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Summary of the Middle East and North Africa Climate Week (MENACW): 8-12 October 2023

In opening the second Middle East and North Africa Climate Week (MENACW), President-designate of the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 28), Sultan Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Chairman, Masdar Clean Energy Company, stated that “we cannot unplug the energy system of today before building the one of tomorrow” and that to make truly ground-changing progress on climate action, “we must separate facts from fiction, reality from fantasy, and impact from ideology.” He said a core concern for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is ensuring climate action is achieved without sacrificing economic development and just transitions for energy security. These words set the tone for subsequent discussions throughout the week as participants discussed just and equitable energy transitions, economic diversification, and inclusive finance to meet climate goals, along with strategies for climate adaptation in the MENA region.

MENACW 2023 convened under the theme, “Advancing Inclusivity and Circularity for Just and Equitable Energy Transitions.” It focused on three main pillars: transformation, inclusion, and solutions. Through a series of thematic tracks, affiliated events, side events, interactive Action Hubs, a Global Stocktake dialogue for the MENA region, the Gulf Cooperation Council Roundtable, and the League of Arab States (LAS) Roundtable to discuss expectations for COP 28, MENACW 2023 showcased innovative technologies and initiatives that position countries in the region as important incubators for progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and prioritizing an inclusive approach, so as to not leave any segment of society behind.

Three major announcements were made during MENACW 2023 for advancing global climate goals, on: Saudi Arabia’s Greenhouse Gas Crediting and Offsetting Mechanism (GCOM); the Roadmap to Reaching the Saudi Green Initiative’s 10 Billion Tree Target; and the Empowering Africa initiative, building on the foundation of the Clean Fuel Solutions for Cooking programme.

Four thematic tracks were discussed during the meeting:

- Energy Systems and Industry;
- Cities, Urban and Rural Settlements, Infrastructure, and Transport;
- Land, Ocean, Food, and Water; and
- Societies, Health, Livelihoods, and Economies.

A High-Level Communiqué, including outputs from MENACW 2023, will be presented to the COP 28 President and Ministers, ensuring that discussions from the thematic tracks are captured and framed in the context of COP 28 and available to decision makers as a tool to shape climate policy and action.

MENACW took place from 8-12 October 2023 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. MENACW 2023 marked the highest-ever attendance of any UN Regional Climate Week to date, convening over 9000 participants and over 240 sessions. It was organized by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNFCCC, the World Bank Group, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and the League of Arab States.

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A Brief History of the Regional Climate Weeks

The Regional Climate Weeks were launched in 2017 by the Nairobi Framework Partnership as a platform for stakeholders to meet, share experiences and best practices, and identify mutually beneficial climate action and policymaking related to implementing the Paris Agreement. As part of their mandate, the Regional Climate Weeks are intended to provide collaborative platforms to address the breadth of climate issues under one umbrella and with unity of purpose, bringing together, in the respective regions, diverse stakeholders in the public and private sectors around a common goal of addressing climate change.

Regional Climate Weeks provide a platform for exchange among policymakers, practitioners, businesses, and civil society on climate solutions, barriers to overcome, and opportunities for meaningful climate action in different world regions. The first Africa Regional Climate Week was held in Nairobi, Kenya, 9-13 April 2018; the first Asia-Pacific Regional Climate Week was held in Singapore, 10-13 July 2018; and the first Latin America and the Caribbean Climate Week was held in Montevideo, Uruguay, 20-23 August 2018.

MENACW took place for the first time in 2022 in Dubai, UAE, and brought together more than 3000 participants from over 135 countries to share on actions creating regional momentum towards global progress and enable bold commitments and the submission of stronger Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Long Term-Low Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS).

Regional Climate Weeks consist of high-level ministerial sessions reflecting on the risks of climate change facing the respective regions and the potential for strengthening regional leadership and global action. Stakeholder engagement takes place across a series of thematic discussions led by regional and global partners. The need for action is: discussed during side events led by regionally relevant organizations and experts; advanced in affiliated events that allow partners to convene region-specific events and advance the climate agenda; and exhibited and showcased in Action Hubs that demonstrate how climate change solutions are already being implemented. These events bring together leaders and decision makers to engage in solution-oriented discussions and to promote partnerships for action.

At COP 26 in 2021, governments agreed on the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#), formally establishing “the continuation of Regional Climate Weeks where Parties and non-Party stakeholders can strengthen their credible and durable response to climate change at the regional level” and inspire stakeholders to engage and become a part of the momentum generated by the [Paris Agreement on climate change](#). Topics of Regional Climate Weeks include implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and regional progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among others. Regional Climate Weeks are held annually across the following four regions: Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, and, most recently, the MENA region.

