



London and South East Region UNA

Minutes of AGM Saturday 28th Nov. 2020 via Zoom

In Attendance: *Chair:* Patricia Rogers. *Hon Sec:* Neville Grant. *Treasurer:* Peter Webster.
Members: Gonzalo Alvarez, Jane and Brian Beeley, Sir Peter Bottomley MP (West Worthing), Pamela Brivio, Dorothy Brooks-Usher, Stephen Bulters, Ian Elgie, Hilary Evans, Trevor Evans, John Hemsley, Keith Hindell, Annesha Kar Gupta, Rodney Mantle, Salem Mezhoud, Krisztina Milak, Titilayo Odukale, Catherine Pluygers, Rene Smit, Jo Stocks, Rob Storey, Paul Tippell, Anthony Vallyon, Michael Vince, Sarah Webster, David Wardrop.

Apologies: Hagir Ahmed, Jane Grant, Peter Greaves, John Helmsley, Wendy Higgs, Keyet Makonnen, Peri Mohammed, Deqa Salad, Autumn Melody Thomas,

1 Minutes of last AGM & Matters arising

Jane Beeley requested that, in the Chair's report, Alan Bullion's name be prefixed by 'Dr' and under 13.2 and 15, her branch name be amended to 'Tunbridge Wells & Wealden'. With these amendments, the minutes of the L&SER AGM of November 30th 2019 were approved; there were no matters arising.

2 Chair's Report

2.1 It has been an extraordinary year, partly shaped by a pandemic that had been much predicted but still was unexpected. But the main ingredients – of promoting international understanding, cooperation and fairness, of working with our local communities, and of depending on wonderful voluntary support and friendship – have continued unchanged. My thanks to all.

2.2 Perhaps the pandemic has also helped us wake up to the fact that things can change dramatically, that the world is unavoidably interdependent, and that we must work harder than ever to prevent going over brinks, especially those leading to long-term damage, such as climate change. We had to turn to electronic means of working together. Zoom became a familiar part of all of our lives. We began meeting, from the comfort of our sofas, with people from all over the country – and all over the world. But the world outside continued and it was important that our voices were heard. We began using our website to coordinate our campaigns: members are urged to make full use of our website, which among other things contains actions taken by the region over the year:

- In April we wrote to the Foreign Secretary to ask the UK to support UN Secretary-General Guterres' call for a global ceasefire to help people fight the pandemic.
- The World Health Organisation became crucial to coordinating international efforts to fight the pandemic. In April, US President Donald Trump announced that the USA (which had been providing 22% of WHO's funds) would stop supporting it. So, led by our member Sir Richard Jolly, we wrote to the then Secretary of State for International Development, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, to urge the UK to increase its support for WHO and encourage other countries to do so too.
- Again in April, having cancelled the pre-COP26 part of our Spring Council, we held the Policy consultation part of it by zoom and our Policy Committee Chair. Peter Webster, reports on that below.
- In April, too, we began planning for our UN75 event, to be held on UN Day, 24th October. In order to involve a wider demographic we invited Peace Child International to join us in this event and we began making plans with the International Maritime Organisation to hold it at

their London HQ. [See item 3, below.]

- In May it became clear that the pandemic was making impossible demands on the World Food Programme, so we campaigned for additional UK support for this agency.
- In July, we campaigned hard to prevent the merger of DfID with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, fearing that such a merger would damage the quality of our aid programme. Sadly, this merger happened, so we turned our campaigning attention last week to encouraging our members to contact their MPs about supporting the establishment of a cross-party committee to scrutinise UK aid now that the DfID Select Committee will cease to exist. There is to be a free vote on this in the Commons soon.
- Then, responding to the many suggestions that the UK is going to discontinue its commitment, (which has now been presented as government policy) we started campaigning urgently for UK aid to continue to meet the 1970 UN target of 0.7% GNI, which was enshrined in UK law in 2015.
- In July, too, led by our member Paul Tippell, we campaigned for the UK to meet its funding pledge for UN humanitarian aid and to encourage others to provide more support to help the suffering people of Yemen; to help broker a ceasefire, and to urge the Saudis to take various steps towards reducing the devastating effects of this conflict. We shared on our website Paul's moving presentation.
- In August, 75 years after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs, we supported the ICAN campaign for the UK to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The letter on our website has haunting contributions from some atomic bomb survivors. Since then, the 50th ratification – which happened on UN Day, 24th October, the final day of our festival – means that the Treaty will come into effect on 22nd January 2021. Now we must try to get the nuclear states to engage with this international law that they are breaking.

