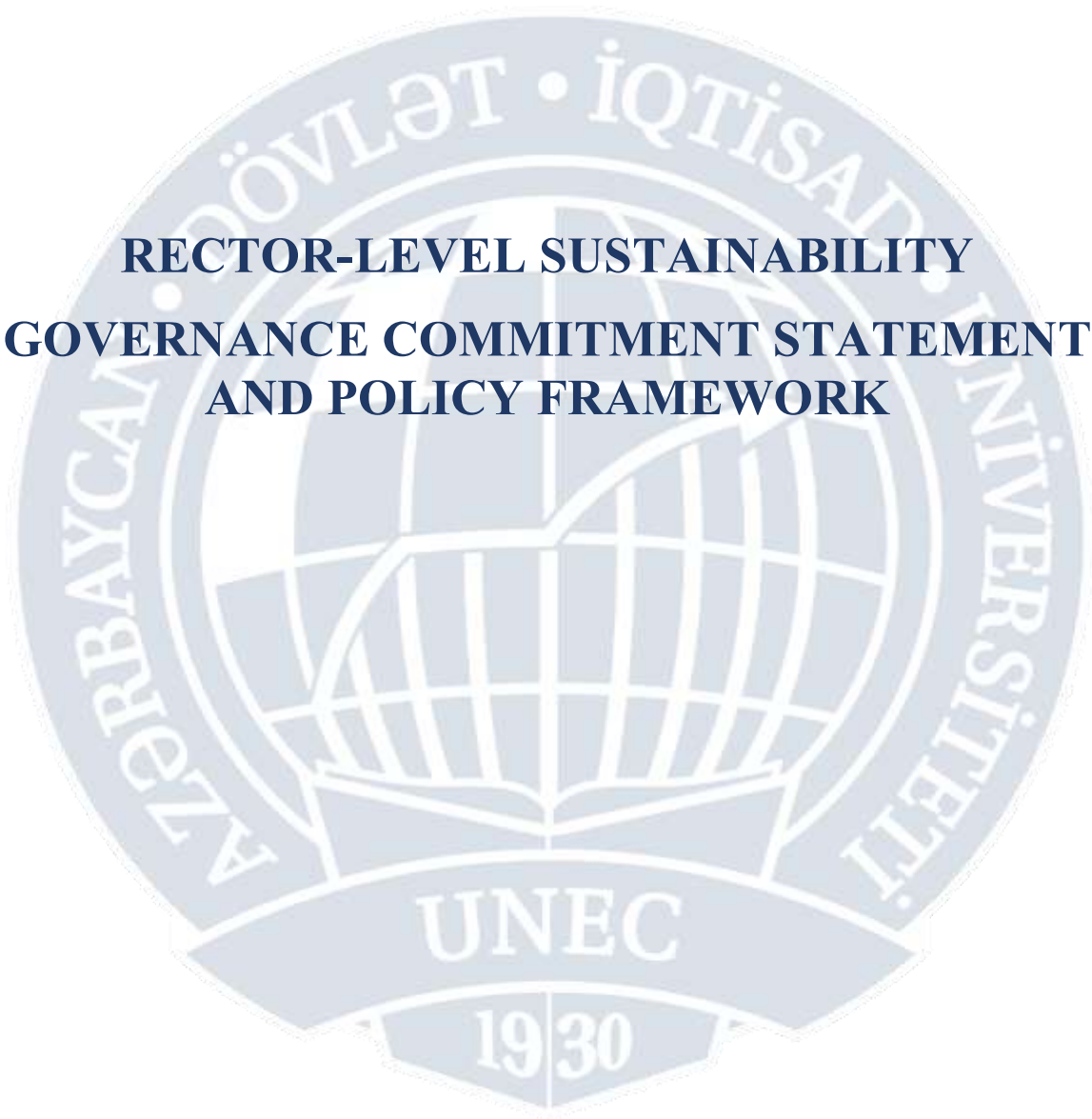


AZERBAIJAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS (UNEC)

**RECTOR-LEVEL SUSTAINABILITY
GOVERNANCE COMMITMENT STATEMENT
AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**



Baku, Azerbaijan
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1. Preamble and Institutional Context

Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC) is one of the leading higher education institutions in the Republic of Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus region, recognized for its contribution to economic education, applied research, and public policy development. As a university whose academic mission is deeply connected to the economic and social development of the country, UNEC recognizes that sustainable development is not only a global imperative but also a core institutional responsibility.