First Middle East and North Africa Climate Week: The inaugural MENACW took place from 28-31 March 2022, in Dubai, UAE, bringing together over 3,000 in-person stakeholders from over 135 countries, more than 1,200 virtual participants, and more than 500 speakers. Over 160 side events, affiliated events, and Action Hubs explored resilience against climate risk, the transition to net-zero emissions, collaboration on obstacles and opportunities for climate change adaptation and mitigation, and integrating climate action into global pandemic recovery. Thematic sessions were organized around three tracks:

- national actions and economy-wide approaches, with discussions addressing long-term national planning, including sustainability strategies, the energy transition, climate finance, and carbon markets in the MENA region, as well as the role of youth in national climate plans;
- integrated approaches for climate-resilient development, with discussions focusing on climate action and resilient recovery, climate action in fragile settings, and community-based adaptation in the region; and
- seizing transformation opportunities, by exploring breakthrough solutions to deliver support and climate action at a scale that puts cities, sectors, countries, regions, and the built environment on a low-emission and resilient development pathway.

Side events convened to address such issues as youth engagement on climate change, green economic recovery, agriculture climate solutions, building resilience, climate finance, ecosystem impacts, education, adaptation solutions from Indigenous Peoples and women, and development of renewable energy. Action Hubs addressed such topics as food security in the MENA region, renewable energy projects, smart cities, mobility, and the role of youth in climate policy.

Report of the Middle East and North Africa Climate Week 2023

MENACW 2023 began with an opening plenary on Sunday 8 October. From Monday 9 to Thursday 12 October, participants engaged in thematic discussions, with high-level discussions taking place on Monday 9 October. A summary of the opening plenary, thematic sessions, high-level discussions, and closing plenary follows below.

Welcome and Opening Ceremony

MENACW 2023 opened with a video of youth voices highlighting the ambitions of: carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS); transitioning to natural gas; accelerating the development of renewable energy products; and advancing the development of hydrogen plants to help others meet their climate goals.

Aseel al Bassam, Master of Ceremony and Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, introduced MENACW as a platform for dialogue in pursuit of climate solutions to achieve the shared commitment to meet the challenges posed by climate change ahead of COP 28.

Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud, Minister of Energy, Saudi Arabia, highlighted the work of the women and men



Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud, Minister of Energy, Saudi Arabia

working in the country's energy sector, noting that the "big story" of MENACW would be told by the "young cadets" on what we can and should be doing for their future. He assured participants of his ongoing efforts alongside the President of COP 27, President-designate of COP 28, and the Executive Director of the UNFCCC to deliver a successful and memorable COP 28 in Dubai in November.

Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Egypt, and COP 27 President, emphasized the role of developing nations in: leading the climate change intergovernmental process, guided by the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), equity, right to development, and climate justice; achieving decisions related to emission reductions and phasing out fossil fuels; and building resilience by incorporating the impacts of climate change into national plans. Shoukry highlighted the balance between rights and duties achieved at COP 27, which led to the launch of the Loss and Damage Fund. He called for supporting a just transition pathway and underscored the importance of restructuring financial institutions.

Sultan Al Jaber, COP 28 President-designate and Minister of Industry and Advancing Technologies, UAE, noted this will be the fourth COP hosted by a MENA country. He expressed his hope for COP 28 to deliver transformational outcomes on climate action, through a pragmatic and comprehensive climate agenda.

He stressed that adaptation, people, and livelihoods must be central to the climate agenda. He called for: donors to double climate finance and replenish the Green Climate Fund (GCF); "old promises" to be kept, citing the USD 100 billion pledge made over a decade ago; and "old institutions" such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to update their mandates and charters for "the climate realities of today." He called on the private sector to step up to the task by investing in the needs of the global South rather than just the opportunities in the global North.

Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC, highlighted how the MENA region has found ways to ingeniously adapt to an increasingly challenging natural environment and has turned those skills into prosperity, calling on the region to continue to do so in the face of urgent climate change. He stressed the importance of economic diversification and leveraging

emerging technologies, like carbon capture and storage (CCS) and hydrogen, while noting that these cannot be substitutes for transitioning away from fossil fuels. He stated that COP 28 "must show the world that we are ready to make hard choices, seek solutions rather than point to failures of others, and find common ground and take action."

