



**International  
Science Council**

The global voice for science

# The ISC organizational sustainability principles

*14 May 2020*



# The ISC organizational sustainability principles

---

## 1. RATIONALE

---

The ISC, as an organization whose mission is to advance science as a global public good, is deeply implicated in the global effort to address the challenges of environmental change and sustainability. Among the core values of the ISC are innovation and sustainability, meaning that the ISC aims to embed the principles of sustainability in its policies and practices, and to promote new approaches and solutions to achieve sustainability. Tactically, one of the four major domains of activity for the ISC in the current planning period is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The ISC cannot be a credible champion for the 2030 Agenda unless it acknowledges and takes responsibility for reducing its own negative

impact on the environment. It therefore integrates sustainability principles into its way of working, both internally and with its members and external partners.

Achieving a truly sustainable workplace will not be easy, not least for an international organization with a global constituency and mandate; however, in making the effort, the ISC aims to be an advocate for more sustainable organizational policies and practices, and to encourage individuals and other organizations to adapt their own objectives and practices in a way that is commensurate with current global ambitions to achieve rapid and just transformations to sustainability.

---

## 2. UNDERSTANDING AND MONITORING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

---

Reducing our environmental impact implies knowing where we are starting from and taking effective action with measurable outcomes.

The main areas in which the ISC can manage its environmental impact are: travel, organization of meetings/events, and secretariat operations.

The ISC will closely monitor its carbon emissions from air travel from January 2020 onwards. Information on carbon emissions from travel and energy use at ISC headquarters, and eventually from regional branches, will be presented annually to the Governing Board.





---

### 3. MANAGING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

---

#### *a. Air travel*

Carbon emissions from travel, particularly from long-haul flights, far outweigh any other environmental impact of ISC activity on a quantitative basis.

Carbon off-setting of air travel emissions will be a standard practice. The ISC will record and offset the emissions of all people travelling at the expense of the ISC (including invited meeting participants). The carbon emissions of travel and the associated off-setting costs will be calculated with the *atmosfair* carbon emissions calculator (see [atmosfair.de/en](https://atmosfair.de/en)).

The cost of off-setting carbon emissions may be invested either in technology that would facilitate virtual meetings, thereby reducing the need for travel, or in certified carbon mitigation projects.

*Carbon off-setting must, however, be in addition to efforts to reduce travel.*

The ISC will take a number of measures to minimize its carbon emissions from travel, chiefly:

- Careful consideration of the need for, and the anticipated positive and negative impact (scientific, professional and environmental) of any trip or convening.
- Systematic consideration of alternatives to travel-intensive meetings, such as teleconferencing or nodal meetings.
- Prioritization of lower-carbon forms of transport where practicable (e.g. trains over planes, direct over indirect flights).

#### *b. Meetings and events*

ISC meetings and events, whether organized in-house, in other locations and/or in partnership with other organizations, should include sustainability as a criterion for choosing locations, venues, catering and materials. Sustainability considerations and principles (see Annex A) should be agreed with partner organizations before committing to co-organize an event.

#### *c. Operations*

Reducing energy use and material waste in buildings and secretariat activities, including publishing practices, is another important way to reduce an organization's impact on the environment. The principle should be: refuse, reduce, re-use, recycle.

The ISC will conduct an internal sustainability audit of its workplace operations on an annual basis (see Annex B).

The ISC will provide guidance to its staff on how to minimize negative environmental impact in the workplace.





---

#### 4. FOSTERING A CULTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY

---

Above all, the ISC aims to foster a culture of sustainability within and outside the organization.

Financial and staff resources will be made available for support of sustainability efforts, including training for sustainability in the workplace. The organization will appoint a designated sustainability officer, responsible for monitoring and driving forward implementation of the ISC sustainability principles and for being a point of reference for staff.

Feedback will be given to the staff, governing bodies and members on the organization's sustainability efforts and progress, and their input will be solicited, on a regular basis.

All ISC staff and governing or advisory body

members should be requested to confirm that they have read and will adhere to the ISC sustainability principles at the beginning of every year. The sustainability principles will be shared with ISC members annually, and sharing of good practice among members will be welcomed and facilitated.

The sustainability principles and internal guidelines will be reviewed and updated annually, on the basis of feedback and learning, including with members, and according to the latest scientific knowledge and technologies available.

Finally, the ISC will advocate for organizational sustainability by addressing the topic and making reference to the ISC sustainability principles in all meetings and publications and on its website.

---

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** *The ISC was inspired by many organizations and their policies in the preparation of these principles, including: Future Earth, C40 Cities, Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), Trades Union Congress, atmosfair*



# ANNEX A:

## The ISC sustainable event checklist

*This checklist is intended solely as an aide to ISC staff in the preparation of meetings.*

---

### BEFORE DECIDING TO ORGANIZE AN EVENT:

---

1. Consider the likely positive scientific or other impact of the event, in relation to the negative environmental or other impact.
2. Consider whether the meeting or individual participation could be organized virtually. The ISC has a range of technologies to accommodate virtual meetings, including desktop videoconferencing and a professional videoconference room.

