



UNITED NATIONS IN VIET NAM

CONCEPT PAPER

Towards establishment of a **Green** One UN House in Vietnam

February 2008

Vision

The vision for the **Green** One UN House in Viet Nam is to retrofit the current UN Apartment Building into an environmentally friendly and healthy UN House for all resident UN agencies in Hanoi, with cutting edge eco-design and technology.

A **Green** One UN House would:

- Use key resources (energy, water) more efficiently, and be a firm statement of the UN commitment to sustainable development, which is an underpinning philosophy of all of its work;
- Provide a model building and through that demonstrate the viability of innovative sustainable buildings in rapidly urbanizing Viet Nam;
- Enable the UN in Viet Nam to implement an ambitious reform programme as one of the 8 pilot countries of the High Level Panel as co-location is essential to overcome the 'silo mentality' that comes with physical separation of the 16 UN Agencies in Viet Nam;
- Provide an example of UN agencies working together through programmatic functional clusters as well as common support services – enhancing effectiveness and creating cost-efficiencies;
- Provide a better, healthier, safer and more friendly work environment for employees – creating a working environment that enhances productivity;
- Maximize the opportunities for South-South cooperation by collaborating with the Centre of Excellence, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University in Thailand for the eco-design;
- Maximize the transfer of 'green' technology and knowledge to Viet Nam, building local capacities whenever possible.

The **Green** One UN House is developed in a partnership with a broad range of stakeholders from within the UN Country Team in Viet Nam, which include the Heads of Agencies, the Operations Management Team and the Staff Associations. The UNDG Working Group on Common Premises (Rome) provides general support and technical advice towards the establishment of a **Green** One UN House. In addition, a joint Working Group comprising of officials from the UN and Government of Viet Nam has been established. The Working Group provides general oversight and ensures that the **Green** One UN House complies with building regulations and other relevant provisions. Last but not least the implementation of the **Green** design and construction is benefiting substantially from the expertise, advice and technical backstopping provided by Regional Office of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in Bangkok

Section 1: UN Reform in Viet Nam

Viet Nam was selected as the first of only eight countries in the world to pilot the implementation of the recommendations of the independent High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence, co-chaired by the Prime Ministers of Norway, Pakistan and Mozambique. In November 2006, the Panel advised then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, that effectiveness and efficiency of the UN at country level could be improved if fragmentation in planning and delivery of development programmes would be reduced and inbuilt inefficiencies removed. The report stated: “The most radical decision we could take is to maintain the status quo. It would represent a victory for inertia and parochial, short term institutional and national interests to maintain a [UN] system that has grown over time, and which no one facing the challenges we do today would design as it is”. The Panel recommended the UN at country level to develop One Programme, One Budgetary Framework, One Leader, and, where appropriate, One House (for more information see the report “Delivery as One”: <http://www.un.org/events/panel/>).

It was not surprising that Viet Nam immediately sprang to mind as a pilot country to test such an innovative approach to UN development cooperation at country level. As early as autumn 2005 the UN Agencies in Viet Nam initiated a reform process towards enhanced coherence, effectiveness and efficiency through five dimensions of change: One Plan, One Budget, One Leader, One Set of Management Practices and One UN House. The overall goal of the ‘One UN Initiative’ is to maximize the contribution of the participating UN Agencies to building a prosperous, equitable and democratic Viet Nam for all by enhancing coordination, collaboration and programmatic synergies among the UN Agencies.

The One UN Initiative has made considerable progress. This is in large part due to the leadership of the Government, who consider the UN an important partner in helping to address the development challenges ahead. The Prime Minister of Viet Nam has been closely engaged in the One UN Initiative. A joint Government-UN Tripartite National Task Force (TNTF) was established in 2006, charged with the responsibility of advancing UN reform by providing effective oversight, and to operationalize the reform process.

The One Plan I was signed on 23 August 2007 with the participation of the Government of Viet Nam and six UN Agencies, namely UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNIFEM, and UNV. The One Plan II and One Budget II with the additional involvement of 8 incoming UN Agencies – FAO, IFAD, ILO, UNIDO, UNHABITAT, UNESCO, UNODC, and WHO are being finalized and it is expected that One Plan II will be signed in early 2008. Similar to One Plan I, the importance of environment is clearly articulated in Outcome 3, i.e. “Vietnam has adequate policies and capacities for environmental protection and the rational management of natural resources and cultural heritage for poverty reduction, economic growth and improving the quality of life”. A One Plan Management Plan is being developed to operationalize joint planning, monitoring and delivering as part of the One UN Initiative. The UN Country Team is discussing a Memorandum of Understanding for the One Leader, which would provide the Resident Coordinator with an enhanced authority and accountability framework. A set of harmonized programme and project management guidelines is being developed by the three ExCom Agencies and the Government, with an open invitation for other UN Agencies to join.