Noura Alissa, Senior International Policy Analyst, Climate Change and Sustainability, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, saying that hydrocarbons will remain in the energy mix for decades to come, stressed the need for discussing carbon removal and abatement when talking about emission reductions.

Najla AlSudairy, Oil Sustainability Programme, reported on Saudi Arabia's prioritization of indirect solutions through material transition in packaging and the buildings and construction industry, including polymer concrete admixtures that reduce water consumption, fiber reinforced polymer rebars to replace steel, and polymer pallets to replace wooden ones.

Noof Abdulghani, Senior Environmental Engineer, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, shared Saudi initiatives to increase renewable energy capacity to 130 gigawatts by 2030, alongside programmes to replace liquid fuel with carbon capture. He noted further opportunities for development and scaling up efforts to reach net-zero targets using a range of available strategies.

Reem AlSultan, Director, Strategy and International Collaboration, Saudi Energy Efficiency Center (SEEC), discussed Saudi Arabia's "hydrogen revolution," aimed at making the country one of the largest producers and exporters of clean hydrogen. She reported that SEEC's efforts have already resulted in the reduction of 57 million tons of carbon emissions.

Mazen Alashwal, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, talked about the nation's capacity for deep geological carbon storage. He stated that his country will complete building one of the largest CCS hubs in the world by 2027, with the objective of capturing and storing 44 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) by 2035.

Mohammad Ayoub, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, and Board Member, GCF, reported on the Saudi Green Initiative, created by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud as a consolidated national vehicle to: reduce emissions; protect biodiversity, land, and sea; support the country's net-zero vision; and reliably supply energy through investment across all pillars of the circular economy.



Opening ceremony family photo

High-Level Launch of Thematic Tracks for Regional Climate Weeks

On Monday, October 9, the four thematic tracks to be discussed during the week were introduced during a high-level session, moderated by Alejandro Kilpatrick, UNFCCC.

Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC, noted the MENA countries' 1.5°C warming trend over the last 100 years, which is 50% faster than in other regions. He called for: scaling up climate finance, including USD 600 billion by 2030 across the MENA region; integration of mitigation and adaptation into plans and commitments; renewed commitment to reduce emissions by 43% by 2030 from 2019 levels; decarbonization of the economy; and a just transition.

Khalid Almeheid, Chief Climate Negotiator, Saudi Arabia, underscored three points: the MENA region has many challenges, but also great potential for action in all tracks discussed in the meeting; different regions should make their own path towards sustainable development based on their own realities, while contributing to global goals; and MENACW will highlight solutions for taking this region forward and facilitate enablers and cooperation for action.

Abdallah Al Dardari, Assistant Secretary-General and Regional Bureau Director, UNDP, underlined the interlinkages between the tracks. He noted that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs will not be reached through conventional trajectories. He underlined the need to support countries in linking their NDCs to their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and national investment strategies. Al Dardari emphasized that investment in climate action and the SDGs can only be successful when undertaken through inclusive, bottom-up strategies.

Sami Dimassi, Regional Director, UNEP, said MENA's population will double by 2050 but that the region has human capital and resources to safeguard its future and further the global commitment to meet the Paris Agreement's objectives. He called for leveraging the MENACW platform to highlight the region's contributions, noting that ten MENA countries have committed to the [Global Methane Pledge](#), which can accelerate achievement of climate goals. Dimassi urged for speaking openly and cooperatively.

Luis Tineo, Interim CEO, Climate Investment Funds, World Bank, spoke about the role of the World Bank in the MENA region, noting it dedicates 35% of its portfolio and resources to projects in the region. He stressed that tackling climate change-related problems requires a "whole-of-economy" approach, through regulations and incentives for decarbonization.

High-Level Announcement of Saudi Arabia's Greenhouse Gas Crediting and Offsetting Mechanism

A panel discussion on Saudi Arabia's Greenhouse Gas Crediting and Offsetting Mechanism (GCOM) on Monday, October 9 was moderated by Nora Abdulaziz AlSudairy, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia. Panelists discussed GCOM's contribution to Saudi Arabia's NDC and its link with Article 6 (cooperative implementation) of the Paris Agreement.