---

### CATERING:

---

3. Offer local seasonal foods, at least 50% vegetarian and no red meat.
4. Offer local beverages and serve fair-trade coffee and tea.
5. Choose a caterer who uses reusable crockery (including coffee cups).
6. Verify the food waste practices of the caterer and/or venue.

---

### BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE MEETING:

---

7. Before and during the meeting, inform the participants about the ISC sustainability principles and the measures that have been taken to reduce the environmental impact of the meeting.
8. Make sure the travel of all participants whose travel is paid for by the ISC is included in the ISC calculations for off-setting.

---

### LOCATION AND SUPPLIERS:

---

9. Select a meeting location that minimizes overall emissions (notably from air travel), taking into account concerns for geographic, disciplinary and stakeholder representation.
10. Select a venue with a sustainability rating, if available.
11. Recycling facilities for waste paper and other materials should be highly visible and understandable.
12. Recommend hotels within walking distance of the venue and with sustainability ratings, if available.
13. Choose local suppliers, preferably with sustainability ratings.
14. Ensure that temperature and lighting controls of the venue are set to the minimum adequate levels.
15. Minimize paper copies of documents, replacing them by access to online documentation and information.
16. Use recycled paper, if printing is necessary, print on both sides and without colour. Print on-site rather than shipping.
17. Do not use plastic name-badge pockets. Use generic, reusable lanyards and collect them after the meeting for re-use.
18. If absolutely necessary, offer only tote bags made from recycled materials.
19. Offer water fountains/jugs (with tap water, where safe), rather than bottles, and ask participants to bring their own water bottles.
20. Offer sustainably sourced pencils rather than pens and provide pencil sharpeners.



# ANNEX B:

## ISC INTERNAL OPERATIONS CHECKLIST

*This checklist is intended to provoke discussion and reflection on measures that could be taken to improve the sustainability performance of the ISC. A small internal committee should answer the questions collectively once a year and propose possible follow-up action.*

---

### ENERGY SOURCES

---

1. Do we source our energy (electricity and heating) from the most sustainable provider?

---

### ENERGY USAGE

---

2. Is the workplace properly insulated, draught-proofed and ventilated?

3. Are the thermostats in the right places and set to the right temperature (19°C for heating, 24°C for cooling)?

4. Are there automatic power-reducing features, e.g. motion sensor lights, timers, power downs?

5. Is equipment low energy?

- a. Lighting
- b. Computer monitors
- c. Other

6. Are staff trained to use equipment in an eco-friendly way?

- a. Email
- b. Virtual conferencing
- c. Other use of computers (streaming music/videos)
- d. Turning off equipment when leaving the office
- e. Turning off lights when not in use

7. Do we know our annual energy use?

8. Do we off-set our internal energy use?

---

### OTHER RESOURCES

---

9. Do we minimize the use of resources other than energy?

- a. Paper
  - i. Are administrative tasks digitized where possible?
  - ii. Is there a sustainable publishing policy?
- b. Packaging
  - i. Coffee packaging/capsules
- c. Disposable items (stationery)
- d. Water

---

### WASTE AND RECYCLING

---

10. Are measures in place to reduce waste and increase people's consciousness of the need to reduce waste?

11. Are recycling facilities for waste paper and other materials highly visible?

12. Are recycling guidelines up to date, clear and visible? Are staff trained in good recycling practices?

13. Is equipment recycled at the end of its life?



---

## PROCUREMENT AND SERVICES

---

14. Do we have a sustainable procurement policy? (Do we buy equipment and goods only when necessary, from recycled materials when possible and sourced from suppliers with good labour and environmental standards?)

15. Do cleaning service providers apply good labour standards and use environmentally friendly products?

16. Do we have a list of catering service providers with verified ecological credentials?

17. Do our financial service providers handle our funds in a sustainable manner and themselves implement an organizational sustainability strategy?

---

## TRAVEL TO WORK

---

18. Are staff encouraged to take public transport or bicycles to work, or to walk, when possible?

19. Does the company have a teleworking policy that helps reduce travel to the office?

---

## TRAVEL FOR WORK

---

20. Do we monitor, attempt to reduce and off-set our (unavoidable) carbon emissions from travel?

21. Do we monitor the number and size (number of participants) of physical and virtual meetings we organize or co-organize?

22. Does our travel policy include sustainability considerations?

---

## CONSCIOUSNESS

---

23. Does the organization know its carbon footprint?

24. Are the organization's staff, governing bodies and members aware of its sustainability policy?

25. Is there a clear set of internal guidelines for staff?

26. Is there a designated person staff can bring questions or suggestions to?

