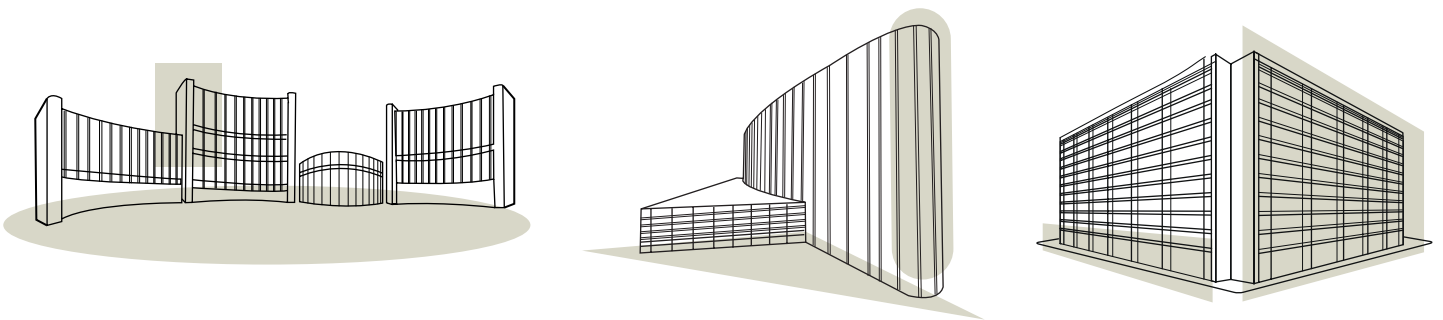


UNITED NATIONS

# Peer Review Process

A Voluntary Review of Environmental Performance



UNITED NATIONS

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

**EMG**

The Peer Review Process was initiated in 2012 by the United Nation's Environment Management Group (EMG). The Project aims to review the environmental sustainability profile and performance of UN agencies. Peer reviewing refers to one or more of the agencies reviewing the environmental performance of fellow agencies' facilities and internal operations. Some examples of reviewed agencies include WFP, UNRWA, UN Environment, IMF, UNIDO and WMO.

Currently, the Peer Review Process focusses on the facilities and operations of UN agencies. However, it can be extended to review programmes and corporate systems of UN agencies from an environmental perspective.

The Peer Review is undertaken by Peer Review Teams comprising technical experts, UN and international organization representatives, and local government authorities, with support and coordination provided by the EMG

Secretariat. The Peer Review Team analyses data and information provided by the reviewed agency based on site visits to the reviewed facility(ies). Achievements, challenges, good practices and lessons learned in approaches to corporate environmental management are then identified and compiled into a Peer Review Report, along with proposed recommendations. These recommendations focus on how the environmental performance of the reviewed entity could be improved, whilst enhancing their resource efficiency, and economic and social sustainability.

For every Peer Review, the results are guided and validated by a Peer Review Body which comprises representatives from UN agencies. The entire Process is governed by a set of principles which include mutual trust among peers, voluntary participation and non-binding recommendations. These principles are what set the Peer Review Process aside from traditional environmental and energy audits.

## Main features

### 1 Actors



a.) **The Peer Review Body** – comprises representatives of the different UN agencies and operates with a peer spirit of open dialogue, result-orientated analysis and exchange of experience, advisory conclusions and recommendations. The Peer Review Body convenes to discuss and approve the draft Peer Review Reports, including the finalisation of recommendations. The Body reports to the EMG annual Senior Officials Meeting and is supported by the EMG Secretariat.



b.) **The Reviewed Entity** – partakes in providing access to data and documentation, answering questions, hosting visits and facilitating contacts with a range of relevant individuals and organizations involved in the Peer Review. It has an interest in moving reforms forward through the Review Process and its recommendations.



c.) **The Reviewer Entities (Peer Review Team)** – the reviewer entities are selected on a rotating basis from among the different members of the Peer Review Body. They act as peers (not inspectors) in the early stage of the Process – e.g. as individual and objective representatives or experts involved in the analytic work and field missions.



d.) **The EMG Secretariat** – provides a neutral ground in the individual review processes and provides continuity and consistency of the sequence of reviews. At any point in time, the Secretariat may hire the expertise of a technical consultant to ensure accuracy and analytic quality with regards to the Peer Review Process. The balance of the Secretariat's involvement with the specific Reviewer Entities may vary according to review programs – however, its role always remains substantially more labour-intensive, rather than technical.

