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# **AZERBAIJAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS (UNEC)**

## **CLIMATE ACTION POLICY**

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## **Section 1. Introduction**

Climate change is one of the defining challenges of the contemporary world and has significant implications for environmental systems, economic stability, social welfare, public health, and institutional resilience. Universities, as centers of knowledge creation, leadership development, research, and civic engagement, carry a special responsibility in addressing climate-related challenges and supporting the transition toward a more sustainable future.

Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC), as a leading higher education institution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, recognizes that climate action is not only an environmental necessity but also an institutional, social, and academic responsibility. As a university that contributes to the education of future economists, managers, policy professionals, public administrators, and researchers, UNEC acknowledges its role in promoting sustainable development, responsible resource use, climate awareness, and evidence-based responses to environmental challenges.

This Climate Action Policy sets out UNEC's institutional commitment to integrating climate action into its governance structures, operational activities, educational processes, research priorities, and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The Policy provides a long-term framework for progressively strengthening climate-related governance, improving environmental performance, supporting climate literacy, and embedding sustainability principles across university life.

UNEC views climate action not as a standalone activity, but as a continuous and evolving institutional process that requires strategic planning, effective governance, reliable data, stakeholder participation, and regular monitoring. This Policy therefore serves as a foundation for future climate-related planning, implementation, target-setting, and reporting.

## **Section 2. Purpose of the Policy**

The purpose of this Climate Action Policy is to establish a coherent institutional framework through which UNEC will progressively address climate change mitigation and adaptation in a structured, transparent, and accountable manner.

More specifically, this Policy aims to:

- define UNEC's institutional commitment to climate action and environmental responsibility;

- provide guiding principles for integrating sustainability and climate considerations into university decision-making;
- support the development of an evidence-based and phased climate action approach;
- encourage efficient use of energy, water, materials, and infrastructure resources;
- strengthen the role of education, research, and public engagement in addressing climate challenges;
- support the gradual establishment of environmental data systems, including greenhouse gas monitoring practices;
- promote institutional resilience and responsible governance in line with national and international sustainability priorities.

### **Section 3. Policy Statement**

UNEC is committed to progressively integrating climate action into its institutional strategy, governance, operations, education, research, and stakeholder engagement. The University acknowledges that effective climate action requires both operational improvements and a broader academic and societal contribution through teaching, research, knowledge dissemination, and responsible leadership.

Accordingly, UNEC commits to:

- promoting sustainable and climate-conscious institutional development;
- improving environmental governance and institutional coordination in matters related to sustainability and climate;
- developing the capacity to assess and manage climate-related environmental impacts;
- encouraging resource efficiency and responsible operational practices;
- supporting climate and sustainability awareness across the university community;
- strengthening relevant academic, scientific, and public engagement efforts;
- reviewing and improving institutional approaches to climate action over time.

#### **Section 4. Legal and Strategic Framework**

This Policy is developed in alignment with relevant national and international frameworks and reflects the broader context of sustainable development and climate governance.

The Policy is informed by the following frameworks and principles:

- the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, especially **SDG 13: Climate Action**;
- the **Paris Agreement on Climate Change**;
- national climate and environmental priorities of the **Republic of Azerbaijan**;
- Azerbaijan's commitments under its **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**;
- applicable environmental, energy efficiency, and sustainability-related legislation and policy documents of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- internationally recognized principles of greenhouse gas accounting, including the **GHG Protocol**;
- relevant institutional strategies, development priorities, and internal regulations of UNEC.

This alignment reflects UNEC's intention to ensure that institutional climate action is consistent with broader national and global sustainability efforts.

#### **Section 5. Current Institutional Context**

UNEC recognizes that meaningful climate action must begin with an honest understanding of the institution's current situation, strengths, and gaps. At present, the University is in a developing stage with regard to the formal institutionalization of climate action and environmental performance management.

While various university activities may already contribute indirectly to sustainability—such as digitalization, resource-saving practices, academic initiatives, awareness-building, or responsible campus management—a fully integrated climate governance and environmental monitoring system is still in the process of development.

At this stage, the University identifies several important priority areas for future work, including:

- the gradual development of a structured institutional climate governance mechanism;
- the creation of more systematic environmental data collection practices;
- the assessment of energy, water, waste, and other operational indicators;
- the future establishment of a greenhouse gas accounting approach;
- the strengthening of climate-related awareness, education, and communication;
- the incorporation of sustainability principles into broader university planning and improvement processes.