2.3 LASER exists to work with its branches. This year has been challenging for our branches, and, while I am delighted that a new branch is being formed in Medway, I am sorry to say that 2 UNA branches may close. These are Blackheath branch, and Sutton and Croydon branch. I hope very much we can find ways of helping them to continue, but I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them on all they have achieved. Blackheath – led by the indefatigable Neville Grant – has had an amazing range of initiatives. I'd like to pick out here just two recent ones: their sensitive work supporting refugees in their community; and their organising an inspirational tour by a Palestinian professor. The highlight of the work of Sutton and Croydon has been their schools' debating competition, through which they have influenced hundreds of young people over many years.

2.4 Virtual events: opportunity, or threat?

Some branches have found the dependence on electronic communication enormously challenging. Other branches have found that working electronically has opened up opportunities. Branches have had people join our meetings from all over the country and some of our members – particularly Paul Tippell and Gonzalo Alvarez – have spoken at meetings for groups from around the country, without leaving their homes. Zoom also enabled us, cheaply and easily, to arrange meetings for branches with UNA-UK Executive Director Natalie Samarasinghe, when she was seconded to the UN75 organising group at UN headquarters in New York. We also arranged zooms with our elected trustees who have then widened this method for informing and consulting.

2.5 The varied work of the branches continues to impress:

- From outreach work in Uganda or Luxor, film festivals, MUNGAS, flag-raising ceremonies, too many to list here.
- It is good to see some branches working in co-operation with each other, such as the joint meeting of Wandsworth with Twickenham and Richmond UNA. Special mention must be made of the UNA Climate and Oceans Project in Bexhill, led by the astonishing Gonzalo Alvarez, which offers a model in the way it works with sister NGOs, youth organisations, local government and business, and other organisations.
- For health reasons, Rodney Mantle stood down from the committee earlier in the year and handed over to René Smit, the new Chair of Twickenham and Richmond UNA (TRUNA). Thank you to Rodney for his wise work on the committee. Thank you, too, to TRUNA for planning to hold our Summer Council on *The UN: Past, Present and Future*. Unfortunately, the pandemic scuppered the plans for 2020 and they now plan to hold it in 2021.

2.6 LASER has responded to consultations on subscriptions and membership structures from UNA-UK. We are very worried that UNA-UK does not appreciate the value of having paying members and is in danger of losing this important vehicle of support and credibility. We will discuss this further later in this meeting.

2.7 UN75 Celebration

- Much of the year has been spent preparing for our UN75 event, looking at *What Next for the UN? Building on the insecurity caused by the pandemic, we decided to focus on Building a more secure world*. Originally, we planned to have a 24th October conference with breakout rooms focusing on 6 different aspects of insecurity: Health Security, Food Security, Environmental Security, Economic Security, Peace and Security, Digital Security. Once we realised that the event was going to have to be electronic, David Wardrop suggested that we turned it into a week-long festival.
- We also realised that, at minimal cost, we could include outstanding contributors from all over the world. We planned six workshops on Zoom on the different aspects of security and then a conference and concert on UN Day, which included feedback from the workshops, presentations from the UN Secretary-General and from Lord Ahmed, a Minister of State at the Foreign Office, as well as panels and a concert looking at the *UN: Past, Present and Future*. Each workshop developed proposals for actions – by individuals, communities, nations and the international community/UN.
- We are grateful to the Polden-Puckham Charitable Trust for their financial support (a joy to deal with if you are working on climate change or peace promotion) and the FCDO (a nightmare to deal with and from whom the money- though promised – has still not arrived).
- The UN75 event was voted a huge success. The recordings of the festival are now on its website – www.whatnext4UN.org. Also there is the action plan – *Urgent Actions for Building a More Secure World* – with the opportunity to comment and make suggestions. We hope very much that the products of the festival can be useful to schools and community groups and are welcoming working with UNA branches to take this forward.