Maria AlJishi, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, noted that several principles have been incorporated into the GCOM,



Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC

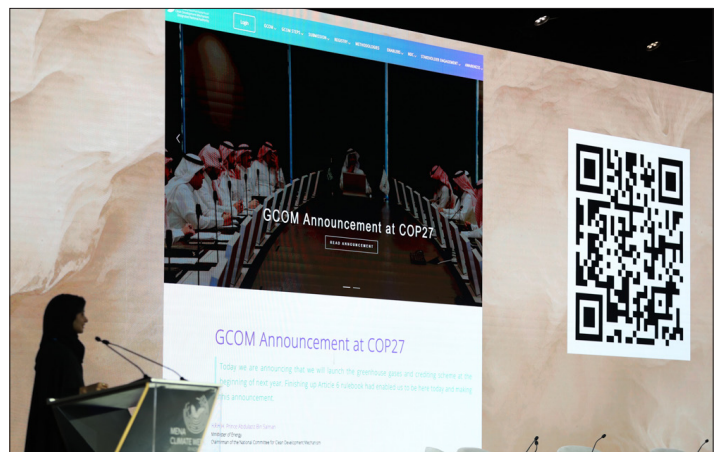
including rigorous record-keeping of credits from issuance to retirement.

Atheer Alkabsi, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, stressed that the GCOM is centered on stakeholder engagement, accessibility, and additionality, in demonstrating that carbon reductions from crediting and offsetting go beyond "business-as-usual."

Oleg Dobrovolsky, Regional Director, International Renewable Energy Certificate (I-REC) Standard Foundation, described the role of market-based support mechanisms for renewable energy projects, including how Renewable Energy Certificates are often much more local and national in scale than global carbon credit initiatives.

Perumal Arumugam, Manager, Mitigation Division, UNFCCC, noted that cooperating parties are responsible for the rules, modalities, and procedures for achieving an international mechanism to guide how credits can be traded between countries, based on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. He stated that the GCOM is "very much within the ambit" of carbon credits and offsetting at the international level.

Alkabsi stressed that the GCOM is helping to achieve Saudi Arabia's NDC and its pathway to net-zero emissions by 2060. Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud, Minister of Energy, Saudi Arabia, officially launched the web application for the GCOM, making the Mechanism live and active.



Saudi Arabia's Greenhouse Gas Crediting and Offsetting Mechanism was officially launched at a high-level event.

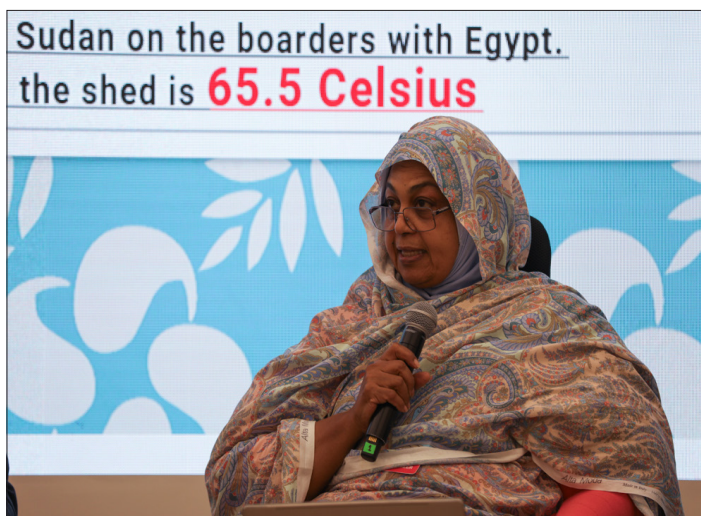
High-Level Dialogue – Towards a Cool COP

On Monday, October 9, a session organized by UNEP and the Climate Champions Team (CCT) of the UAE COP 28 Presidency, and moderated by Rahma AlShamsi, COP 28 Presidency, UAE, highlighted the adaptation and mitigation benefits of sustainable cooling in the context of increasing extreme heat events and global warming.

Sami Dimassi, Regional Director, UNEP, spoke on a sustainable cooling transition in the MENA region in the run-up to the “cool COP 28.” He noted that MENA’s warming is two times the global average and continues to rise, leading to more use of air conditioning and thereby exacerbating climate change. He called for everyone’s commitment to the [Global Cooling Pledge](#) (GCP) to be launched at COP 28. The GCP is an initiative led by the COP 28 Presidency and supported by the UNEP-led Cool Coalition and its partners

Bogolo Kenewendo, Regionalization Director, CCT, noted that 30% of MENA’s population lacks continuous energy access, saying increasing temperatures will increase demand for energy and stress energy grids, infrastructure, and buildings. She said traditional shading, planting methods, and architecture are key, noting MENA countries’ capacity to reclaim their traditional leadership role in natural cooling methods. She invited private entities to join the GCP.

