

Sustainability at ECA



- **THE TRIPLE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS**

The Earth is facing a triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. The United Nations Organizations, Funds and Programmes are at the forefront of the multilateral efforts to address these pressing issues. The Secretary-General of the United Nations stated that *“The fate of humankind depends on how we collectively rise of the challenges of climate change and other environmental concerns”*

- **SUSTAINABILITY IN THE UNITED NATIONS**

The United Nations adopted a [Strategy for Sustainability Management in the UN System 2020-2030 Part 1: Environmental Sustainability in the Area of Management](#). The strategy focuses on environmental governance and system wide cooperation, to deliver positive results in the areas of climate change and greenhouse gas reduction, waste reduction and recycling, air quality, water resources protection, and biodiversity preservation.

The United Nations Secretariat , which includes the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), adopted an [Environmental Policy](#) in 2019. The policy provides the framework and overarching principles to guide the mainstreaming of environmental sustainability considerations into the Secretariat’s activities worldwide. The policy requires UN Secretariat Entities, such as ECA, to build an environmental management system.

The Sustainable United Nations, a team hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme, is coordinating the improvement of the environmental sustainability of the United Nations. They produce an annual report, called the [Greening the Blue report](#), which provides insight into the

sustainability performance of the UN System as a whole, as well as detailed data on specific UN Entities such as ECA.

- **SUSTAINABILITY AT ECA**



ECA in Addis Ababa is spread out in a 13ha park which is refuge for nature

Established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN) in 1958 as one of the UN's five regional commissions, ECA's mandate is to promote the economic and social development of its member States, foster intra-regional integration, and promote international cooperation for Africa's development.

ECA is composed of a headquarter in Addis Ababa, as well as 5 sub-regional offices (SROs) and a training institute (IDEP).

The headquarter in Addis Ababa is the third largest UN compound in the world by building size, and the largest in Africa, hosting between 3,000-4,500 staff and visitors each day, subject to conference attendance. The compound is spread over 13 hectares and offer 20 buildings, representing 110,000m² of surface.

The ECA compounds hosts 22 UN Entities.

Environmental Management System

ECA decided in June 2021 to implement an Environmental Management System (EMS) based on the ISO 14001:2015. Mainstreaming environmental sustainability ensures a systematic approach to reduction efforts.

The implementation of the EMS is led by a Senior Sustainability Steering group composed of directors and technical experts.

All staff are provided with an environmental induction upon joining the organization. A detailed initial environmental review provided insight into ECA's environmental impacts. An Environmental Action Plan 2030 was established to avoid, reduce or offset the environmental footprint of ECA.

ECA aims to reach a “meets” rating of its EMS as per the Sustainable United Nations requirements, therefore paving the way for the obtention of the ISO 14001 certification.

The Printing and Publication Services of ECA (a printing house) is ISO 14001:2015 certified.

● ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY

ECA reports its environmental performance to the Sustainable United Nations since 2008. As an international organization, we aim to track and improve our environmental performance, and our data is available publicly.

ECA inventory covers the full scope of the organization (HQ in Addis Ababa + 5 Sub-Regional Offices + IDEP) and the full scope of the SUN Inventory:

- Waste (municipal, construction, hazardous)
- Water (municipal, groundwater)
- Greenhouse Gas (facilities, operations)
- Environmental Management System

Proxy maybe used to complete the inventory for regional offices with incomplete data.

The compound in Addis Abeba hosts 22 other UN Entities/Agencies and 20 Commercial/Retail tenants. Environmental Inventory due to facilities are apportioned to ECA and hosted entities based on headcount.

Climate and Energy



ECA security officers patrol on an electric vehicle charged with hydroelectricity

The greenhouse gas inventory is based on the following:

- Commercial air travel (fuel consumption of aircrafts in economy and business class). Commercial air travel includes staff travelling on mission, staff travelling on contracts entitlements, as well as conference attendees whose travel is paid by ECA.

- Duty road travel (fuel consumption of UN vehicles, as well as the fuel consumption of vehicles to travel to airports). The commuting of staff to work is excluded from the inventory.
- Electricity consumption from the grid
- Fuel consumption of the back-up diesel generators
- Release of refrigerants in the atmosphere due to the use of air conditioning systems

The greenhouse gas emissions at ECA are mainly linked to Commercial Air Travel (around 90% each year).

While ECA endeavours to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, the unavoidable emissions are offset since 2015 through the purchase of carbon credits verified by the United Nations Convention of Climate Change. We are therefore a climate-neutral organization.

