



Figueres: UN Launches Online Shopping Platform to Offset Your Carbon Emissions

TN Note: If you are ashamed of your excessive carbon footprint, you can now make voluntary carbon offset payments to the United Nations to assuage your guilt. This is roughly equivalent to the medieval practice of purchasing indulgences to gain pardon for sins.

Offsetting your carbon footprint just became a lot like online shopping.

The United Nations climate body announced on Tuesday the launch of an online platform where anyone—individuals, families, businesses—can buy carbon credits tied to specific projects to “cancel out” their personal emissions.

While previously the practice of buying carbon offset credits was largely the project of major corporations, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) hopes its new site will encourage individuals to join too. The platform, announced at a meeting led by Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the UNFCCC, offers a

[carbon calculator](#) where users can measure their emissions for a year.

Then, users can choose a “clean development project,” like [a hydroelectric plant in Karala, India](#), from a menu. Each project comes with a price tag of how many dollars it requires to offset the equivalent of one ton of your carbon. In the case of the plant in Karala, the price right now is \$2.50 a ton. For the average American, whose carbon footprint is [around 20 tons per year](#), a whole year of emissions could be canceled out of the global system for a modest \$50.

The website is evidently still in progress; while the U.N. says there are at least 8,000 projects that can offer certified emission reduction (CER) credits, [only seven](#) appear on the site now.

The practice of buying carbon credits to “cancel out” one’s own emissions has been criticized by writer Naomi Klein, author of *This Changes Everything*, [who sees it](#) as providing an excuse for companies to maintain business-as-usual emissions. But the U.N. insists that the credit system will immediately speed up the reduction of carbon emissions overall, while companies work under growing pressure from governments to draw down their own emissions.

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