In recent years, the global higher education sector has placed increasing emphasis on the role of universities as agents of environmental stewardship, resource efficiency, and social responsibility. International assessment frameworks, most notably the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings, evaluate universities not only on the basis of their physical infrastructure and environmental performance, but also on the strength, visibility, and continuity of institutional governance commitments to sustainability, beginning at the highest level of university leadership.

This document has been prepared to formally establish, document, and communicate the commitment of the Rector of UNEC, Prof. Dr. Adalat Muradov, to embedding sustainability governance across all levels of the university's strategic planning, administrative structure, academic programming, campus operations, and community engagement. It is intended to serve as the foundational governance instrument that anchors UNEC's participation in the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings and its broader sustainability transformation.

This commitment statement and policy framework should be read in conjunction with UNEC's Strategic Development Plan, its Charter, and any subsequent operational policies issued by the Sustainability Council or its subordinate bodies, as described in Section 6 below.

2. Rector's Statement of Commitment

I, Prof. Dr. Adalat Muradov, Rector of Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC), hereby formally declare and affirm the full, unequivocal, and continuing commitment of the University's leadership to the principles of environmental sustainability, responsible resource management, and green campus governance.

This commitment is not symbolic. It represents a binding institutional undertaking that shall be reflected in UNEC's strategic planning documents, annual operational budgets, administrative decision-making processes, and the day-to-day conduct of university affairs. I direct that sustainability considerations be integrated into the responsibilities of every faculty, department, administrative unit, and affiliated body of the University.

As Rector, I commit personally and on behalf of the University's senior leadership to the following:

1. To provide visible, sustained, and personal leadership on sustainability matters, including public representation of UNEC's sustainability agenda at national and international forums.
2. To formally establish and empower a University Sustainability Council with direct reporting lines to the Office of the Rector, as detailed in Section 6.

3. To ensure that adequate financial, human, and technical resources are allocated annually to support the implementation of sustainability initiatives.
4. To require that sustainability performance indicators be reported to the Rector's Office on a quarterly basis and reviewed at the highest levels of university management.
5. To ensure UNEC's continued and transparent participation in international sustainability benchmarking frameworks, including the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings.
6. To promote a culture of environmental responsibility among students, faculty, and staff through education, research, and community outreach.
7. To periodically review and, where necessary, revise this commitment and its associated governance structures to reflect evolving best practices and institutional capacity.

3. Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles

3.1 Vision

UNEC envisions itself as a regionally recognized model of sustainable higher education - a university where environmental responsibility, economic development thinking, and social wellbeing are mutually reinforcing pillars of institutional identity.

3.2 Mission

Through this framework, UNEC commits to reducing its environmental footprint, promoting sustainability literacy across its academic community, and contributing meaningfully to the sustainable development of Azerbaijan and the wider region, in line with national development priorities and international best practice.

3.3 Guiding Principles

- Leadership from the top: sustainability governance begins with, and is actively championed by, the Rector and senior university management.
- Institution-wide integration: sustainability is not confined to a single department but is embedded across academic, administrative, and operational functions.
- Evidence-based decision-making: sustainability initiatives are guided by measurable data, regular monitoring, and transparent reporting.
- Transparency and accountability: sustainability performance and governance structures are communicated openly to the university community and external stakeholders.
- Continuous improvement: sustainability governance structures, targets, and initiatives are reviewed and improved on an ongoing basis.
- Inclusive participation: students, faculty, administrative staff, and external partners are all considered active stakeholders in the sustainability agenda.

4. Alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

UNEC's sustainability governance framework has been designed with explicit reference to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As an institution engaged in economic education and research, UNEC is particularly well positioned to contribute to the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

SDG	UNEC's Institutional Contribution
SDG 4	Quality Education - integrating sustainability topics into curricula and research programs.
SDG 6	Clean Water and Sanitation - responsible water use and management across campus facilities.
SDG 7	Affordable and Clean Energy - improving energy efficiency and exploring renewable energy sources.
SDG 11	Sustainable Cities and Communities - contributing to sustainable urban development in Baku.
SDG 12	Responsible Consumption and Production - waste reduction, recycling, and sustainable procurement.
SDG 13	Climate Action - reducing the University's carbon footprint and raising climate awareness.
SDG 17	Partnerships for the Goals - collaborating with national and international institutions on sustainability initiatives.

This alignment ensures that UNEC's sustainability governance is not developed in isolation, but is instead positioned within a coherent, internationally recognized policy framework that supports both institutional benchmarking and long-term national development goals.

5. Strategic Sustainability Objectives

In accordance with the categories assessed under the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings, UNEC establishes the following strategic sustainability objectives across six core pillars.

5.1 Setting and Infrastructure

- Maintain and expand green open space and vegetation cover across university campuses.
- Ensure that future campus development and construction projects incorporate environmentally responsible design standards.
- Allocate a defined proportion of the annual operational budget to sustainability-related infrastructure improvements.

5.2 Energy and Climate Change

- Conduct periodic energy audits of university buildings and facilities.
- Progressively increase the use of energy-efficient equipment, lighting, and building systems.
- Explore feasibility studies for renewable energy adoption, including solar energy solutions where appropriate.
- Establish a baseline for institutional greenhouse gas emissions and set measurable reduction targets.

5.3 Waste Management

- Implement a campus-wide waste segregation and recycling program.
- Reduce single-use plastic consumption across university facilities and events.
- Introduce organic and hazardous waste handling protocols where applicable.

5.4 Water Management

- Install water-efficient fixtures across campus buildings.
- Monitor water consumption patterns and establish reduction targets.
- Raise awareness among students and staff regarding responsible water use.

5.5 Transportation

- Promote the use of public transportation, cycling, and walking among students and staff.
- Evaluate the feasibility of shuttle services and reduced-emission vehicle fleets for university operations.
- Limit private vehicle access to core areas of campus where feasible.

5.6 Education and Research

- Expand the number of courses and academic programs that incorporate sustainability and environmental themes.
- Support faculty research initiatives related to sustainability, climate change, and environmental economics.
- Organize regular seminars, workshops, and public events to promote sustainability awareness within and beyond the university community.

6. Institutional Governance Structure for Sustainability

To ensure the effective implementation of this commitment, UNEC establishes a formal, multi-tiered sustainability governance structure. This structure ensures that sustainability decision-making is directly connected to the Office of the Rector while allowing for operational flexibility at the departmental level.

6.1 Governance Structure Overview

Governance Body	Core Function	Reports To
Office of the Rector	Ultimate strategic authority; approves policy, budget, and major initiatives.	University Charter / Board of Trustees
University Sustainability Council	Sets institutional sustainability strategy and annual targets; reviews quarterly performance.	Rector
Sustainability Executive Committee	Oversees implementation across faculties and administrative units.	University Sustainability Council
Office of the Sustainability Coordinator	Day-to-day coordination, data collection, and reporting.	Sustainability Executive Committee
Faculty & Departmental Sustainability Focal Points	Local implementation within faculties, departments, and administrative units.	Office of the Sustainability Coordinator

6.2 University Sustainability Council

The University Sustainability Council shall be chaired by the Rector or a Vice-Rector formally designated by the Rector. Its membership shall include representatives of key faculties, the administrative and finance departments, student representative bodies, and, where appropriate, external experts or partners. The Council shall meet no less than twice per academic year to review sustainability performance and approve strategic adjustments.

6.3 Sustainability Executive Committee

The Sustainability Executive Committee shall be responsible for translating Council-level strategy into operational plans, coordinating across faculties and departments, and ensuring that data required for institutional reporting and international benchmarking, including UI GreenMetric submissions, is collected accurately and on schedule.

