



441 G St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

June 8, 2023

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate

The Honorable Tom Cotton
United States Senate

The Honorable Joni Ernst
United States Senate

Climate Change: State Department Did Not Track Greenhouse Gas Emissions from U.S. Delegation Travel to Meetings 26 and 27 of the United Nations Conference of the Parties

Each year, the federal government and other countries report spending billions of dollars on efforts to help limit the magnitude of climate change. Many of these activities focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.¹ The United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference of the Parties convenes an annual multilateral forum to discuss climate change matters.²

The United Kingdom (U.K.) hosted the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, between October 31 and November 12, 2021, to discuss ways to address climate change and to agree on global and national targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. President Biden, seven Departmental Secretaries, two agency administrators, the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, and other administration officials attended COP26 in person. Egypt hosted the 27th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP27) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, from November 6 through 20, 2022. Four Departmental Secretaries, five agency administrators, the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, and other administration officials attended COP27.

The U.S. delegation to these meetings was led by the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, a position created within the U.S. State Department to coordinate U.S. international climate

¹Greenhouse gases absorb infrared radiation, thereby trapping heat in the atmosphere and making the planet warmer. Greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), and several other fluorine-containing halogenated substances. Greenhouse gas emissions are typically presented in terms of metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent to reflect the different warming potential of these gases. See U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2020* (Washington, D.C.: April 15, 2022).

²For more information about meetings of the UN Conference of the Parties, see <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-cop>. According to officials at the U.S. State Department, these meetings and processes contain numerous issue-specific terms, acronyms, and general jargon. As such, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change maintains a glossary of terms: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-convention/glossary-of-climate-change-acronyms-and-terms>.

change efforts specified by the January 2021 Executive Order 14008 on *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*.³ These efforts include leading diplomatic engagement on the climate crisis, exercising climate leadership in international fora, and ensuring that climate change is integrated into all elements of the administration’s foreign policy-making process.⁴

You asked us to provide information on the amount of greenhouse gas emissions required for the U.S. delegation to travel to meetings of the UN Conference of the Parties. Specifically, this report examines (1) U.S. delegation travel to COP26 in 2021 and COP27 in 2022, (2) what is known about greenhouse gas emissions from aviation travel to COP26 and COP27, (3) State’s efforts to track greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. delegation travel, and (4) requirements to limit federal agency greenhouse gas emissions from aviation travel.

To examine the greenhouse gases emitted to transport the U.S. delegations to COP26 and COP27, we

- conducted a comprehensive literature search of news, trade, scholarly, and other literature to determine what information was publicly available about the number of U.S. government officials and employees who attended COP26 and COP27 and their mode of travel;⁵
- interviewed State Department officials to discuss how many U.S. government officials and employees attended COP26 in person and their methodology, if any, for calculating the amount of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from travel to the conferences;
- reviewed the U.K. government’s COP26 plan for delivering a carbon-neutral conference and its final report on the carbon management process, which also calculated the greenhouse gas emissions for all attendees of COP26; and⁶
- followed up with State officials to determine if they planned to calculate greenhouse gas emissions for COP27.

We conducted this performance audit from April 2022 to June 2023 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Over 190 U.S. Delegates Traveled to COP26, and Over 250 Traveled to COP27

According to the State Department’s official list, 191 people from the executive branch traveled to COP26 as members of the U.S. delegation.⁷ The official list for COP27 reported that 259

³Exec. Order No. 14008: *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, 86 Fed. Reg. 7619 (signed Jan. 27, 2021; pub’d Feb. 1, 2021).

⁴U.S. Department of State, *United States Department of State Fiscal Year 2022 Agency Financial Report* (Washington, D.C.: [Nov. 2022]).

⁵The literature search was performed in March 2022 for COP26 and in January 2023 for COP27, using keyword searches in bibliographic databases, including EBSCO, Dialog, PolicyFile, and ProQuest.