Shahira Wahbi, Chief, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, LAS, cited the 65.5°C temperature recorded in Sudan in 2019, saying this should persuade all Arab countries to join the GCP. She called for concrete commitments toward effective transition to sustainable cooling and accountability, including: more policy actions on energy efficiency; energy access; climate-friendly cooling; and cold chains for food and vaccine transport and storage. She said this will improve the lives for millions of people, reduce water evaporation, and change rainfall. She said the LAS can deliver results through strong ministerial action to produce national and regional action plans to accelerate emission reductions.



Shahira Wahbi, Chief, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, League of Arab States



Maged Mahmoud, Technical Director, RCREEE

Maged Mahmoud, Technical Director, Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE), said this official technical arm of the LAS is developing concrete implementation modalities and enhanced capacities, including through producing guidelines and investment tools for attracting investors. He stressed national cooling action plans for Arab countries, with strong monitoring and evaluation.

Walid Kaddachi, Strategic Development Director, Carrier Transicold, discussed the private sector’s role in addressing cooling in the region, saying sustainability is a core part of business’ growth strategy. He noted his industry’s focus areas: product innovation to reduce carbon footprints; using refrigerants with the lowest global warming potential; and expanding the food cold chain to reduce loss and waste.

Jean-Louis Morcos, Senior Investment Officer and Regional Sustainable and Climate Finance Lead, International Finance Corporation (IFC), said the IFC and others can mobilize the private sector toward the GCP. He said the IFC works in emerging markets to ensure bankable projects, ensure fair allocation of risk, and mobilize financial resources through: investing its own money, including in equity; mobilizing political risk insurance and capital from other financiers; and increasing access to concessional capital.

Suliman Al-Khwili, Managing Director, Tabreed Cooling Company, presented on developing the centralized district cooling sector in Saudi Arabia, to enable a market for this with clear implementation policies and regulations. He noted district cooling is ten times more efficient than individual cooling and highlighted plans to incentivize district cooling and make it more feasible.

In the ensuing discussion, participants commented on building capacity in the MENA region for the transportation of goods and noted that regulations on district cooling are being developed. In closing, Ayman Eltalouny, Head of Saudi Environment Sustainability Programme, UNEP, noted the political advantage of proposing a “cooling” label and said the COP 28 GCP will “change the game.”



Panelists in Track 1 discussed approaches to a just and inclusive energy transition, including the role of non-party stakeholders.

Thematic Track 1: Energy Systems and Industry

Approaches to a Just and Inclusive Energy Transition, Including the Role of Non-party Stakeholders: On Monday, October 9, Nathan Cooper, Director of Policy and Engagement, CCT, opened Thematic Track 1 by introducing the four pillars of a just transition: reduce carbon emissions through rapid deployment of renewable energies; ensure energy access for all; insure against current and future climate risks; and ensure livelihoods for all.

Bogolo Kenewendo, Regionalization Director, CCT, highlighted the need for a collaborative framework for developing countries and vulnerable populations that is inclusive, comprehensive, and fit-for-purpose. She stressed that reducing the capital cost of energy is the singular most relevant factor to lead developing countries towards the clean energy needed for low emissions development.

Beniamin Strzelecki, Student Energy Summit 2023, provided a young person's perspective on decarbonization and just transition, stressing upscaling of opportunities, equitable education, and internet access. He said his organization gives youth a platform and resources to implement projects and build confidence. Strzelecki called for building public support, through ensuring decent livelihoods and day-to-day survival, to catalyze momentum for exponential change toward net zero by 2050, saying youth are driving change.

Luciano Caratori, CCT, moderated an open dialogue on the meaning of a just energy transition for the MENA region.

Mari Luomi, King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC), emphasized the need for a common understanding of the concept for the different actors in the region. She presented findings indicating the biggest challenges in the region are related to investments in human capital, highlighting youth employment, education, gender equality, and investment in research and development.

Kishan Khoday, UNDP, noted the MENA region has seen a growth in poverty rates because of conflict and continued investment in oil and gas expansion, and that, despite economic growth, there is still a long way to go for renewable energy incorporation. He said UNDP's investment in the region is used to source co-investments in projects to develop the capacity and resilience of communities.

