cut solid waste emissions in half, decrease water use by 50 percent, and practically eliminate wood use.”

Government Procurement in the World Trade Organization. IISD Trade and Development Brief, Number 4 of 9, 2003

Office of the Federal Environmental Executive of the United States

The following actions will be pursued:

- Review procurement rules to ensure that environmental sustainability is an equal weight criteria in purchasing decisions
- Purchase recycled, biodegradable and reusable goods, in particular paper
- Purchase and install energy-efficient office and maintenance equipment including:
 - sensor lights
 - ENERGY STAR products
- Avoid excessive packaging
- Avoid the use of chlorofluorocarbon products (CFCs)

Sustainable Energy Consumption: The OAS will increase the use of energy from efficient and renewable sources and reduce the aggregate consumption of energy in its premises.

“Human-induced climate change is caused by the emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (GHGs) that have accumulated in the atmosphere mainly over the past 100 years. On current trends, average global temperatures will rise by 2 – 3°C within the next fifty years or so. A quarter of all global GHG emissions come from the generation of power and heat mostly used by domestic and commercial buildings and by industry. This was the fastest growing source of emissions worldwide from 1990 to 20002. The Earth will be committed to several degrees more warming if emissions continue to grow.”

The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review, Cambridge University Press 2007

The following actions will be pursued:

- Encourage employees to decrease use of energy
 - Turn off lights and computers when not needed
 - Place adhesive reminders: *“Save Energy, Turn Lights Off”*
 - Maximize daylight
 - Regular cleaning of lamps and fixtures
- Establish targets for reducing use of non-renewable energies (2% per year)
- Explore the possibility of participating in the USEPA Green Power Partnership and establish targets for increasing use of renewable energies (12% per year)

Water: The OAS will promote the efficient use of water resources and reduce consumption

“People will feel the impact of climate change most strongly through changes in the distribution of water around the world and its seasonal and annual variability. By mid-century, annual average water availability is expected to decrease by 10-30% over some dry regions at mid-latitudes and in the dry tropics, some of which are presently water stressed areas. Drought-affected areas will likely increase in extent. In Latin America, changes in precipitation patterns and the disappearance of glaciers are projected to significantly affect water availability for human consumption, agriculture and energy generation. Climate Change could contribute to a 70% rise in the projected number of people with severe difficulties in accessing safe water by 2025. Main concerns with implications for issues of quantity and quality of water resources relate to the inefficient use of water and to its environmental and socio-economic consequences: low river flows, water shortages, salinisation of freshwater bodies in coastal areas, human health problems, loss of wetlands, desertification and reduced food production.”

IPCC: Climate Change 2007. Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability Working Group II Contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report

The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review, Cambridge University Press 2007

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

The following actions will be pursued:

- Oversee maintenance issues to prevent water leaks
- Encourage rational use of the resource by staff
- Subject to feasibility, install waterless equipment in facilities

Consumption of paper: The OAS will reduce the total amount of paper consumed on its premises.

“Annual emissions from deforestation are estimated to contribute to more than 18% of the global GHGs. Trees play an important play a vital role in carbon sequestration. 17 trees, 250,000 liters of water, and 7800 kwh of electrical energy are used to generate 1 ton of new paper.”

***The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review, Cambridge University Press 2007
District of Columbia Office of Recycling***

The following actions will be pursued:

- Encourage employees to print paper in a responsible manner
- Purchase double-side printers and photocopiers
- Encourage the use of used paper as draft paper
- Encourage e-practices
 - Emphasize electronic communication
 - Emphasize electronic record-keeping rather than hard-copy records
- Increase the capacity of the OAS to maintain electronic records

Recycling programs: The OAS will promote the development of a variety of programs aimed at recycling different materials used in its premises.

“Recycling one glass bottle will light a 100- watt bulb for 4 hours

Recycling 118 pounds of news paper saves a tree

Recycling one ton of paper saves 17 trees, 2 barrels of oil, 4100 kilowatt-hours of electricity , enough electricity for an average home for 6 months.