⁶Arup, *COP26 Carbon Management Plan Executive Summary* (Glasgow, Scotland); and *COP26 Carbon Management Plan: PAS 2060 Qualifying Explanatory Statement, Reference: COP26 CMP Final Report* (Glasgow, Scotland: May 2022).

⁷According to the State Department’s official delegation list, the 191 people who traveled to COP26 included the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, who acted as the U.S. government’s designated representative; seven department secretaries, and two agency administrators; 145 U.S. government advisors, which included officials from multiple executive branch agencies, such as the Executive Office of the President and the Departments of State, the

people from the executive branch were in the U.S. delegation.⁸ See enclosure I for more details on the U.S. delegations to COP26 and COP27.⁹

State Department officials told us that there is no substitute for attending Conference of the Parties meetings in person, because negotiations are complex and typically run all day and night for a number of days. Specifically, they said that informal side discussions are an essential mode of reaching agreement and that such interactions would be almost impossible to replicate in a virtual setting. State officials also stated that meetings of the annual Conference of the Parties are considered to be important gatherings for the numerous organizations that have a strong stake in the outcomes of the deliberations, and they attract thousands of academic experts, civil society leaders, nongovernmental organization advocates, business and labor leaders, and government officials. They said that it is implausible that the U.S. would not send a strong negotiating team to these meetings in order to ensure that outcomes are consistent with U.S. policy and to maintain U.S. leadership and influence in the face of challenges from other countries on such a consequential issue.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Aviation Travel Were a Significant Portion of Estimated Total Emissions for COP26

According to the U.K. government's conference report, greenhouse gas emissions from aviation travel to COP26 were significant in comparison to estimated total emissions from the event.¹⁰ According to this report, approximately 72 percent of the calculated residual greenhouse gas emissions from the event came from international aviation.¹¹ State officials said that these

Treasury, the Interior, Transportation, Energy, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development; and support staff.

⁸According to the State Department's official delegation list, the 259 people who traveled to COP27 included the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate; four department secretaries and five agency administrators; 199 U.S. government advisors; and support staff.

⁹According to the United Nations, COP26 totaled over 40,000 participants, including 22,274 party delegates, 14,124 observers, and 3,886 media representatives. See: <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop26>. According to the United Nations, COP27 was nearly as large as COP26, with over 35,000 participants.

¹⁰Arup, *PAS2060: Qualifying Explanatory Statement Reference: COP26 CMP Final Report*. To achieve a climate-neutral conference, the U.K. government applied a carbon-neutral standard developed by the British Standards Institution. For more information on this standard, called the PAS2060 Carbon Neutrality Standard and Certification, see <https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/pas-2060-carbon-neutrality/>. A key aspect of COP26 achieving carbon neutrality using this standard was the purchase of carbon offsets—reductions of greenhouse gas emissions from an activity in one place to compensate for emissions elsewhere. We plan to further investigate carbon offset quality during future audit work to follow up on our previous report: GAO, *Carbon Offsets: The U.S. Voluntary Market Is Growing, but Quality Assurance Poses Challenges for Market Participants*, [GAO-08-1048](https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-08-1048) (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 29, 2008).

¹¹Residual emissions are those that cannot be reduced to zero. The May 2022 COP26 Carbon Management Plan Final Report reported total emissions from the event as 131,556 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. Aviation emissions were responsible for an estimated 33,400 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, prior to the application of a radiative forcing multiplier of 3, intended to address nongreenhouse gas impacts from aircraft emissions. This equals a total of 100,200 out of the 131,556 total, or 76 percent. According to the report, a portion of the aviation emissions was offset directly by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and was removed from the emissions calculation, resulting in the 72-percent estimate. As of March 2023, a carbon management plan and report with similar emissions estimates were not available for COP27 held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

emissions paled in comparison to expected emissions reductions delivered by COP26 commitments.¹²

According to the U.K.'s report after COP26, aviation for international attendees remains one of the most challenging areas in which to reduce impacts due to a lack of data. Detailed information on travel methods for Conference of the Parties delegates was not available, as the majority of attendees undertook their own travel booking arrangements. According to the contractor who wrote the report, only a very small amount of data relating to U.S. delegate and associated transport was available.