2.8 Thank you!

I have been supported by an excellent team, to all of whom I give my warm thanks. I would like to identify in particular,

- Autumn Melody Thomas who had worked with UNA in California and got in touch with us when she moved to London: she contacted all our branches and helped us update the branch section of our website. She, with LASER, helped to organise a very successful zoom meeting between UNA Young Professionals in the USA and the UK. She also made a valuable contribution to the Peace and Security workshop of the festival and continues to work on these issues with UNA Westminster Young Professionals.
- Thank you, too, to Annesha Kargupta who, as our Environmental Officer, has followed up the environmental resolution passed at our Policy Conference (see below item 5) She has also worked on tidying up our website and adding historical information there, along with
- Titilayo Odukale, who contributed to the social media promotion of our festival.
- David Wardrop – who led the Peace and Security workshop of our festival.
- Peter Webster – who is Festival Treasurer and general trouble-shooter (as well as LASER Treasurer)
- Jane Beeley who has been editing our newsletters.
- Sarah Webster who has been in charge of sending them out.
- Wendy Higgs is standing down from the committee, now that she is spending much of the year working with street children in Luxor; she is going to continue to be a member of the London UNA Trust, that supports the charitable aspects of our work.
- Keyet Makonnen, who is setting up a UNA Southern Voices branch.
- Keith Hindell is standing down from the committee after many years of service, including as Chair. [See item 6]
- Neville Grant is standing down as Secretary. Neville has been a pillar of LASER for many years – as committee member, editor of the paper-based *Laser* newsletter, then Chair and then, for many recent years, as Secretary. We are delighted that he has offered to continue to serve on the committee, and thank him for his huge contributions in the many leadership roles that he has held.

3 Treasurer's report

4 Policy Committee Chair's Report

5 Environmental Officer's Report

This report is based on a survey of branches following up the Carbon Footprint Reduction Resolution

agreed at our Policy Conference. 9 out of the 30 approached replied. None of the respondents had formal policies to reduce their carbon footprints but they described some of the actions they are taking. These included promotion of the SDGs (particularly those linked to the environment), encouraging use of public transport, car-sharing, promotion of the 5 Rs – *Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Rot and Recycle*. Some branches are planning their policy implementation. Some Branches were considering other offsetting activities, including through the UNA Eastbourne Uganda Mvule Tree planting project. The full report is attached as *Appendix* at the end of these minutes.

6 Revised constitution

6.1 A subcommittee of the Executive Committee had drafted a revised constitution, which had been agreed by the Executive Committee and then circulated with the papers for this meeting. After a short discussion, the revised constitution was adopted.

6.2 It might well be necessary to update the constitution if and when UNA-UK change their position on the membership issues.

7 Elections

The following were elected via the Zoom facility, with a 100% turnout:

Chair: Trisha Rogers Treasurer: Peter Webster Secretary: Jane Beeley

Committee members, with a 91% turnout :

Hagir Ahmed, Gonzalo Alvarez, Neville Grant, Salem Mezhoud, Catherine Pluygers, René Smit, Rob Storey, Antony Vallyon, David Wardrop

8 UNA-UK membership arrangements

The new proposals from UNA-UK were discussed, and deplored: the unilateral raising of membership subscriptions had caused a number of members to leave, and it was unlikely that it would generate increased income. It seemed that the staff of UNA-UK were much more interested in policy issues than in membership, and the records seemed to be in disarray. There was discussion about whether the region should run its own membership scheme, possibly outsourcing organisations that offered this service, but it was pointed out that it would be just as easy for UNA-UK to use this strategy. It was agreed that the Committee should arrange to meet UNA-UK to try to find a solution for how best UNA-UK and branches could share useful data on members and supporters.

9 Awards and tributes

9.1 Wandsworth Branch The Stevens Trophy for 2020 has been awarded to Wandsworth UNA for organising a very full programme of meetings.

9.2 Derek Smith Hilary Evans paid tribute to Derek Smith, possibly the longest standing member of UNA: he has been a member for 67 years. Derek campaigned on many different issues, and organised many events – public meetings, exhibitions, fund-raising events, MUNGAS, an annual Civic Service and flag day – and he recruited many members, including Vince Cable, and kept in contact with the local MP. He was instrumental in putting the UN on the 1999 National Curriculum. A special certificate was to be sent to Derek.