UNEC recognizes that climate action must be built on realistic, measurable, and evidence-based foundations. For this reason, the University adopts a phased and capacity-building approach rather than relying on unsupported or non-verifiable institutional claims.

### **Section 6. Scope of the Policy**

This Policy applies to UNEC's academic, administrative, operational, and community-related activities, including but not limited to the following areas:

- campus buildings, facilities, and infrastructure;
- energy consumption and efficiency practices;
- water use and resource management;
- waste generation and waste reduction practices;
- procurement and material consumption;
- mobility and transport-related practices;
- administrative operations and digitalization;
- teaching, learning, and curriculum development;
- scientific research, innovation, and policy-oriented studies;
- student and staff awareness activities;
- internal governance, reporting, and institutional planning;
- stakeholder engagement and partnerships related to sustainability and climate action.

The Policy applies across the university community and is intended to support institution-wide coordination and participation.

## **Section 7. Guiding Principles**

UNEC's approach to climate action is guided by the following principles:

### **7.1 Institutional Responsibility**

UNEC recognizes climate action as an institutional responsibility that should be reflected in governance, planning, operational management, education, and community engagement.

### **7.2 Evidence-Based Decision-Making**

Institutional climate action should be based on reliable information, measurable indicators, relevant methodologies, and periodic assessment.

### **7.3 Continuous Improvement**

Climate action is understood as an ongoing process of planning, implementation, monitoring, review, and refinement.

### **7.4 Participation and Inclusion**

Meaningful and sustainable institutional change requires participation from students, academic staff, administrative staff, leadership, and relevant external stakeholders.

### **7.5 Transparency and Accountability**

UNEC supports the gradual development of transparent internal processes for tracking progress, documenting actions, and strengthening accountability.

### **7.6 Practicality and Realism**

The University is committed to practical and context-sensitive climate action based on institutional capacity, available data, and progressive improvement.

### **7.7 Integration**

Climate action should not remain isolated from the rest of institutional life; it should be connected to education, research, management, operations, and external engagement.

## **Section 8. Mission and Vision for Climate Action**

### **8.1 Mission**

UNEC's mission in climate action is to cultivate an environmentally responsible, sustainability-oriented, and climate-conscious university environment through good governance, education, research, operational improvement, and stakeholder engagement.

### **8.2 Vision**

UNEC aspires to become a university that progressively integrates climate action and sustainability into all key areas of institutional life and contributes meaningfully to a low-carbon, resource-efficient, and resilient future through education, research, and responsible campus practices.

## **Section 9. Strategic Objectives**

To advance this mission and vision, UNEC establishes the following strategic objectives:

### **9.1 Strengthen Environmental Governance**

To establish or designate institutional mechanisms that coordinate climate action and sustainability-related initiatives across the University.

### **9.2 Develop Environmental Data and Monitoring Capacity**

To progressively improve the collection, organization, and use of data related to energy, water, waste, resource use, and greenhouse gas emissions.

### **9.3 Promote Resource Efficiency**

To improve the efficiency of campus operations, including energy use, water use, procurement practices, and material consumption.

### **9.4 Encourage Sustainable Campus Practices**

To support practical improvements in waste reduction, digitalization, efficient facilities management, and sustainable operational behavior.

### **9.5 Foster Climate Education and Literacy**

To encourage the integration of climate change, sustainability, responsible consumption, and green economy concepts into academic and extracurricular activity where relevant.

## 9.6 Support Research and Innovation

To promote research, publications, and analytical work related to climate action, sustainable development, environmental governance, green transition, and associated socio-economic issues.

## 9.7 Build Institutional Awareness and Engagement

To strengthen the awareness and participation of students, academic staff, and administrative personnel in climate-related efforts.

## 9.8 Enhance Partnerships and Public Engagement

To cooperate with public institutions, academic networks, international organizations, and other stakeholders where possible in matters related to sustainability and climate action.

## Section 10. Greenhouse Gas Management Approach

UNEC recognizes the importance of greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting as a key component of institutional climate governance. However, the University also recognizes that credible emissions management requires appropriate methodology, reliable baseline data, and internal reporting capacity.

Therefore, UNEC adopts a progressive approach to greenhouse gas management. The University intends to work toward the development of an institutional framework for identifying, assessing, and monitoring greenhouse gas emissions in line with recognized methodologies.

As institutional capacity develops, UNEC will seek to identify relevant sources of emissions, including:

- **Scope 1 emissions:** direct emissions from sources owned or controlled by the University;
- **Scope 2 emissions:** indirect emissions from purchased electricity, heating, and cooling, where applicable;
- **Scope 3 emissions:** selected indirect emissions such as commuting, procurement, waste, business travel, and other categories, where feasible and relevant.