State Has Not Calculated Greenhouse Gas Emissions from U.S. Delegation Travel to COP26 and COP27 but Is Developing Tools to Estimate Future Travel Emissions

State officials told us that they did not have a systematic way to calculate greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. delegation travel to COP26, COP27, or any past meetings of the Conference of the Parties. They said that State is developing methods to estimate future travel emissions. State officials told us that the State Department does not have the data to calculate greenhouse gas emissions from the full delegation travel to Conference of the Parties meetings because each participant makes their own travel arrangements using the travel management systems of their agency. Further, they said that the White House has information about which officials traveled on Air Force One, but State does not have access to that information.¹³

State officials said that they are working to both quantify and develop methods to reduce the department's greenhouse gas emissions from its operations, including emissions from travel as a part of State's efforts to meet emissions reduction goals. Specifically, they said that they are working to gather the necessary data, such as the mode of travel, origin, and final destination for State Department members of the U.S. delegation to future Conferences of the Parties.¹⁴ These data points are the first step needed to calculate greenhouse gas emissions from air travel. According to these officials, since travel and in-person diplomacy is a critical element of achieving the department's mission, the expected emissions from travel are expected to be a large part of the department's total emissions for travel by all State officials. However, they said that the department is exploring ways to decrease emissions and costs by, for example, increasing direct flights where possible and encouraging use of trains. State Department officials said that their efforts apply not just to Conference of the Parties meetings, but to all State aviation travel.

¹²According to State officials, prior to COP26, the world was headed for well over 2 degrees Celsius of warming by the end of the century, missing the goals of the Paris Agreement and posing significantly worse climate risks. They said that, based on the outcomes and pledges that emerged from COP26 in Glasgow, the International Energy Agency (IEA) calculated that fulfillment of these commitments would be enough to hold the rise in global temperatures to 1.8 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. Following COP27 at Sharm el-Sheikh in late 2022, the IEA estimated that full implementation of the pledges made at Paris, Glasgow, and Sharm el-Sheikh would limit the rise in global temperatures to 1.7 degrees Celsius. Further, the Emissions Gap 2022 report ([United Nations Environment Programme, Emissions Gap Report 2022: The Closing Window: Climate Crisis Calls for Rapid Transformation of Societies \(Nairobi: 2022\).](#)) estimated that implementation of nationally determined contributions and pledges from COP26 would yield an estimated 4.8 billion metric tons of additional greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

¹³According to State officials, the Secretary of State was on Air Force One for travel to COP26.

¹⁴State Department officials provided a rough estimate of 85.7 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gas emissions for travel of 66 of its employees to travel from Washington, D.C., to COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Federal Agencies Are Required by Executive Order to Track and Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Aviation Travel and Other Sources

Federal agencies are required by executive order to track and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from aviation travel and other sources. Specifically, the December 2021 Executive Order 14057 on *Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs through Federal Sustainability* sets an overall goal for the federal government to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions economy wide by no later than 2050.¹⁵ To help achieve this goal, the executive order calls for State and other federal agencies to reduce scope 1, 2, and 3 greenhouse gas emissions by setting and achieving targets for fiscal year 2030 measured from a fiscal year 2008 baseline.¹⁶

Scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions are owned or controlled by a federal agency, whereas scope 3 emissions are a consequence of the activities of an agency but occur from sources not owned or controlled by it (see fig. 1).¹⁷ Aviation emissions from federal employee travel are generally considered scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁸

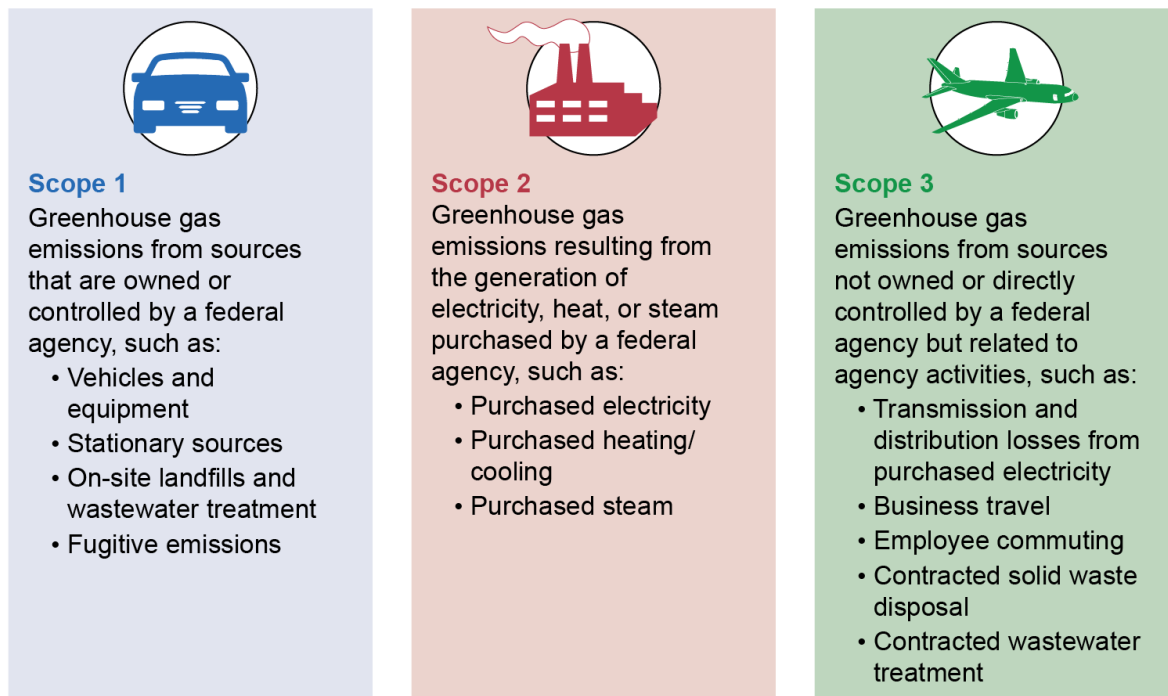
¹⁵Exec. Order No. 14057, *Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs Through Federal Sustainability*. 86 Fed. Reg. 70,935 (signed Dec. 8, 2021; pub'd Dec. 13, 2021). Net-zero emissions means reducing greenhouse gas emissions as close to zero as possible and balancing remaining emissions with an equivalent amount of emission removal, through natural carbon sinks, such as forests; carbon capture and storage; or direct air capture. Executive Office of the President, Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, M-22-06 (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 8, 2021); and the White House Council on Environmental Quality, *Implementing Instructions for Executive Order 14057, Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs Through Federal Sustainability* (Washington, D.C.: August 2022).

¹⁶For guidance on how agencies are to implement Executive Order 14057, see <https://www.sustainability.gov/resources.html>.

¹⁷Scope 1, 2, and 3 are defined here: Council on Environmental Quality, *Federal Greenhouse Gas Accounting and Reporting Guidance* (Washington, D.C.: January 2016). According to the guidance, scope 1 greenhouse gas emissions are from sources that are owned or controlled by a federal agency; scope 2 emissions result from the generation of electricity, heat, or steam purchased by a federal agency; and scope 3 emissions are from sources not owned or directly controlled by a federal agency but related to agency activities.