9.3 Keith Hindell David Wardrop paid tribute to Keith Hindell: Keith – the son of a Marxist puritan atheist welder who imbued him with a love of mountains – won scholarships to Harrow and then Oxford. At 14, Keith became the youngest boy to climb the Matterhorn, good preparation for UNA's constant uphill struggles. Keith was a well-known BBC broadcaster, and author of an excellent autobiography *The Gilded Vagabond*, available in all good bookshops. He had been a very longstanding member of UNA, and a past Chair of the region; he also spent many years on the committee, and organised overseas visits to UN organisations in Europe for members from time to time. The Region is delighted to present him with a Distinguished Service Award for his many valuable contributions. We wish him well in his retirement. In his reply, Keith gave a superb analysis – and defence of – the UN as a vitally important organisation, and he highlighted particularly the work of agencies such as UNHCR, WFP, and WHO. He noted there were currently 13 peace-keeping operations in the world involving some 100,000 personnel, costing 5 billion pounds: a mere 0.5% of all military budgets in the world.

10 Presentation by UNA LASER's new president, Sir Peter Bottomley

10.1 Trisha Rogers introduced our new president Sir Peter Bottomley MP now Father of the House, and Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Committee on the UN. Among the government posts he has

held are Minister for Roads and Traffic, when he persuaded us all to “Clunk Click, Every Trip”. A Trustee of several charities, including Christian Aid, he has been involved in many international issues, including working on the legacy of Archbishop Oscar Romero, murdered in El Salvador. Sir Peter led the UK delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

10.2 Sir Peter recalled his long connection with UNA – he had been on the board in the late seventies, and he recommended Keith’s book for the insights it provided. He hoped that the election of Jo Biden might mean that internationalism was going to be given renewed strength and influence. His advice to branches was to get UN issues onto the agendas of sister organisations – and to minimise ‘house-keeping’ issues that could take too long. Actions speak louder than words – for example why not give each MP a tree to plant each year through the UNA Eastbourne Mvule Project, with local press coverage? He advised branches to get involved in local organisations such as refugee organisations, or local food banks. Overlapping with other organisations could have a positive effect, and make full use of the local media. LASER-UNA should also make full use of parliamentary links, especially to campaign on the reductions of the 0.7 GNP British aid commitment.

10.3 Sir Peter kindly agreed to take questions which covered British Aid, and the need for a cease-fire, and aid in Yemen; Sir Peter said that the best way of dealing with such questions was through local MPs, to get them involved and aware of the issues. Another question raised the possibility of a combined meeting of three APPGs (on the UN; on UN Global Goals; and on the Commonwealth) to deal with common issues in the light of the forthcoming visit of the UN Secretary General in January.; Sir Peter said that this was an issue best followed up through Lord Hannay.

11 The meeting closed at 1715 hrs.

Signed

Chair Patricia Rogers

Hon Sec. Neville Grant

Appendix

Environmental Officer Report

1. Executive Summary: This report is based on 10 minutes survey for Carbon Footprint Reduction Resolution. We have 16 branches and 14 universities at our London and South-East Region (LASER) and from those 16 branches and 14 universities, 7 branches, 1 university and UNA LASER region responded to my survey. I asked 3 compulsory questions on personal information and 7 questions on action taken by branches for current & future Carbon Footprint Reduction and Uganda tree-planting project. None of the branches had formal policies to reduce their carbon footprints but here are some of the actions they are taking. Some branches are planning their policy implementation. Some Branches were considering other offsetting activities on Uganda Tree planting project.

2. Introduction: We have 9 regions in England, UK and as LASER we are working actively on carbon footprint reduction along with offsetting activates of UNA Eastbourne Uganda Mvule tree planting project.

3. Who Participated: We have 16 branches and 14 universities at LASER and from those 16 branches and 14 universities, these following 7 branches, 1 university and UNA LASER region responded to my survey:

- **Canterbury:** Emily Shirley
- **Harpenden:** John Trevor Evans
- **London Metropolitan University MUN:** Maria M Khan
- **Merton UNA:** Alison Williams
- **Streatham & Clapham UNA:** Sarah Webster
- **Tunbridge Wells & Wealden:** Jane Elizabeth Beeley
- **UNA Westminster:** Martin Grixoni
- **Bexhill and Hasting UNA Branch:** Barbara Echlin
- **London and South East Region:** Patricia Rogers

4. Questions of Survey: In this survey I asked following 3 compulsory questions on personal information and 7 questions on action taken by branches and universities for current & future Carbon Footprint Reduction and Uganda tree-planting project.