Riham Elgizy, CEO, Regional Voluntary Carbon Market Company, called for defining the just energy transition and the voluntary carbon market's role in it, noting that by 2030, 50% of Saudi Arabia's energy will be from renewables. She said 50% of communities in some African countries have no electricity, and 40% of the global population lack access to clean fuel for cooking. She said while fossil fuels "won't be switched off tomorrow," the economy is decarbonizing as fast as possible. Elgizy said carbon markets support justice by giving certificates for renewable energy. He noted the MENA region could experience a 5-6°C temperature increase but has resources and capacity for excelling in solar and hydrogen technologies.

In the ensuing discussion, panelists, *inter alia*, emphasized: integrating renewable energy into the build-back of post-conflict countries; more and better-quality data and identification of where gaps exist in the just transition to send the right signal to the market; and UN climate finance for bringing technologies for direct air capture to the global South. One participant questioned who will buy reduction/removal credits for CCUS and whether carbon credits will lead countries away from net-zero targets.

Caratori invited proposals for on-the-ground investments into real world projects for communities most vulnerable to negative climate change impacts.

Critical Minerals for the Energy Transition in MENA: On Tuesday, October 10, Khalid Saleh Al-Mudaifer, Vice Minister for Mining, Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources,



Khalid Saleh Al-Mudaifer, Vice Minister for Mining, Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources, Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, spoke about the potential of MENA to deliver the minerals required to meet global demand in the context of the energy transition. He said the mining industry can provide employment and stimulate the growth required for sustainable development, highlighting the establishment of minerals and metals value chains that focus on local communities.

Radia Sedaoui, Chief, Energy Cluster, ESCWA, presented on harnessing critical energy transition minerals for sustainable development in least developed and land-locked developing countries. She highlighted mapping of strategic minerals for the low-carbon transition and harnessing the increasing demand for critical energy transition minerals.

In an ensuing panel discussion, Ahmed Mohina, Ministry of Electricity and Energy, Egypt, stressed innovating in carbon capture to enable use of fossil fuels without affecting the global environment and called for regional integration.

Wafa Bakheet, Energy and Minerals Regulatory Commission, Jordan, called for knowledgeable countries to transfer capacity to countries with natural resources to use in current or future value chains.

Jabir Hussein, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Somalia, stressed policy needs, including on: transparency and accountability; transportation infrastructure; market access; investment; community engagement; and benefit-sharing.

Luciano Caratori, CCT, said the MENA region can play a critical role in driving a circular minerals economy.

In closing remarks, Fouad Musa, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, highlighted the role of youth in tackling the challenges related to creating the technological advancements for a sustainable future. He underscored the need to create technology for recycling and to remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Implementation of the Energy Transition in the Context of NDCs, Addressing Opportunities, Challenges and Barriers:

During this session on Tuesday, October 10, Keynote speaker Iman Ustadi, Head of Negotiations, COP 28 Presidency, UAE, lamented the current trajectory that fails to reach 43% in carbon emission reductions from 2019 levels by 2030. She urged accelerating scale and speed to meet the Paris Agreement goals through ambitious NDCs, development strategies, and sufficient means of implementation.



Iman Ustadi, Head of Negotiations, COP 28 Presidency, UAE

Simon Benmarraze, Team Lead, Renewable Energy Technology and Infrastructure, IRENA, also noting that the current trajectory for global climate commitments requires accelerated efforts to meet the Paris Agreement's goals, recommended aligning NDCs and LT-LEDS.

Mary Awad Menassa, UNFCCC-World Green Economy Organization (WGEO) Regional Collaboration Centre (RCC), moderated a panel discussion focused on facilitating the energy transition in the context of NDC implementation.

Abdullah Alsubaie, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, cited Saudi Arabia's "circular carbon economy" framework and "whole-of-government" approach.

Ayman Refaie, Ministry of Environment, Egypt, said mitigating carbon can help developing countries mitigate budget problems.

Youssef Mouayed, Ministry of Environment, Iraq, reported on new projects on renewable energy and methane.

Mohamadou Sow, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Mauritania, said his country desires local capacity building and technology to develop its mineral resource potential.

