

Briefing note Reducing the climate impacts of UN Peacekeeping: from ambition to action

Militaries account for an estimated 5.5% of global emissions. This means that all militaries — including UN Peacekeepers — have a key role to play in global climate action through meaningful mitigation strategies, emissions reduction targets, and transparent and comprehensive emissions reporting.

Peacekeeping accounts for 41.6% of the UN system's reported greenhouse gas emissions.¹ To limit warming to 1.5°C — as called for in the Paris Agreement — global emissions must reach net zero by 2050. Decarbonising peacekeeping must therefore be a priority for the UN. Since the start of the *Environment Strategy for Peace Operations* in 2017, emissions from UN Peacekeeping and Field-Based Special Political Missions have declined. The updated *Way forward: Environment Strategy for Peace Operations 2023-2030* prioritises both reducing energy consumption and transitioning to renewable energy. Decarbonising peacekeeping will require sustained commitment, investment and effective implementation; but done well, this can simultaneously build more efficient and robust peacekeeping operations.

UN Peace Operations are already demonstrating how decarbonisation can be achieved by militaries, alongside commitments to reduce environmental footprints and increase climate resilience. This has been enabled through measuring and understanding energy use and transparently reporting emissions to track progress. Transparency is key to understanding how activities contribute to emissions, and where climate action must be focused.

Recommendations

The 2025 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial provides an opportunity to advance the decarbonisation of peacekeeping operations, which includes data sharing, standardising approaches, and encouraging States to commit to goals.

- **Standardised emissions reporting:** UN Peacekeeping should adopt a standardised framework for monitoring emissions across scopes 1, 2 and 3 of the GHG Protocol, and which Member States should commit to.
- **Clear and communicated targets:** All missions should set and communicate emissions reductions targets that are aligned with the 2015 Paris Agreement, integrating these into Mission Determined Contributions. Member States should share strategies, lessons learnt and case studies.
- **Policy integration:** Member States should support the inclusion of military GHG emissions reduction protocols and environmental protection measures in relevant UN decisions and policies.
- **Training and capacity building:** Climate and environmental training should be mandatory for all UN Peacekeeping personnel before deployment, covering mitigation practices and support local community resilience to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.
- **Investment in solutions:** Member States should commit resources and capital investment to support training, energy efficiency initiatives and proven low-carbon technologies that reduce overall environmental footprints.

1. Greening the Blue, Annual Report 2024: <https://greeningtheblue.org/sites/default/files/interactive-report-landing/Annual-Report-2024-GtB.pdf>

Why is emissions reporting for UN Peacekeeping important?

GHG emissions cannot be effectively managed without being measured. However, while the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) requires some states to report national GHG emissions annually, reporting military emissions is voluntary and inconsistent across States. Without even a minimum reporting obligation to the UNFCCC, most States do not require their militaries to provide any meaningful GHG emissions reporting.

Introducing standardised reporting to the UN Department of Operational Support (DOS) would begin to fill this gap. It would provide essential data to track progress and promote much-needed transparency. The DOS is already supported by the Group of Friends for Leading on Environmental Management in the Field (LEAF): a group of UN Member States co-chaired by Bangladesh and Italy. LEAF is critical in supporting the delivery of the ambitious vision for UN Peacebuilding, offering valuable lessons that could inform broader military reporting practices.

Decarbonising UN Peacekeeping

UN peace operations are often deployed in remote, conflict-affected areas with limited infrastructure. As UN missions must predominantly be self-sufficient — particularly in terms of energy, water and waste management — there is a unique opportunity to trial renewable energy projects and improve environmental management. This has additional operational benefits, such as reducing the strain on host countries, improving reputation, and fostering better relationships with communities.

For example, the Slovenian armed forces trial of a plug-in hybrid diesel generator cut fossil fuel use by 70%, resulting in a quieter and less disruptive environment. This was driven by a vision to develop a zero-emission camp by 2050, and is one of many innovations that have been developed through partnerships between defence and civil stakeholders prioritising decarbonisation. The roll-out of training is key and States are already beginning to lead the way in providing climate and environmental training for military and peacekeeping personnel, such as the Slovenia-based Peace Operations Training Centre and the International Centre of Excellence on Environmental Protection, established by the Italian Carabinieri in Rome.²

All States contributing personnel to UN Peacekeeping missions have an opportunity to lead by example: reducing emissions, setting a standard for emissions reporting, supporting renewable energy adoption, and promoting climate resilience and environmental stewardship in host communities. Doing so supports peacekeeping outcomes, protecting people and the climate.

This briefing has been jointly prepared by the Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS) and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia. CEOBS is a UK charity working to increase the protection of people and ecosystems from the impact of armed conflicts and military activities: www.ceobs.org. Our Military Emissions Gap project monitors and analyses military emissions data: www.militaryemissions.org. Further information: contact@ceobs.org

The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia performs administrative and professional functions for the defence system and the system of protection against natural and other disasters. The Ministry is committed to achieving the objectives of the Republic of Slovenia's climate ambitions and is integrating a climate change perspective into the development of its military capabilities. The Ministry's activities include increasing energy efficiency, reducing its carbon footprint, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, investing in innovation and development projects in the field of increased resilience and environmental protection.

2. Peace Operations Training Centre: <https://climate-diplomacy.org/climate-change-peace-and-security-training>; International Centre of Excellence on Environmental Protection: https://italyun.esteri.it/en/news/dalla_rappresentanza/2025/01/statement-of-italy-at-unsc-side-event-environmental-impact-of-un-peace-operations-from-ambition-to-action