- Your Full Name (**Compulsory**)
- Name of your branch (**Compulsory**)
- Email address of your branch (**Compulsory**)
- Please share a statement of your branch's policies to reduce your carbon footprints. (**Optional**)
- Please share your current progress in implementing these policies. (**Optional**)
- Are you considering adopting any future policies to reduce your branch's carbon footprint? (**Optional**)
- Does your branch have any links or planned links with UNA Eastbourne's Uganda tree-planting project? (**Optional**)
- Please give details of any links or planned links. (**Optional**)
- Do you have any other offsetting activities for the reduction of your carbon footprint, planned or current? (**Optional**)
- Is there anything you would like to add? (**Optional**)

4.1. Please share a statement of your branch's policies to reduce your carbon footprints:

Canterbury branch is mainly working on climate change via the SDGs. Harpenden branch is organizing meetings to inform members about climate change. London Metropolitan University MUN is mostly following the university's sustainability policies and decided to try and reuse as much as possible, in terms of placards and other paper products. Although Merton UNA don't have any written policies but their members receive relevant information by e-mail frequently and some of them attend meetings and share on how they are trying to reduce their own carbon footprints. Tunbridge Wells & Wealden have not formalized any branch policy particularly to reduce their carbon footprint. However they are using several practical ways in which they are trying to do this by encouraging people to use public transport to attend meetings and circulating maps to aid this, they encourage using car share, ensuring each year their annual MUNGA included environmental motion to be debated the highlighted topic and spread the word about the importance of reducing carbon footprint amongst their staff and more local schools. On a personal level, they have not flown anywhere for the past two and a half years, recycling as much as possible. UNA Westminster mentioned that as a branch they advocate the *five R's: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Rot and Recycle*. As individuals they are encouraging those within their sphere of influence to implement five R's and as a branch they advertise 5 R's, and holding Zoom meeting rather than face to face meetings in London. London and South East Region is trying to be environment friendly as much possible in all their activities.



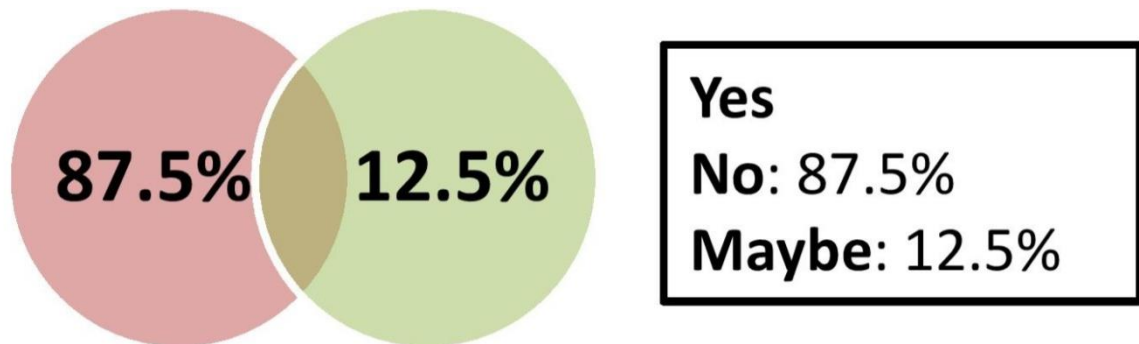
4.2. Please share your current progress in implementing these policies: Canterbury branch is trying to influence the outcome of the Canterbury Local Plan which is in the process of being revised so that it is rewritten to reflect the SDG goals and targets. Also they are arranging urgent consultation with Canterbury SDG Forums like alliance of universities, local NGOs and so on. Harpenden is doing group activity which is suspended at the moment. London Metropolitan University MUN said that due to the current situation, a lot of their work has moved online, however they will be attempting to further digitise their activities. Merton UNA said that they have a long way to go. Streatham & Clapham UNA said that they have been thinking about it. Tunbridge Wells & Wealden are using zoom for LaSER Policy Conference in May at which branches voted to include the 'Acting on our own Carbon Footprint' branch policy. They joined other local people as signatories with an open letter addressed to the borough and county council leaders, urging them to consider 'clean, green infrastructure' which was published in the local press to broadcast the importance of reducing town's carbon footprint to the local public. They are actively encouraging those South East branches which run environmental campaigns to submit articles on these topics. On a personal level, they are reducing the use of their personal car, purchasing groceries online, walking to local shops and pharmacies, wearing washable masks, donating 6 bags of clothing and other items to Oxfam and have no plans to travel abroad this year. London and South East Region is trying to minimise their use of paper and car transport.