For detailed information on all of the ‘Ones’ in the One UN Initiative, please see <http://www.un.org.vn> containing key documents and for regular updates on progress achieved.

Section 2: The importance of a Green One UN House in Viet Nam

Enhanced effectiveness requires establishing programmatic synergies among UN Agencies, which emerge from working better together in the planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes/projects. The establishment of a carbon-neutral, team-friendly One UN House is a pivotal to efforts to promote the harmonization and simplification measures and to achieve the programmatic synergies as clearly outlined in Paris Declaration and Hanoi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness for four main reasons:

1. Physical co-location in a Green One UN House will help to break down the barriers that come with physical separation of the 16 resident UN Agencies, which are housed in 12 different locations in Ha Noi, and foster a sense of common UN identity.
2. Co-location is essential to maximize inter-agency teamwork. To overcome the programmatic fragmentation associated with many UN players in the field, our ambition is to establish 'functional clusters'. Discussions about the extent of functional clustering are currently ongoing, but all agree in principle that a Green One UN House should be designed as a team-friendly workplace, with staff of UN Agencies co-located and working together as a team on the basis of thematic issues. Rather than the traditional design of a floor-plan per Agency, the aim is to ensure an innovative and flexible interior design that facilitates inter-agency exchange and collaboration.
3. A Green One UN House will allow the UN Agencies to integrate their support services (common receptionist, drivers, IT, travel, banking, procurement, security, human resource management, etc) and as such the House will contribute to cost-efficiencies in the medium term. The details of the common support services, particularly in IT and HR, require further discussion within the UNCT. Direct cost-savings can however be attributed to enhanced efficiency of key resources such as energy and water, as well as building maintenance.
4. Our vision is to develop a carbon neutral UN House that will be the benchmark of 'green buildings' in Viet Nam, maximizing energy efficiency and occupant comfort. Up-front objectives include substantially reduced greenhouse emissions and dramatically reduced energy & water consumption. The result should be exemplary in terms of energy efficiency and indoor environmental quality.

Enhancing energy efficiency is particularly important in the case of rapidly urbanizing Viet Nam, a country very vulnerable to climate change due to its long coastline. But climate change is not merely an environmental issue: it also has serious social and economic implications, and responding to it requires the involvement of a variety of sectors, including finance, energy, transport, agriculture, urban planning and health. According to recent projections, potentially 22 million Vietnamese people will be displaced due to the rise in sea levels, with the productivity in the Mekong Delta -the rice bowl of the country- severely affected, and a potential impact on the GDP between 11-36% if sea levels rise by 1-5 metres (World Bank estimates). Climate change thus needs to be firmly positioned in the broader sustainable development agenda, involving its economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

Monitoring of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness is usually done through a set of indicators focussing on financial mechanisms and processes. However, the implementation of the Declaration is also about opportunities to engage in the development effectiveness agenda. Engagement in environment awareness, advocacy and capacity building needs to be broadened and deepened, including on addressing the implications of global environmental issues such as climate change within the development agenda. Establishing a Green One UN House is one expression of such an engagement by the UNCT with the people of Viet Nam.

Section 3: 'Greening' the UN in Hanoi

From a concept ...

The UN in Viet Nam firmly believes in complementing a carbon-neutral UN House with 'green' ways of working. With funding provided through the budget of the Resident Coordinator, a full environment audit of all UN premises in Hanoi is being finalized by independent experts. The audit will result in a carbon emission inventory and suggestions of how to raise environmental awareness and induce behavioral change, and how to address (sometimes wasteful) business practices in the UN through 'greening' UN procurement, reducing the need for air travel etc. A full Environment Action Plan will be drafted upon completion of the Environment Audit, enabling the UN to track tangible changes in its environmental footprint even before it moves to a Green One House.

...and strong government support

The Government of Viet Nam strongly supports the establishment of a Green One UN House with substantially reduced greenhouse emissions, and much reduced energy and water consumption. In fact, it was the Government who had added the One House as the 5th pillar in the One UN Initiative. Based on a review of several potential sites for a Green One UN House offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a collective decision was taken in Spring 2007 to convert the current UN Apartment Building to a Green One UN House. From a green urban planning perspective, retrofitting the existing structure is preferable to constructing a new office building in the outskirts, which would contribute to urban sprawl. The UN Apartment Building is owned by the Government of Viet Nam, but built (financed) by the UN on a long-term lease which ends in December 2008. While designing such an innovative green building is an objective in itself, it is also an important part of the identity of the UN as an advocate for environmental awareness and behavioral change. True to the United Nations spirit, we have as secondary objectives to build local knowledge and capacity in Viet Nam on eco-design and construction, through the transfer of green technology.