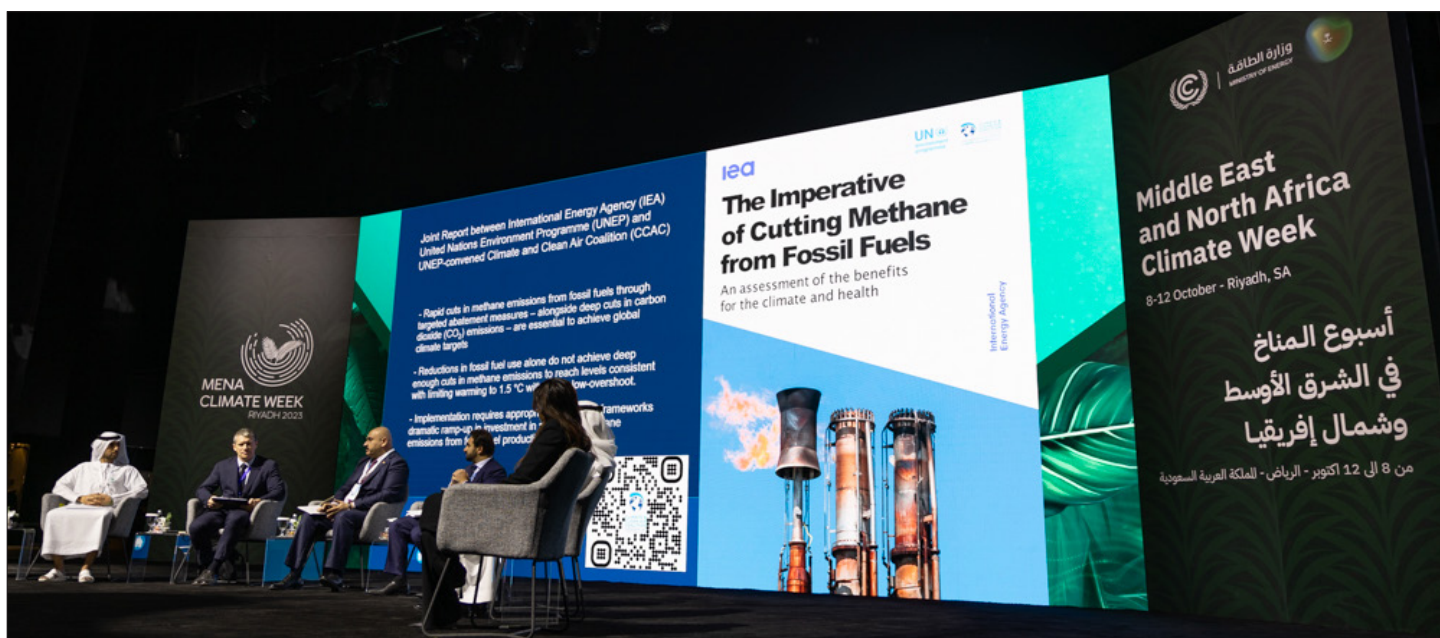
Syed Adeel Abbas, World Bank, called for more ambition towards supporting least developed countries (LDCs), specific and economy-wide targets, improved measurement methodologies, and reduced energy intensity.

Kishan Khoday, UNDP, shared a collaborative initiative to create an energy efficiency programme for capacity development in reducing energy intensity across different sectors, such as building and transport.

Menassa closed the session, noting different pathways towards climate change solutions and support for enabling environments to achieve climate targets and sustainable development.

Reducing Methane Emissions in the Oil and Gas Value Chain:

Miriam Hinostroza, UNEP, moderated this session on Wednesday, 11 October. She noted that the recent UNEP, International Energy Agency (IEA), and Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (CCAC) [joint report](#) on the imperative of cutting methane from fossil fuels states that 70% of methane emissions from fossil fuel operations could be reduced with existing technology.



Panelists in Track 1 discussed reducing methane emissions in the oil and gas value chain.

Keynote speaker Abdulla Malek, Office of the UAE Climate Change Special Envoy, said 20% of methane emissions come from the oil and gas sector, stressing that methane abatement will bring positive economic returns and near-zero net costs, representing clear opportunities for the MENA region. He called on everyone to commit at COP 28 to reduce 30% of methane emissions from 2020 levels by 2030 and follow this with action and results.

In a subsequent panel discussion, session moderator James Morris, CCAC, emphasized an economic value in reducing methane, and called for ramping-up investment in mitigating methane from fossil fuel production.

Youssef Mouayed, Ministry of Environment, Iraq, said his country has a good understanding of the issue of reducing methane emissions and presented projects that would attract investments in dealing with methane.

Jean-Louis Morcos, IFC, said the development of [Country Climate Development Reports](#) with the support of the World Bank puts climate at the center of development policies and serves as a basis for diagnosis to get countries onto a greener path.

Abdulaziz Aljodai, Director, Technology and Innovation, Saudi Arabia's Basic Industries Corporation, noting methane is widely used in the chemical and petrochemical industry, said there are very effective procedures to reduce fugitive emissions.