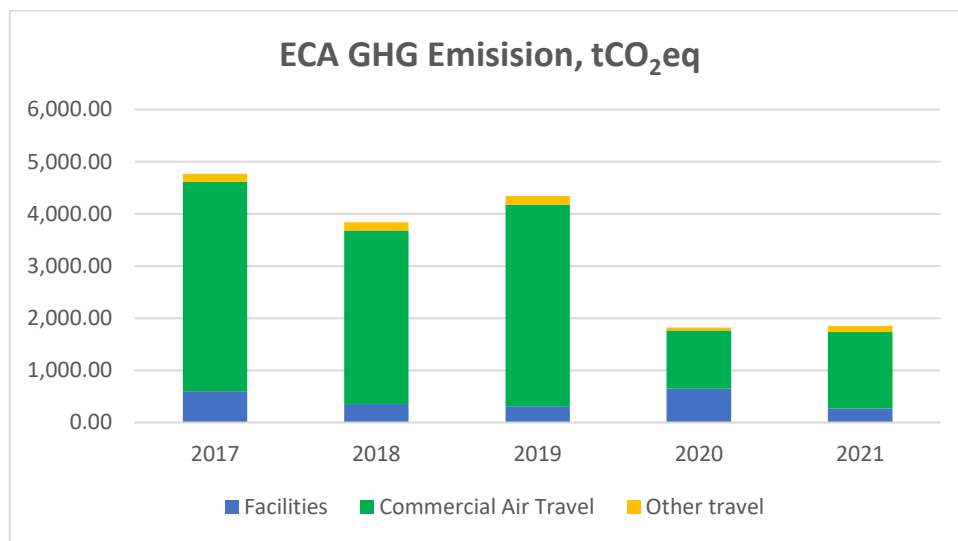


Figure 1: ECA greenhouse gas emissions from 2017 until 2021

ECA operates 63 vehicles. Currently 15% of its vehicles are electrical. In 2022, two hybrid vehicles were purchased.

Waste



ECA has built a waste recycling center



ECA has set up water fountains an encourage staff to bring their own reusable bottle of water

ECA has set up waste sorting bins throughout its compound and is encouraging its staff and visitors to participate in waste reduction, waste sorting and waste recycling. A central waste sorting area was built in 2014 to store and sort waste before they are evacuated from the compound.

Waste generated at ECA can be municipal solid waste from its offices, its catering outlets, its garden or other activities such as building maintenance. Upgrading of facilities through construction and demolition projects can significantly change the amount of waste generated from one year to the other. At the moment, ECA is undertaking major renovation projects, such as the renovation of the Africa Hall. Hazardous waste generated at ECA are minimal and include small quantities of medical waste (incinerated) or small quantities of construction waste (asbestos). All waste is disposed of using international standards.

In 2021, ECA HQ produced an estimated 1083 T of waste. An estimated 41% was recycled, but it is estimated that the figure is higher: waste companies recycle ECA waste but cannot produce detailed recording at this stage. The type of waste is detailed in the figure below:

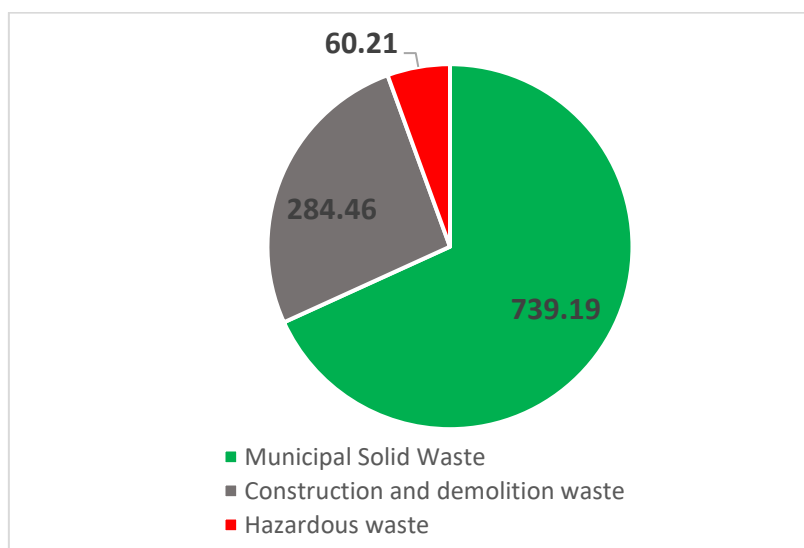
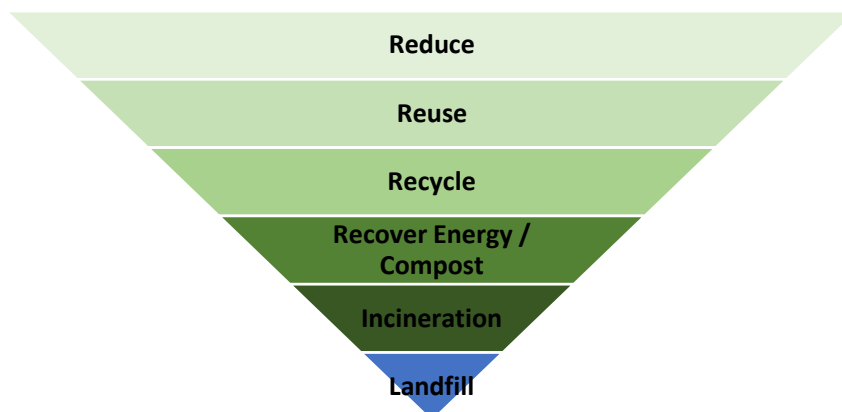