...to a reality

Green buildings, also named high-efficiency sustainable buildings, are designed through an integrated process which marries new technologies with low-tech, natural systems and concepts to create buildings, which use limited resources efficiently and minimize their impact on the environment. In general, all the heating, cooling and ventilation systems are designed to compliment the natural environment. Solar and other renewable energy sources are employed on site. Indoor environments are made people friendly with natural lighting, ventilation and natural, non-toxic finishes. Building materials are selected from renewable resources which will have a lesser impact on the environment, minimize construction waste, and can be recycled at the end of the building's life. Green buildings are maintained and operated in a manner which sustains these principles and are environmentally sound. Green buildings seek to minimize the permanent imprint on the land while significantly reducing our use of energy and water resources. Pollution will also be reduced through the use of recycled and sustainable produced materials which will reduce the need for mining, drilling and other processes harmful to the environment.

Green buildings reduce greenhouse emissions and enhance our environment, not just for today's generation but equally if not more important, also for future generations.

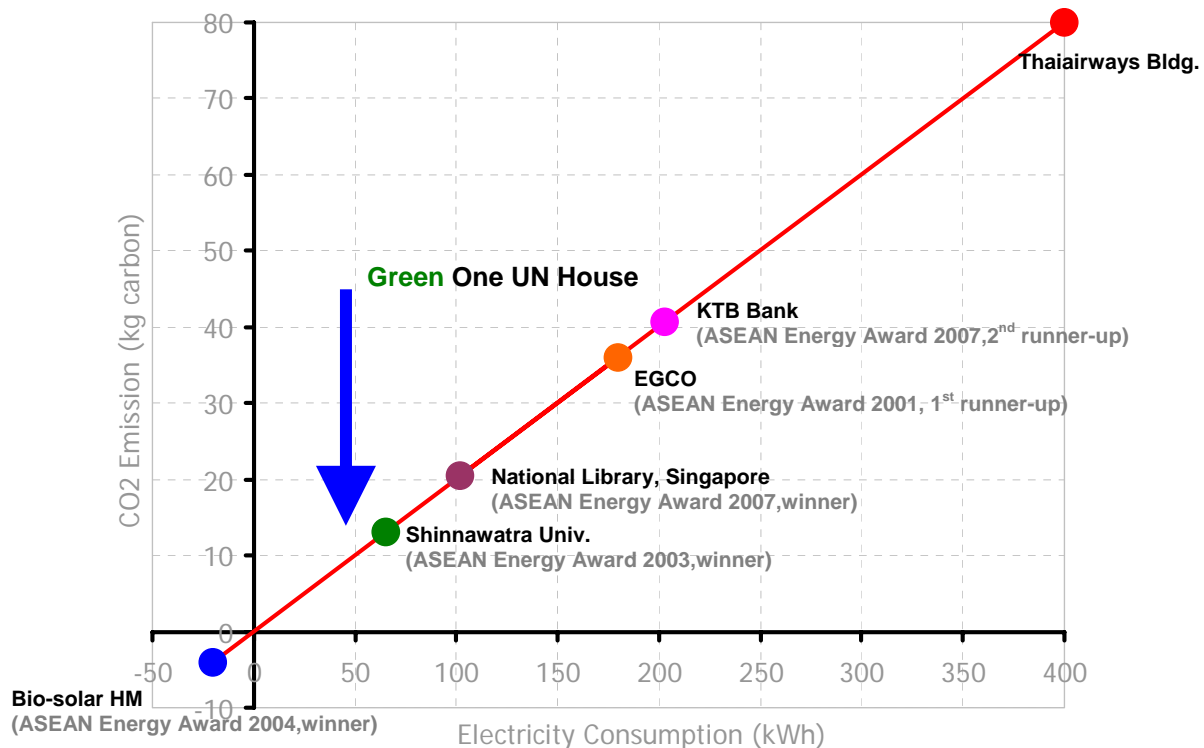
Section 4: Design Features of the Green One UN House in Hanoi

With valuable financial support from the Norwegian government and technical support provided by the UNEP regional office in Bangkok, a preliminary design of a carbon-neutral UN House was completed by the distinguished professor Soontorn Boonyatikarn, an award-winning expert from Chulalongkorn University (Thailand) and his team. The design ensures that the future Green One UN House will meet the highest possible environment standards with the following key design features:

- Increase of usable areas by reducing internal wall structures;
- Minimized heating and cooling loads by changing glazing, frame, and brick materials and by reducing exterior surface area;
- Use of high efficiency air conditioning system;
- Use of natural light with minimized direct sun and UV protection;
- Installment of energy efficiency lighting system;
- Development of water recycled system with water harvesting, treatment, and re-use;
- Design of common green area for social interaction;
- Other long-term development measures to reach carbon-neutral operation (environmentally friendly interior decoration, energy-efficient IT systems and equipment, use of renewable energy, etc.).

