

## Executive Summary

This Technical Report provides a description of the Footprint methodology and aims at a comprehensive compilation of the UAE research processes, conclusions and recommendations. This report is further intended to provide the basis for the strategic formulation of the UAE Government position paper on 2005 UAE Ecological Footprint, assist as a reference document for elements of the communication strategy around the launch of the Living Planet Report 2008 as well as a reference for next steps of the Initiative.

The Living Planet Report is published biennially and provides a diagnostic assessment of the state of our world, through the *Living Planet Index* and the *Ecological Footprint*.

The Ecological Footprint is a consumer-based sustainability indicator providing a general picture of the environmental consequences of consuming resources. As the GDP tracks monetary flows and provides a picture of the monetary status of a country, the Ecological Footprint tracks resource flows and provides a picture of a country's dependence on natural resources.

Living Planet Report 2006 ranked the UAE as the country with the highest per capita Ecological Footprint in the world. The publishing of the report raised concerns, in the UAE, on the methodology and the robustness of the data used for the calculation of the Ecological Footprint.

In answer to this the Al Basama Al Beeiya (Ecological Footprint) Initiative, was launched in October 2007 as a ***national effort to ensure a sustainable future by measuring and understanding the impact of our ways of living on planet earth***. The Initiative made the UAE the third country in the world to embark on such in-depth research collaboration, after Switzerland and Japan.

Although a nation's per capita Ecological Footprint tracks the contribution of different areas of consumption, *population* and *carbon Footprint* were first identified as crucial areas for the UAE because Footprint results are reported in per capita terms and as the carbon Footprint constituted 76% of the UAE Footprint in 2003. The Initiative reviewed 2003 data used for the calculation of the UAE Footprint reported in Living Planet Report 2006 as well as 2005 data that will be used for the Living Planet Report 2008 (due for release late October 2008).

The review of the UAE data used in the Living Planet Report 2006 revealed the use of inaccurate 2003 population data and the omission of trade data (all trade movements influencing apparent consumption within the country were neglected).

For the Living Planet Report 2008, international data that best represents UAE population will be used. Also, trade data will be included in the 2005 Ecological Footprint of the UAE. These inclusions recommended by the Initiative, are expected to result in a more robust UAE Footprint value. However, data gaps continue to exist in key areas, for example trade in free zones and further research is also needed to verify the reliability of data representing the UAE in international databases, such as for petroleum exports.

It is essential to note that the Ecological Footprint analyses final net consumption (production + import – export) of a given population. Therefore, nations with high average consumption patterns should expect to have high per capita Footprints. Furthermore, nations that most rely on biocapacity from outside their borders to support their population should have greater responsibility to safeguard the availability and accessibility of global natural resources.

The Initiative, through the research process, realised that the availability of strong reliable starting environmental and socio-economic data is fundamental to not just the Ecological Footprint analyses but all tools to measure sustainability. Therefore, one of the crucial recommendations of the Initiative is to support the establishment of a National Statistical Bureau. This would streamline the communication of information representing the UAE, ensure methodological consistency in data processing for robust representation of the nation, and guarantee data integrity.

The Initiative also recognised that capacity requires to be built and regularly improved amongst existing technical staff and expertise, university students as well as government and corporate institutions. This will ensure the formulation, implementation and maintenance of sustainability policies and their effective institutionalisation.

In contributing to the UAE governments pioneering efforts to promote sustainable living, the Footprint research will continue for Year 2 (2008-09) by:

- looking at other components of the UAE Footprint
- building capacity on the Footprint methodology
- further researching population and CO<sub>2</sub> issues for the country
- assisting in the development of environmental policies
- increasing environmental awareness in the society

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دائرة البيئة والمياه  
Ministry of Environment & Water

**Ministry of Environment and Water** works to keep environment clean and safe for living and work of the existing and future generations through integrated management of balanced - ecosystems and sustainability of water resources and animal, fish and agricultural wealth in cooperation with partners and within the international accepted criteria. Its mission is *to conserve environment and natural resources for sustainable development.*



**Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative (AGEDI)** was launched by the Government of the UAE at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, in response to several international, regional, and national calls for enhancing data quality that would improve the environmental policy and decision making process.



**Emirates Wildlife Society** is a UAE environmental NGO established under the patronage of HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, to implement conservation actions for protection of local biodiversity and promotion of sustainable lifestyles. In the UAE, EWS works in association with WWF. EWS-WWF has been active in the UAE since the beginning of 2001.



**Global Footprint Network** promotes a sustainable economy by advancing the Ecological Footprint, a tool that makes sustainability measurable. Together with its partners, the Network coordinates research, develops methodological standards, and provides decision makers with robust resource accounts to help the human economy operate within the Earth's ecological limits.

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