The future establishment of an institutional baseline year for emissions assessment will be a key step for the University's longer-term climate action planning. Until such a baseline is

formally established, UNEC prioritizes capacity-building, data improvement, and systems development.

## **Section 11. Core Areas of Action**

UNEC's climate action efforts will be advanced through several interrelated areas of action.

### **11.1 Governance and Institutional Coordination**

UNEC will work toward establishing or assigning an institutional coordination mechanism for sustainability and climate action. This mechanism should support communication between relevant units, facilitate planning and implementation, and encourage accountability.

### **11.2 Energy Efficiency and Buildings**

The University will seek to improve energy efficiency across campus operations through practical and gradual measures, which may include:

- review of energy-consuming systems and patterns;
- efficient lighting solutions where feasible;
- improved operational management of heating, cooling, and electrical systems;
- consideration of energy efficiency in renovation and infrastructure decisions;
- encouragement of energy-saving behavior within the university community.

### **11.3 Water and Resource Use**

UNEC will support responsible resource management by encouraging:

- more efficient water use practices;
- reduction of unnecessary material consumption;
- responsible use of office and academic resources;
- digital alternatives where these reduce unnecessary resource use.

### **11.4 Waste Reduction and Circular Practices**

The University will promote responsible waste-related practices, including:

- reduction of avoidable waste;

- support for reuse and recycling practices where operationally feasible;
- reduction of unnecessary single-use material consumption;
- increased awareness of responsible consumption and disposal behavior.

### **11.5 Sustainable Procurement**

UNEC will encourage the gradual inclusion of sustainability considerations in procurement decisions, including attention to durability, efficiency, lifecycle perspective, and avoidance of unnecessary purchases where possible.

### **11.6 Mobility and Transport**

UNEC will encourage more sustainable mobility practices by supporting and promoting, where feasible:

- walking and cycling;
- public transport use;
- reduced need for unnecessary travel through digital alternatives;
- awareness of lower-emission commuting and travel behavior.

### **11.7 Education and Curriculum**

As a university with a strong academic mission, UNEC recognizes the importance of climate-related education. The University will encourage the inclusion of sustainability, climate change, environmental economics, green development, responsible management, and related themes in relevant academic contexts.

This may include:

- integration of climate and sustainability themes into relevant curricula;
- organization of seminars, lectures, workshops, and educational events;
- promotion of sustainability literacy among students and staff;
- support for interdisciplinary discussion on environmental and climate-related issues.

### **11.8 Research and Innovation**

UNEC will support research and intellectual contribution in areas relevant to climate action and sustainable development, including but not limited to:

- climate economics and policy;

- environmental governance;
- green finance and sustainable business;
- sustainable development strategies;
- responsible resource use;
- climate adaptation and socio-economic resilience;
- public policy and institutional transformation in the context of sustainability.

### **11.9 Awareness and Community Engagement**

UNEC will encourage awareness-building and engagement initiatives that support a culture of environmental responsibility across the university community. These may include:

- student-led or staff-led awareness activities;
- internal campaigns and thematic events;
- outreach initiatives linked to sustainability and climate action;
- participation in relevant national and international sustainability initiatives.

## **Section 12. Planned Implementation Approach**

UNEC adopts a phased approach to climate action implementation.

### **12.1 Short-Term Priorities**

In the short term, UNEC will prioritize the strengthening of foundational institutional capacity. This includes:

- identifying responsible coordination structures;
- improving internal awareness and institutional ownership of climate-related priorities;
- reviewing existing sustainability-related practices and opportunities;
- beginning more systematic data collection for key operational indicators;
- supporting early-stage awareness, training, and communication activities.

## 12.2 Medium-Term Priorities

In the medium term, UNEC aims to move toward more structured and measurable climate action by:

- improving environmental monitoring systems;
- identifying baseline conditions and performance trends;
- integrating sustainability more clearly into selected operational and planning processes;
- developing more formalized targets where data allows;
- strengthening educational, research, and outreach components.

## 12.3 Long-Term Priorities

In the long term, UNEC seeks to deepen and institutionalize climate action through:

- sustained reduction of environmental impacts;
- stronger integration of climate considerations into campus planning and governance;
- more mature reporting and accountability systems;
- expansion of climate-relevant research, innovation, and external partnerships;
- development of a more resilient and sustainability-oriented institutional culture.

## Section 13. Governance and Institutional Responsibility

Effective implementation of this Policy requires clear institutional responsibility and coordination.