Recycling one ton of cans can prevent 13 tons of carbon dioxide”

District of Columbia Office of Recycling

The following actions will be pursued:

- The establishment of a recycling program including separation of recyclables from solid waste;
- Ensuring an adequate number of containers for separated recyclables;

- Ensuring that bins are emptied and recycled appropriately;
- Preparing a two year recycling plan for paper aluminum, steel and tin cans and brown, green and clear glass bottles and jars (Mandatory and subject to fines under the DC Solid Waste Management and Multi- Material Recycling Act of 1988);
- Coordinating with the World Bank and IMF among other international organizations in the area to maximize resources and efforts in this area;
- Hiring a licensed, registered recycling hauler to regularly pick up recyclables (Mandatory and subject to fines under the DC Solid Waste Management and Multi- Material Recycling Act of 1988) if the World Bank is not able to provide the service;
- Develop future programs for recycling various materials, including:
 - Toner cartridges
 - Mobile phones
 - Athletic shoes
 - Carpet and ceiling tiles
 - Paint
 - Office supplies
 - Fluorescent tubes
 - Compact fluorescent lamps
 - Batteries
 - Lamp ballasts containing polychlorinated biphenyls

Transport: The OAS will promote several actions to reduce and offsetting emissions related to staff transport for work-related purposes.

“Transport accounts for 14% of global GHG emissions, making it the third largest source of emissions. Three quarters of these emissions are from road transport, while aviation accounts for around one eighth.”

The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review, Cambridge University Press 2007

The following actions will be pursued:

- Establish greater incentives for staff to use public transportation, fuel-efficient vehicles and car pooling for daily commute.
- Increase facilities for bicycle racks and spaces
- Consider the purchase of hybrid vehicles to replace current Organization vehicles as needed
- Off-setting carbon emissions generated through staff travel for official missions through the establishment of a fund that will support the implementation of this Greening of the OAS strategy.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

The Strategy will have the following four steps: (a) performing an environmental assessment; (b) establishing a General Coordinator for the program and focal points within each department of the organization; (c) establishing internal policies; and (d) developing training materials to strengthen the capacity of staff to implement the program.

a) *Performing an Environmental Assessment:* During the initial phase an environmental assessment will be conducted to review the following areas and their current implications to sustainability and the organization including cost related, in order to assess the future impact of the strategy. The OAS-DSD jointly with the General Coordinator described below will conduct this assessment:

- Total water usage
- Waste produced
 - Type of waste
 - Amount of waste
- Total amount of paper consumed
- Total energy consumed

b) *Coordination:* A General Coordinator within the Department of Administration will be designated for the implementation of the strategy, to work with designated focal points in all Departments within the Organization and in particular with the DSD, for updates, trainings and capacity building.

The coordinator will strengthen cooperation with the World Bank *Greening Program* and maximize the contribution has been making to the OAS through “Green services” in the area of recycling. The Coordinator’s role will also be to explore potential partnerships including with USEPA’s Green Power initiative or Waste Wise Program.

c) *Education and Training:* Leadership, combined with staff awareness and engagement are the key to the success of this strategy. The general coordinator, together with the OAS DSD will develop training modules/materials to increase awareness and capacity of employees to implement the strategy in all the focus areas.

III. FUNDING OF THE STRATEGY

The OAS will establish a Greening the OAS Fund that will be financed through a carbon offset travel program. This program will be established to offset emissions derived from staff travel for missions and other official business. The cost of the environmental damage caused by emissions from each official trip will be calculated using the mechanism explained below and the cost will be contributed to the special fund in the same requisition created to purchase the travel. The emissions will be offset through the different actions taken within the greening the OAS strategy, supporting the transition to a lower carbon world.

The calculation method to be used was developed by *ClimateCare*, to determine precisely what amount is necessary to offset emissions produced during travel¹. A table for all most likely destinations will be distributed for easy computation of the CO₂ offset cost.

A committee led by the Secretary General and formed by the Executive Secretary for Integral Development, the Director of the DSD, the General Coordinator and the Director of Administration will decide the priorities for implementation of the strategy and the allocation of resources. The Committee will also be responsible to identify new initiatives within the scope of this strategy to reduce the environmental footprint of the OAS facilities and operations, including through engagement and consultation with staff members.

¹ The mechanism works as follows: for long haul flights, take the average fuel burn figures for a Boeing 747 and an Airbus A340 as published by the EU. Divide this by the average number of seats (not occupied seats) and also subtract the amount of freight carried by the average long haul aircraft. Double the amount of CO₂ emitted to take account of the enhanced atmospheric impacts of aviation. Then calculate the greater circle distance between the airports in question. A similar method is used for short haul, except that a Boeing 737 is used as the reference aircraft. As an example, this method shows that 2.41 tons of CO₂ are caused by a round-trip flight for one person from Washington D.C. to Buenos Aires. The cost to offset this CO₂ is of US\$36.16. Thus, when an OAS employee travels from Washington to Buenos Aires, the Organization will contribute \$36.16 to the Greening the OAS Fund