The future Green One UN House is expected to set a benchmark in the Asean region for office building design aiming to reduce CO2 emissions.

Design for Global Warming Reduction (data provided courtesy of Chulalongkorn University)



Section 5: Financial feasibility of the Green One UN House in Hanoi

There is an on-going debate in the construction industry about whether or not there really a 'green surcharge' in construction. Some argue that the upfront construction cost for a 'green' building in the initial period will definitely increase as of the installment of 'green' equipment and systems. However, a well-designed green building may actually be less expensive than a traditional building due to the minimized exterior surface area and construction volume. In the case of the Green UN House in Viet Nam, construction costs may increase as green materials, recycle construction waste are not now in common use and not (yet) available in Viet Nam, and may have to be procured from abroad. However, it is important to note that one of the primary goals of green buildings is that over the full life of the building, and hopefully in much less time most if not all of the additional green costs will be recovered.

There is thus consensus among UN Agencies, government partners and all donors that a Green One UN House in Viet Nam is beneficial for all parties. It enables the UN to implement its ambitious reform programme for better development results for the people of Viet Nam. Through a green demonstration building the UN and the Government can jointly advocate for environmental awareness and climate change. The project will build local capacities in environmentally-friendly design and construction in rapidly urbanizing Viet Nam and after the lease with the UN, the Government will own an office property with cutting edge innovative eco-technology.

While many preparatory steps have been taken, the financial feasibility of a Green One UN House remains a challenge. Initial estimates of the total costs associated with retrofitting the UNAB to a Green One UN House are in the area of 6 million USD, based on a calculation of projected UN staff levels and an average square meter price of 700 USD in Hanoi. Until now, preliminary design was funded by Norway.

The ExCom UN Agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA) agreed to contribute USD 1 million towards the construction costs. Other resident UN Agencies have pledged support to the project and are considering ways and means to address the financial challenge.

A potential partnership arrangement between the UNCT in Viet Nam and Clinton Foundation Climate Initiative is being negotiated to help the UN to access to technical expertise and eco-efficient equipments at a below market price.

Furthermore, although the Government does not have the financial means to finance the upfront costs of green construction, the Government has expressed its interest in the Green One UN House and is considering various options to reduce the funding gap. This may include a generous mix-credit schema offered by a donor Government, with 35% grant element.

In addition, the UK has already publicly pledged a contribution of 1 million USD for the Green One UN House.

Finally, a full financial analysis of optimal funding options for the One 'Green' UN House by an independent and reputed financial company is currently underway and the results should be available in early April.

However, it is clear that additional donor support for a Green One UN House will be required. Such donor support is essential to enable the implementation of the ambitious reform programme in Viet Nam as one of the 8 pilot countries of the High Level Panel, with co-location being essential to ensure a more coordinated delivery of the UN development programmes, but also to establish a green demonstration building to showcase the viability of innovative sustainable buildings. The Green One UN House is a firm statement of the UN commitments to improve effectiveness and efficiency of its performance, and to the sustainable development which is an underpinning philosophy of all of its work.

In Conclusion

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon organized a high-level debate on Climate Change in the General Assembly in September 2007, and publicly stated that the UN should contribute directly to a better environment by "promoting greener practices at its agencies and [UN] buildings around the world".

The UN in Viet Nam is now considered on the vanguard of change and reform, as it has come furthest in testing and implementing the recommendations of the High Level Panel Report "Delivering as One", and we will be the first to establish a carbon-neutral UN House. This means that there is a lot of political visibility in everything we do, and consequently, constructive but high pressure to deliver results. The UN in Viet Nam is keen to ensure we develop a financially feasible project to enable the UN to "Deliver as One" as well as "Deliver Green".



Perspective of the future **Green One** UN House

Contact us

For more information on the **Green One** UN House please contact the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Kitty van der Heijden, Head of the Office (kitty.heijden@undp.org) and the One UN House Coordinator in the Office, Ms. Thuy (nguyen.thi.thanh.thuy@undp.org).