6.4 Sustainability Coordinator

A designated Sustainability Coordinator shall be formally appointed by order of the Rector. This individual shall serve as the primary point of contact for sustainability matters, oversee day-to-day data collection and reporting, and liaise with external ranking bodies, including UI GreenMetric.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Rector

- Provide overall strategic direction and public leadership on sustainability.
- Formally approve the University's sustainability policy, targets, and major budgetary allocations.
- Chair or designate a chair for the University Sustainability Council.
- Review quarterly and annual sustainability performance reports.

7.2 Vice-Rectors and Deans

- Ensure integration of sustainability objectives within their respective faculties and administrative areas.
- Support the allocation of departmental resources toward sustainability initiatives.
- Nominate faculty-level sustainability focal points.

7.3 Sustainability Executive Committee

- Develop annual sustainability action plans in line with Council-approved strategy.
- Coordinate cross-departmental initiatives related to energy, waste, water, and transportation.
- Prepare quarterly performance reports for submission to the Council and the Rector's Office.

7.4 Sustainability Coordinator

- Maintain accurate and up-to-date sustainability data across all relevant categories.
- Prepare UNEC's submissions to the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings and other benchmarking frameworks.
- Coordinate awareness campaigns, training sessions, and stakeholder engagement activities.

7.5 Faculty, Staff, and Students

- Participate actively in sustainability initiatives, awareness campaigns, and reporting processes.
- Adhere to university policies regarding waste segregation, energy use, and resource conservation.
- Propose new sustainability initiatives through established institutional channels.

8. Resource Allocation and Budgetary Commitment

Effective sustainability governance requires dedicated financial and human resources. Accordingly, the Rector's Office commits to the following:

- Inclusion of a dedicated sustainability line item within the University's annual operational budget.
- Provision of adequate staffing for the Office of the Sustainability Coordinator, including administrative support as required.
- Allocation of funds for priority infrastructure improvements identified through energy and water audits.
- Support for faculty and staff participation in sustainability-related training, conferences, and professional development opportunities.
- Consideration of external funding opportunities, including national and international grants, partnerships, and donor programs, to supplement institutional resources.

The precise budgetary allocation shall be determined annually by the Rector's Office in consultation with the University Sustainability Council and the Finance Department, and shall be reviewed as part of the annual budgetary planning cycle.

9. Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation Framework

To ensure accountability and continuous progress, UNEC establishes the following monitoring and reporting framework:

8. Quarterly Reporting: The Sustainability Executive Committee shall submit quarterly performance reports to the University Sustainability Council and the Rector's Office, covering progress against the objectives outlined in Section 5.

9. Annual Sustainability Report: An annual, publicly available sustainability report shall be prepared, summarizing key performance indicators, completed initiatives, and forward-looking targets.
10. International Benchmarking: UNEC shall maintain continuous participation in the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings, ensuring timely and accurate annual submissions.
11. Data Verification: Sustainability data shall be subject to internal verification procedures prior to external reporting, coordinated by the Sustainability Coordinator.
12. Performance Review: The University Sustainability Council shall formally review institutional performance against strategic objectives at least once per academic year, with findings reported to the Rector.

10. Communication, Transparency and Stakeholder Engagement

Transparency is a foundational principle of this governance framework. UNEC commits to the following communication and engagement practices:

- Publication of this Sustainability Governance Commitment Statement on the official University website, in a dedicated and easily accessible sustainability section.
- Regular publication of sustainability news, achievements, and initiatives through University communication channels, including newsletters, social media, and press releases.
- Organization of an annual sustainability forum or open session, inviting participation from students, faculty, staff, and external partners.
- Establishment of a feedback mechanism through which students and staff may propose sustainability-related suggestions or concerns.
- Engagement with governmental bodies, industry partners, and other universities on joint sustainability initiatives and knowledge exchange.

11. Review, Revision and Continuous Improvement

This Sustainability Governance Commitment Statement and its associated policy framework shall be reviewed no less than once every two years, or earlier where deemed necessary by the Rector or the University Sustainability Council. The review process shall take into account:

- Progress against strategic objectives and quarterly/annual performance data.
- Evolving best practices in higher education sustainability governance.
- Updates to international benchmarking methodologies, including changes to UI GreenMetric indicators.
- Feedback received from students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders.