Collaboration Tools Improve Carbon Efficiency of Climate Change Conference

United Nations helps transform the way nations communicate with Cisco TelePresence.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CHALLENGE
• Develop secure network infrastructure for 18,000+ attendee conference
• Reduce carbon footprint for conference through video collaboration
SOLUTION
• Cisco network infrastructure for secure, wired and wireless access
• Cisco TelePresence for "in-person" interactions over network
RESULTS
• Proved Cisco TelePresence technology's capability to facilitate high-level negotiations
• More level playing field for organizations unable to attend COP15
• More effective communication and collaboration

Challenge

When the United Nations (UN) selected the Danish Government as host of the 2009 Climate Change Conference, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs prioritized two objectives. First, this had to be the most accessible and inclusive conference ever, cutting across geographical, cultural, financial, and political boundaries. Second, and equally important, they wanted to create the most carbon-efficient climate conference to date. They had to "walk the talk."

The climate conference, or 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15), gathered 139 heads of state and 18,000 other delegates from around the world with the intent to hammer out details on a global agreement to help reduce human-evoked greenhouse gas emissions. Attendees included members of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); intergovernmental organizations; and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Rainforest Foundation of Norway, The Nature Conservancy and LEAD Africa. The media also played an integral part of the conference by connecting world leaders with their constituents around the planet.

At a basic level, the Danish hosts faced the challenge of providing reliable wired and wireless Internet access, safe from cyber attacks, for the thousands of delegates and media from around the world. In addition, they wanted to promote inclusiveness while reducing some of the carbon footprint of the conference.

For years, the Danish Government had been using video conferencing to mitigate travel costs for Danish missions abroad. Svend Olling, head of COP15 planning in the Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted, "While video conferencing has been helpful for our intra-ministry communications, it fell short of the in-person experience that is so critical to delicate negotiations." Olling's challenge was to find a true-to-life video technology that could be implemented on-site, yet with enough coverage around the world to expand meeting inclusiveness for those who could not attend in person.

Solutions

The ministry announced public bids for a technology sponsor in the fall of 2008. Cisco stepped in immediately with a proposal to handle it all: wired and wireless access, local and wide area networking, data security, and the state-of-the-art Cisco TelePresence™ technology.

The UN and Danish ministry chose Cisco as the exclusive technology provider of the conference. Olling says, "Cisco met our demands in terms of the company's sustainability strategy, its corporate social responsibility (CSR) program and its adherence to the UN Global Compact."

Under the leadership of Henrik Michel Kjaer, the Cisco COP15 global project lead, a multidisciplinary team was formed, consisting of Cisco Services, the Cisco European field organization, the Cisco TelePresence Technology Group, the Cisco Corporate Marketing Organization, and Cisco IT. The team built out the on-site network and the Global Climate Change Meeting Platform (GCCMP) - a TelePresence exchange built on UN premises in Geneva, Switzerland - and connected six UN offices and five governments with four Cisco® TelePresence meetings room built on-site at the COP15 location in Copenhagen, Denmark.

For the duration of the conference, the team also connected 77 Cisco TelePresence rooms located at Cisco offices around the world, as well as traditional video conferencing units at 23 Danish embassies. With over 100 "virtual rooms" available at the COP15 conference, travel replacement was at last a reality.

In addition, Cisco installed a single-screen unit in a small presentation theater located in the main conference hall. The UNFCCC created a rich program of key discussion topics, enabling experts from all around the world to interact with delegates and attendees in Copenhagen.

"Cisco was honored and thrilled to be the technology partner for such a prominent global event," says Marthin De Beer, senior vice president of the Cisco Emerging Technologies Business Group. "For Cisco, it fits perfectly with our focus on doing what's best for our planet. When you factor in the enhanced interaction and accelerated decision-making that's possible through Cisco TelePresence, we see concrete benefits for intra-government and inter-government communications at the highest levels."

> "We'd used videoconferencing in the past, but it was nothing like using Cisco TelePresence. It is indeed the next-best thing to being there."
> **— Svend Olling, head of COP15 planning in the Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Results

"The network performed flawlessly," says Olling, noting that attendance exceeded 18,000 participants. "And Cisco TelePresence also exceeded expectations. The expressions 'nothing like putting a face to it' and 'seeing eye-to-eye' convey just some of the advantages of life-size streaming video with zero latency. Negotiations were extended not only by geography and time, but also by expanded cultural understanding."

In total, officials, chief negotiators, nongovernmental environmental agencies, and media logged over 250 hours during 149 meetings on the GCCMP. UN officials spoke regularly with heads of state. Roundtable programs on various topics enabled climate change experts to exchange ideas together in one forum, from dozens of countries scattered across the globe, with representation from government and nongovernment agencies, and the nonprofit, educational, and private sectors.

Government ministers and UN officials frequently used the Cisco TelePresence platform to conduct media briefings with press in their home countries, giving journalists the feeling that they were speaking face-to-face with officials. The GCCMP facilitated press conferences between Copenhagen, the Czech Republic, Hungary, South Korea and Thailand. Journalists at the Royal Danish embassy in Kathmandu used a high-definition video-conferencing unit to participate in a press briefing - an innovative example of interoperability.

Next Steps

The GCCMP is expanding to include even more accredited parties to a UN Climate Change Conference such as COP15. The possibilities to transform the way nations discuss not only climate change, but also other key global issues, such as nuclear disarmament, pandemic planning, and many international topics, are endless.

CUSTOMER NAME
- Danish Government, COP15 Host, Ministry of Climate and Energy and Ministry of Foreign Affairs

INDUSTRY
- Government

With the successful proof of concept of Cisco TelePresence at COP15, the GCCMP is now developing into a global Community Of Interest (COIN) for the UN, governments, NGOs, IGOs and media that support inter-governmental and inter-organizational communication. It will play an even larger role at future UN climate change conferences and at other similarly large, inter-governmental events. As more and more governments connect, the concept of a borderless, level playing field based on Cisco TelePresence becomes more of a reality.

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