4.3. Are you considering adopting any future policies to reduce your branch's carbon footprint:

Canterbury said that they do not have any plan yet, but at personal level they are doing a lot. They gave up car ownership 30 years ago and a handful of active members of them are mostly and almost all of

them are very committed for reducing carbon footprint. Harpenden has no policy here. London Metropolitan University MUN is considering some, however due to the current situation they are waiting for the university's reopening to finalise any decisions. Merton UNA has a very interesting policy. They encourage more to use the carbon calculator to monitor their emissions. Streatham & Clapham UNA said that they might want to have, but it is difficult as most of it is related to holding meetings. Tunbridge Wells & Wealden are Planning for Zoom meeting where public may register and marking UN75 November event with two speakers, one on the oceans & growing amount of plastic waste there, and the second speaker on efforts to make the town plastic free. The local FoE, and teenagers in the local Youth Forum has been invited to participate. UNA Westminster has a tree planting project. London and South East Region has no policy yet to be considered for this.

4.4. Does your branch have any links or planned links with UNA's Eastbourne's Uganda tree planting project: Tunbridge Wells & Wealden said may be they have, but all other branches, LASER Region and universities said that they do not have any planning.



4.5. Please give details of any links or planned links: Canterbury is working on setting up a partnership with Entebbe re the SDGs and climate change in particular. Harpenden have links with local environmental campaigning groups. Merton UNA has shared their carbon calculator with us. Streatham & Clapham UNA said that they may have some planning in the future. Tunbridge Wells & Wealden has actively supported Gonzalo Alvarez and his work on Climate and Oceans. They have been invited to join the Climate and Oceans Committee formed by him and they look forward to sharing in this work to publicise the threat to our oceans and seek ways to minimise carbon footprint which would establish good links with UNA Eastbourne's project.

4.6. Do you have any other offsetting activities for the reduction of your carbon footprint, planned or current: Tunbridge Wells & Wealden has hoped to hold further 'virtual' meetings, reducing the need for travel. UNA Westminster said maybe. London and South East Region said that some of them give money to tree-planting to offset their air travel.



4.7. Is there anything you would like to add: Canterbury's key activity has been working on the local implementation of the SDGs and their annual World Peace Service at Canterbury Cathedral, but this year's service will not be going ahead because of C-19. Harpenden would support action by the region and UNA-UK to lobby the UK government on climate change in the preparations for COP26 and to encourage groups to engage with local government on this issue. Tunbridge Wells & Wealden said that transport plays a great role in Climate change. Merton UNA and UNA Westminster found our survey method helpful. London and South East Region said that they shall be interested to see what branches are doing.

4.8. UNA Bexhill and Hastings: UNA Bexhill and Hastings did not replied my question directly, but they sent me their works in a different way. At 2019 they took themes the plight of our Oceans and

Peace in our troubled world, and the impact that climate disruption as their main work. They are collaborating with other local, regional and national groups and organisations. Following 2018 Peace Event, they intend to form a network of local groups to work with them to enhance the UN's capacity for maintaining global peace and security. They are hearing from the local Syrian Refugee Group about how refugees are being helped in their area. They are holding meeting on UN's latest report from the IPCC calling for urgent action to keep warming levels below 1.5°C the imminent threat of climate change. At 2020 their local UNA programme for 2020 reflects the dominance of climate disruption and in this way they are responding to that threat. Locally both Rother and Hastings local councils have declared a climate emergency.

5. Conclusion: In conclusion, I want to conclude by saying that branches and universities need to take more planning and actions for carbon footprint reduction and development of Uganda tree planting project.