¹⁸The Implementing Instructions for Executive Order 14057, https://www.sustainability.gov/pdfs/EO_14057_Implementing_Instructions.pdf, direct the General Services Administration (GSA), in coordination with the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the Office of Management and Budget to (1) assess systems and methodologies to track and report government-wide and agency-specific scope 3 emissions; (2) develop systems to provide annual reporting of scope 3 emissions; and (3) calculate relevant categories of scope 3 emissions using the best available methodologies and data sources. The instructions also direct agencies with existing initiatives to track and report scope 3 emissions to coordinate with CEQ and GSA to ensure that agency systems and approaches align with government-wide tracking and reporting methodologies. As of March 2023, GSA has yet to issue this guidance.

Figure 1: Scope 1, 2, and 3 Greenhouse Gas Emissions



Source: Council on Environmental Quality. | GAO-23-105863

Note: According to Council on Environmental Quality, stationary sources are primarily associated with the combustion of fossil fuels for the generation of electricity, heat, cooling, or steam in stationary, on-site sources, such as boilers, furnaces, and other equipment. The Environmental Protection Agency defines fugitive emissions as emissions that result from the direct release to the atmosphere of greenhouse gas compounds from various types of equipment and processes, such as refrigeration and air conditioning systems, fire suppression systems, and the purchase and release of industrial gases.

Further, at COP27 on November 11, 2022, the Council on Environmental Quality, within the Executive Office of the President, launched the Net-Zero Government Initiative.¹⁹ Participating countries committed to achieving net-zero emissions from national government operations by no later than 2050 are to develop a roadmap and interim targets by COP28 that outline their pathway to achieve net-zero emissions and publish the roadmap upon completion. Over 15 countries will join the U.S. in this Initiative, according to the announcement.

High-quality greenhouse gas emissions data are a cornerstone of programs to address climate change.²⁰ Limiting greenhouse gas emissions requires an understanding of existing emissions, as well as the development of a program to monitor, report, and verify emissions. A program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions also requires an understanding of the numerous emissions sources and methods for calculating emissions.

Conclusions

¹⁹See <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ceq/news-updates/2022/11/17/ceq-launches-global-net-zero-government-initiative-announces-18-countries-joining-u-s-to-slash-emissions-from-government-operations/>.

²⁰GAO, *Climate Change Science: High Quality Greenhouse Gas Emissions Data Are a Cornerstone of Programs to Address Climate Change*, GAO-09-423T (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 24, 2009).

Meetings of the UN Conference of the Parties are held to develop and implement multilateral greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals, among other activities. The State Department leads the U.S. delegation to these meetings. The December 2021 Executive Order 14057 on *Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs through Federal Sustainability* established greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals for State and other federal agencies. These goals include greenhouse gas emissions reductions from aviation travel. For State and other federal agencies, the first step in meeting these goals is understanding U.S. greenhouse gas emissions from air travel and other sources, including U.S. delegation air travel to meetings of the UN Conference of the Parties. State would be better positioned to evaluate progress toward its greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals under these executive orders if it consistently estimated emissions from aviation travel.

Recommendation for Executive Action

The Secretary of State should ensure that the State Department consistently estimates greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. delegation travel to meetings of the UN Conferences of the Parties to align with the goals of Executive Order 14057. (Recommendation 1)

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to the State Department for review and comment. In its written comments reproduced in enclosure II, State neither agreed nor disagreed with the recommendation, noting that (1) the scope of this report focused specifically on travel of U.S. delegations to UN Conferences of the Parties, and (2) estimating the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the overseas travel of State Department personnel more generally would more fully align with Executive Order 14057. State suggested revising the recommendation to more directly focus on greenhouse gas emissions from State Department personnel. We continue to believe the recommendation is valid, because State's suggested revisions are beyond the scope of our work.

State agreed that estimating greenhouse gas emissions from official travel of State Department personnel to meetings, including those of the UN Conferences of the Parties, aligns with the goals of Executive Order 14057. This is an important first step in determining the travel emissions from the full U.S. delegation to such meetings led by State in its leadership role established by Executive Order 14008. It is also an important first step in achieving net zero emissions from national government operations by no later than 2050, a goal established by the Net-Zero Government Initiative at COP27 on November 11, 2022.

State officials also commented that emissions from aviation travel to meetings of the UN Conferences of the Parties paled in comparison to emissions reductions achieved at these meetings. We continue to believe that a consistent approach for estimating greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. delegation travel to meetings of the UN Conferences of the Parties would help State make this comparison. State also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the report date. At that time, we will send copies to the appropriate congressional committees and the Secretary of State. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3841 or by email at gomezj@gao.gov. Contact points for our Office of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. In addition to the contact named

above, Joe Thompson, Assistant Director; Jason Trentacoste, Analyst in Charge; and Carolyn S. Blocker made significant contributions to this report. Also contributing to this report were Adrian Apodaca, Paul Aussendorf, Jason Bair, Colleen Candrl, Wil Gerard, Cindy Gilbert, Heather Krause, and Caitlin Scoville.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alfredo Gómez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'A' and a prominent flourish at the end of the name.

J. Alfredo Gómez, Director
Natural Resources and Environment

Enclosures – 2

Enclosure I: Information on U.S. Delegations to the 26th and 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties

Table 1: U.S. Delegation to the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, October 31–November 12, 2021

Department or agency	Department/ agency head attended ^a	Representative/ alternate representatives ^b	Senior advisors	U.S. government advisors	Security and logistical support staff ^c	Total ^d
Executive Office of the President ^e	Yes	0	3	8	0	11
Millennium Challenge Corporation ^f	No	0	0	4	0	4
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	No	0	0	0	2	2
U.S. Agency for International Development	Yes	0	1	14	0	15
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Yes	0	1	8	0	9
U.S. Department of Commerce	No	0	1	4	0	5
U.S. Department of Energy	Yes	0	1	13	4	18
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	No	0	0	5	0	5
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	Yes	0	1	5	5	11
U.S. Department of State ^g	Yes	0	2	31	5	38
Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate ^h	Yes	4	0	21	0	25
U.S. Department of the Interior	Yes	0	1	6	7	14
U.S. Department of the Treasury	Yes	0	1	6	0	7
U.S. Department of Transportation	Yes	0	1	7	0	8
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Yes	0	1	7	4	12
U.S. International Development Finance Corporation	No	0	0	4	0	4
United States Embassy London	No	0	1	2	0	3
Total	11	4	15	145	27	191

Source: GAO analysis of State Department data. | GAO-23-105863

^aDepartment secretary or agency administrator.

^bAccording to the State Department, the Representative was designated as the Head of Delegation, and each Alternate Representative was designated as a Deputy Head of Delegation. One Alternate Representative served in State's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs as well as Senior Advisor and Managing Director for Negotiations and Programs to the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate. He is listed in the total for the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate.

^cFormally designated as "Non-Accredited Logistical Support Staff - Requiring Access to Venue" and "Non-Accredited Security Detail Personnel - Requiring Access to Venue."

^dThe COP26 delegation additionally included 90 congressional observers (20 representatives, 18 senators, and 52 congressional staff); five public sector advisors, such as local government officials; and 11 nongovernment advisors, such as audio visual specialists.

^ePresident Biden traveled to COP26 but was not included on the State Department’s official delegation list or the total in this table presented throughout the report.

^fAccording to its website, the Millennium Challenge Corporation is an independent U.S. foreign assistance agency that works with partner countries to promote growth, address poverty, and invest in future generations.

^gThe number of State Department delegates does not include delegates from the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate.

^hAccording to State Department officials, the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate is designated as the U.S. Head of Delegation to COP26. The Special Presidential Envoy for Climate reports to the President of the United States, and the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate is housed at the State Department.