### 2 Guiding Principles

The Peer Review Process relies on mutual trust among entities and shared confidence throughout the process. Individuals conducting reviews act as fellow peers gathering facts, assessing progress and providing recommendations, not as inspectors or teachers. Reviews build on exchange of best practices, use of internationally established standards and principles and non-binding conclusions and recommendations.

Furthermore, the Peer Review is a tool which provides voluntary participants with non-obligatory recommendations and the sharing of best practices in corporate environmental management. The Process differs from other methods which may require self-reporting obligations by entities to independent and impartial third parties.

01



**Preparation stage**  
(EMG driven)

02



**Consultation stage**  
(EMG driven)

03



**Peer review stage**  
(PRB driven)

04



**Ownership stage**  
(driven by the Reviewed entity)

### 3 Peer Review steps

For all Peer Reviews, several stages are required in sequence: Preparatory, Consultation, Peer Review, and Release/Ownership:

a.) **The Preparatory Stage** – relies on general clarification of the Peer Review Process to be undertaken, agreed between the EMG Secretariat and the Reviewed Entity. In addition to this, the Peer Review Team is formed. Work is undertaken around available information and data, and objectives (scope and focus of the Peer Review, aims, goals, targets; formal and declarative) are developed; a survey from the EMG Secretariat to the Reviewed Entity is also due for completion. Where necessary, an initial scoping visit is undertaken of the Peer Review site.



b.) **The Consultation Stage** – involves a recommended on-site visit undertaken by the Peer Review Team, alongside the consultation of relevant officials and staff of the Reviewed Agency. As part of the review, the Agency is requested to submit available data to the Peer Review Team, who then prepares a Draft Peer Review Report including draft conclusions and recommendations, with the transmission of this draft document to all Members of the collective Peer Review Body well in advance of the proposed Peer Review Body Meeting.



c.) **The Peer Review Stage** – undertaken by the Peer Review Body, which for every review includes an exchange among peers and the review and revision of the draft conclusions and recommendations. The Peer Review Body Meeting will discuss and adopt the final non-binding conclusions and recommendations on both the achievements and the areas for progress, to be trans-



mitted to the Senior Officials Meeting of the EMG and likewise to top officials of the Reviewed Entity.

d.) **The Release/Ownership Stage** – driven by the Reviewed Entity with support of the EMG Secretariat. Chiefly, this stage includes a presentation to and by top officials, staff involvement, media releases on appropriate websites and relationships with local, national and international press alongside any chosen follow-up of the recommendations. The overall process of assessment by peers is based on evidence, a neutral stance, and non-obligatory recommendations. These three components are key for the credibility and influence of the peer reviews; with them the process differs from other programmes which may require self-reporting by organisations or countries to independent and impartial bodies. Moreover, the Process does not carry sanctions.



### 4 Content of the Peer Review

The substance of the Process is brought together in the Peer Review Report and can vary substantially. For example, the contents may consider parameters including: energy, water, waste, staff behaviour and awareness and environmental policy review etc. Additionally, a review of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) related to air travel may be considered. These parameters are assembled within the structure of some common features throughout the report, which include: the achievements, challenges and recommendations associated with the findings of the Peer Review Process and the position of the Reviewed Entity with regards to particular review topics.

## Experience so far

Since 2013, the Peer Review Process has involved a range of UN entities and facilities, including headquarters and offices located in field operations. Some examples of these entities and their review criteria, plus feedback from those involved in the review, are presented here.

World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) headquarters has been reviewed against GHG emissions management, waste management, ICT and green events/meetings, and GHG emissions and management related to air travel.