UNEC should establish or designate an appropriate coordination mechanism for climate action and sustainability. Depending on institutional structure, this may take the form of a committee, working group, coordination unit, or cross-functional institutional mechanism.

This structure may be responsible for:

- overseeing implementation of the Climate Action Policy;
- facilitating cooperation among relevant units;
- supporting environmental data collection and institutional analysis;

- contributing to the preparation of sustainability-related reports and internal updates;
- identifying priority areas and recommending future action;
- reviewing progress and proposing updates to institutional approaches.

The governance mechanism should involve, where appropriate:

- relevant members of university leadership;
- administrative and operational representatives;
- academic representatives;
- individuals or units working on planning, development, infrastructure, quality, or related areas;
- other relevant stakeholders where appropriate.

Climate action is understood as a shared institutional responsibility rather than the task of one department alone.

## **Section 14. Stakeholder Engagement**

UNEC recognizes that successful climate action depends on broad participation across the university community and beyond.

### **14.1 Internal Stakeholders**

Internal stakeholders include:

- students;
- academic staff;
- administrative staff;
- university leadership;
- operational and support units;
- university committees or structures involved in planning, quality, development, or student life.

UNEC will seek to create channels for awareness, participation, communication, and collaboration among these groups.

## 14.2 External Stakeholders

External stakeholders may include:

- government bodies and public institutions;
- local authorities;
- academic and research partners;
- international organizations and networks;
- civil society organizations;
- relevant private-sector and community partners.

Where appropriate, UNEC will pursue cooperation that strengthens institutional capacity, promotes knowledge exchange, and supports sustainability-related goals.

## Section 15. Monitoring and Reporting

UNEC is committed to the progressive development of a monitoring and reporting approach that supports transparency, learning, and continuous improvement.

Subject to institutional capacity and data availability, UNEC will work toward tracking indicators such as:

- energy consumption trends;
- water use trends;
- selected waste-related metrics;
- implementation status of sustainability initiatives;
- development of greenhouse gas accounting capacity;
- participation in awareness, education, and engagement activities.

Monitoring should not be seen merely as a reporting requirement, but as a management tool that helps the University identify progress, gaps, and future priorities.

The University may gradually strengthen internal documentation, periodic reporting, and institutional review processes related to sustainability and climate action.

## **Section 16. Resource Allocation**

UNEC recognizes that effective climate action requires organizational commitment, institutional coordination, and, where necessary, the allocation of financial, human, and technical resources.

The University will seek, within its institutional capacity and planning processes, to support climate-related action through:

- allocation of relevant staff time and coordination functions;
- integration of sustainability considerations into planning and operational decisions;
- support for awareness, training, and educational activities;
- support for data collection, analysis, and monitoring capacity where feasible;
- pursuit of collaboration and partnership opportunities that may strengthen climate-related efforts.

UNEC also recognizes the value of exploring opportunities for external cooperation, grant-based support, project partnerships, and institutional collaboration where relevant and feasible.

## **Section 17. Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals**

This Policy particularly supports UNEC's contribution to the following Sustainable Development Goals:

- **SDG 13 – Climate Action**
- **SDG 4 – Quality Education**
- **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production**
- **SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy**
- **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities**
- **SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals**

UNEC recognizes that climate action is interconnected with educational quality, institutional governance, social responsibility, economic transformation, and sustainable development more broadly.

## **Section 18. Policy Review and Continuous Improvement**

This Climate Action Policy shall be reviewed every **three to five years**, or earlier if necessary, in light of:

- changes in national or international policy frameworks;
- evolving institutional priorities;
- new environmental data and monitoring capacity;
- strategic developments within UNEC;
- lessons learned from implementation.

The review process should aim not only to update the document, but also to strengthen the practical effectiveness and relevance of UNEC's climate action efforts.

## **Section 19. Conclusion**

Azerbaijan State University of Economics affirms through this Climate Action Policy that climate action is an integral part of responsible university governance and long-term institutional development. UNEC recognizes that higher education institutions must contribute not only through operational improvement, but also through teaching, research, awareness-building, public engagement, and the preparation of future professionals capable of responding to complex sustainability challenges.

This Policy establishes the institutional foundation for UNEC's progressive approach to climate action. It reflects the University's commitment to evidence-based development, responsible resource use, stakeholder participation, environmental awareness, and continuous improvement.

UNEC understands that climate action is a process that develops over time through stronger governance, better information, collaborative effort, and practical implementation. Through this Policy, the University confirms its intention to strengthen its contribution to a more sustainable, resilient, and climate-conscious future.