Figure 2: ECA HQ waste production by source, 2021, in T

All the waste produced at ECA follows the following waste hierarchy:



The municipal waste which cannot be recycled is incinerated in a state-of-the-art waste to energy (electricity) incineration plant, under the authority of the Addis Ababa Waste

It is estimated that the ECA compound in Addis Ababa could increase its recycling waste through the composting of organic waste such as garden waste. In 2022, a pilot project was established for composting.

ECA aims to become a single-use plastic-free organization. Throughout the compound, water fountains are provided, and staff and visitors are advised to use reusable water bottles. Catering outlets are plastic-free, to the extent possible. ECA invites visitors and contractors to join the UN in eliminating the scourge of plastic pollution by adopting environmentally friendly practices.

Water

ECA uses water for drinking, cleaning, washing, for bathrooms and also to irrigate its compound. The irrigation of the compound is made using a borehole on site.

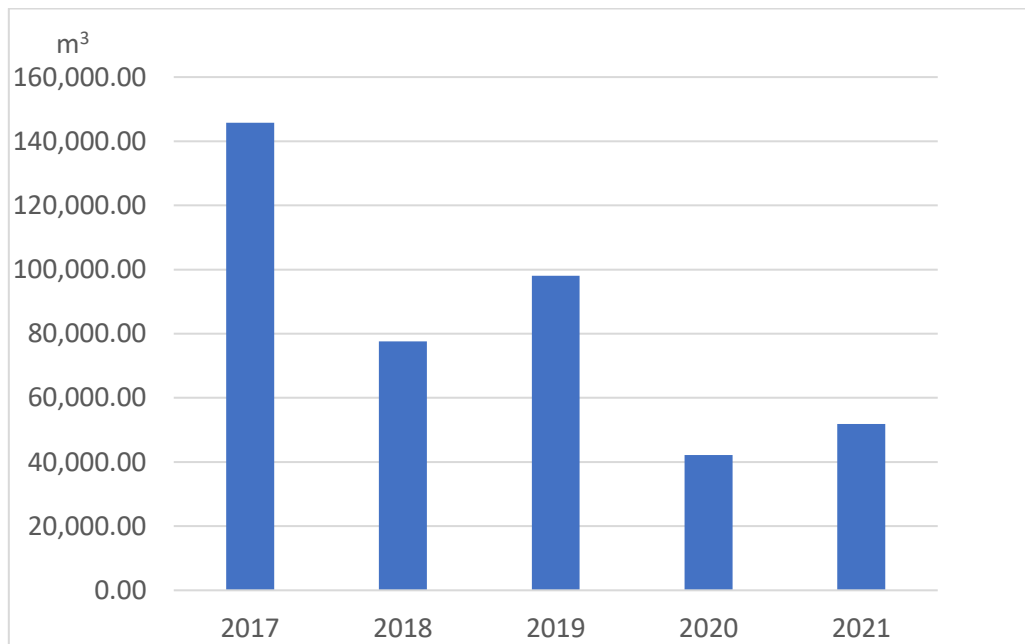


Figure 3: Total ECA water consumption, municipal and groundwater, in m³

ECA is committed to reducing its water consumption through building efficiencies (water-saving plumbing fixtures), sustainable landscaping and awareness raising on consumption behaviour.

- **CONTACT**

ECA values the engagement of its stakeholders on its sustainability performance. For inquiries, please contact eca-fmsservicedesk@un.org