*“Benefits of a 3rd party peer review, we are in this instance looking to take advantage of specific expertise in respect to renewable energy development that may be available from other UN agencies. The recommendations received in this occasion were very relevant and useful. We were pleased to be peer reviewed and therefore we encourage other UN agencies to do so as well.”*

Mr. Carlo Tancredi (WMO), Facility Management Engineer.

UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) headquarters has been reviewed against: waste and water management, GHG emissions, the management of emissions in buildings and facilities, and staff awareness, involvement and training.



*“The peer review offered Building Management Services (BMS) an opportunity to receive professional feedback, which has brought new insights in facilities management and has given BMS the chance to validate its efforts. It also enhanced the relation between UN entities as we have shared knowledge and experiences.”*

Mr. Diego Masera (UNIDO), Building Management Services Division Chief.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been reviewed against GHG emissions management in buildings and facilities, waste management, and communication and outreach. GHG emissions from air travel were also reviewed.

*“The Peer Review Process was a chance to share IMF accomplishments with colleagues from other UN entities, while also providing a different perspective of the challenges we face. The recommendations were invaluable to the growth of our program.”*

Ms. Evelyn Nash (IMF), Environment, Health, Safety and Sustainability Officer.



# Benefits

## Further improvement in environmental performance:

- The Peer Review Process can act effectively as a precursor for assigning environmental, social, and economic sustainability objectives to your agency's future corporate sustainability and environmental management. A Peer Review of your agency can also set the mechanisms in place for fostering continual improvement and implementing related international standards such as Environmental Management System ISO 14001 or the European Commission's Eco-Management Audit Scheme etc.

## Real changes:

- Improve energy efficiency, e.g. through identifying the procurement of more energy efficient lighting and heating etc.
- Reduce the costs of facilities and operations.
- Increase staff engagement, e.g. by including environmental sustainability as part of their job related skills or responsibilities.
- Reduce energy consumption, e.g. electricity and fuel.
- Improve staff health and safety by improving air quality standards.

## Unique mutual learning experience:

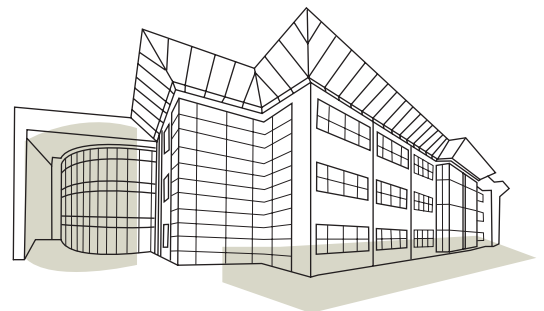
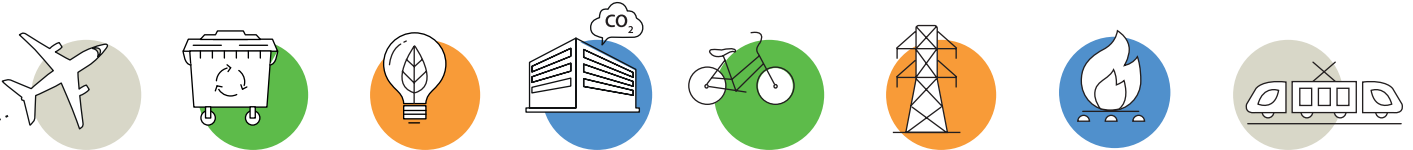
- The Process of sharing experience on best practices is an important capacity building instrument, for: i) the entity under review, ii) the entities participating in the process as specific Reviewer Entities, and iii) the entities participating in the responsible collective Peer Review Body. Together, entities involved in the Peer Review Process benefit through mutual learning and fast transfer of know-how. The peer nature of this Process allows a method for other involved agencies to gather best practices and examples for their own implementation.

## Walking the talk:

- The Peer Review Process is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Secretary General's determination to have the UN lead by example and maintain sustainability as a top priority – a step forward towards "walking the talk" by your agency.

# Getting involved

To get involved and to find out more about either having your organisation Peer Reviewed or participating as a Peer Reviewer of another UN entity, please get in touch with the UN Environment Management Group at [emg@unep.org](mailto:emg@unep.org).



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ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

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