Table 2: U.S. Delegation to the 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP27) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, November 6–20, 2022

Department or agency	Department/ agency head attended ^a	Representative/ alternate representatives ^b	Senior advisors	U.S. government advisors	Security and logistical support staff ^c	Total ^d
Executive Office of the President	Yes	0	4	13	0	17
Export-Import Bank of the United States	Yes	0	1	5	0	6
Millennium Challenge Corporation ^e	Yes	0	1	4	0	5
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	No	0	0	6	2	8
U.S. Agency for International Development	Yes	0	3	24	1	28
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Yes	0	1	10	4	15
U.S. Department of Commerce	No	0	3	9	0	12
U.S. Department of Defense	No	0	3	0	0	3
U.S. Department of Energy	Yes	0	2	16	4	22
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	No	0	1	4	0	5
U.S. Department of Homeland Security	No	0	1	1	0	2
U.S. Department of State ^f	Yes	0	9	49	3	61
Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate ^g	Yes	4	0	30	0	34
U.S. Department of the Interior	No	0	1	3	0	4
U.S. Department of the Treasury	Yes	0	2	11	0	13
U.S. Department of Transportation	No	0	1	4	0	5
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Yes	0	3	4	5	12
U.S. International Development Finance Corporation	Yes	0	1	6	0	7
Total	11	4	37	199	19	259

Source: GAO analysis of State Department data. | GAO-23-105863

^aDepartment secretary or agency administrator.

^bAccording to the State Department, the Representative was designated as the Head of Delegation, and each Alternate Representative was designated as a Deputy Head of Delegation. One Alternate Representative served in State’s Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs as well as a Senior Advisor and Managing Director for Negotiations and Programs to the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate. He is listed in the total for the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate.

^cFormally designated as “Non-Accredited Logistical Support Staff - Requiring Access to Venue” and “Non-Accredited Security Detail Personnel - Requiring Access to Venue.”

^dThe COP27 delegation additionally included 76 congressional observers (nine representatives, five senators, and 62 congressional staff); 10 public sector advisors, such as local government officials; and 15 nongovernment advisors, such as audio visual specialists.

^eAccording to its website, the Millennium Challenge Corporation is an independent U.S. foreign assistance agency that works with partner countries to promote growth, address poverty, and invest in future generations.

^fThe number of State Department delegates does not include delegates from the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate.

^gAccording to State Department officials, the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate is designated as the U.S. Head of Delegation to COP27. The Special Presidential Envoy for Climate reports to the President of the United States, and the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate is housed at the State Department.

Enclosure II: Comments from the U.S. Department of State



United States Department of State
Comptroller
Washington, DC 20520

MAY 9 2023

Jason Bair
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Mr. Bair:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "Climate Change: State Department Did Not Track Greenhouse Gas Emissions from U.S. Delegation Travel to Meetings 26 and 27 of the UN Conference of the Parties" GAO Job Code 105863.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Walsh".

James A. Walsh

Enclosure:
As stated

cc: GAO – Alfredo Gomez
OES – Hagen Maroney (Acting)
OIG - Norman Brown

Department of State Comments on Draft GAO Report
Climate Change: State Department Did Not Track Greenhouse Gas Emissions from U.S. Delegation Travel to Meetings 26 and 27 of the UN Conference of the Parties
(GAO-23-105863, GAO Code 105863)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the GAO draft report, *“Climate Change: State Department Did Not Track Greenhouse Gas Emissions from U.S. Delegation Travel to Meetings 26 and 27 of the UN Conference of the Parties.”*

Recommendation 1: The Secretary of State should ensure that the State Department consistently estimates greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. delegation travel to meetings of the UN Conferences of the Parties to align with the goals of Executive Order 14057.

While the Department understands the scope of this report focused specifically on travel involving of U.S. delegations to UN Conferences of the Parties, we believe that estimating the GHG emissions associated with the overseas travel of Department personnel more generally would be more fully aligned with E.O. 14057. Although we agree with the thrust of the recommendation, we respectfully suggest alternative language to expand its applicability, as proposed below.

“The Secretary of State should ensure that the State Department consistently estimates greenhouse gas emissions from official travel of Department personnel to meetings, including those of the UN Conferences of the Parties, to align with the goals of Executive Order 14057.”