Maan Iskander, Director, Green Energy and Policy, Saudi Aramco, reflected on how emissions can be turned into valuable products that can serve the world. He said his company is spearheading the industry because it has the lowest flaring intensity when compared to its peers.

Olivia Azadegan, Director, Energy Transition, Clean Air Task Force, noting that methane emissions mitigation is a low hanging fruit because of low costs and cost effectiveness, said the technology exists to do this now.

Malek closed the session, stating that focusing on opportunities related to methane abatement and conversion to chemicals requires investment but also has a good return value.

Hydrogen Horizons: Unveiling the Sustainable Energy Landscape in the MENA Region: Erick Ruiz Araya, Deputy Director, IRENA, moderated this session under Track 1 on Wednesday.

Keynote speaker Simon Benmarraze, IRENA, urged applying knowledge from oil and gas to renewable energy operations for resilient economic growth. He said hydrogen and its derivatives will produce 51% of energy consumed in the MENA region, with blue hydrogen forming 94% of production. He called for growing the hydrogen supply sixfold and making the majority green.

A subsequent panel discussion was moderated by Luciano Caratori, CCT. Radia Sedaoui, Chief, Energy Cluster, ESCWA, noted MENA's infrastructure and human capital will make its hydrogen competitive, but stressed the need for environmental, social and governance (ESG) compliance to make exports acceptable.

Samir Rachidi, Director General, Research Institute for Solar Energy and New Energies, said MENA governments must define their interests, potential, and gaps regarding hydrogen production and cooperate on mutual challenges, including EU regulations on renewable fuels of non-biological origin.

Zeid Alghareeb, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, said natural sinks in MENA could be monetized for importing CO₂ from other regions and called for certainty in regulations and upscaling deployment of technology for all types of hydrogen.

Maged Mahmoud, Technical Director, RCREEE, noted countries in the MENA region have different needs, since there is no harmonization in terms of energy.

Jean-Louis Morcos, IFC, made recommendations to attract financing for green hydrogen projects, including: considering



Panelists in Track 1 discussed hydrogen horizons and unveiling the sustainable energy landscape in the MENA region.

updating technology; ensuring that the whole value chain is green; having a strong transmission network; and having adequate infrastructure.

Abdulrahman Kurdi, Hydrogen Diplomacy Advisor, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), reflecting on how to stimulate investment for green hydrogen projects, noted that patents for storing hydrogen could be a source of income.

Ruiz Araya closed the session, saying that as time goes on more great opportunities arise that are both good for business and good for our planet.

Financing the Energy Transition: Unlocking New and Emerging Technologies on the Route to Net-zero: Syed Adeel Abbas, World Bank, moderated this session on Thursday, 12 October.

In opening remarks, Kishan Khoday, UNDP, noted the MENA region has excelled in growing renewable energy capacity due to reducing import tariffs and expanding the use of feed-in tariffs, green bonds, and debt-for-nature swaps, among others. He also highlighted fiscal policies to reduce investor risks, partnerships, and capacity building for local actors regarding new carbon markets. He reported that UNDP has upscaled energy financing to help resilience, given growing crisis situations and poverty.

Moderator Abbas opened a panel discussion, noting public sector investment will not be sufficient for the energy transition. He encouraged: developing regulatory frameworks, including laws on renewable energy and public-private partnerships; enhancing partnerships for knowledge sharing; and investing in research and development.

Abdullah Jefri, IFC, noting a USD 2.8 trillion investment is needed to reach net zero by 2030, urged policy reforms to create enabling environments to attract investment in technologies. He said investment barriers include weak institutional capacity, lack of modularity in financing packages, and utility buyers with poor credit.

Zoë Knight, Group Head, Sustainable Finance and Climate Change, HSBC, pointed to barriers in countries that prevent the financial sector from responding to the need to increase demand for low carbon alternatives. She called for clear policies and emissions targets, and for financial targets for the banking sector.

Maged Mahmoud, Technical Director, RCREEE, urged modularity development for concentrated solar power and hydrogen and a short-term focus on blue hydrogen production, moving to green hydrogen production over time. He called for using more energy smartly and efficiently, seeing no point in electric vehicles without green electricity.

Fatih Yılmaz, KAPSARC, discussed capacity gaps in meeting ESG requirements for reporting, tracking, and regulation, and for measurement, reporting, and verification for carbon market certification. He lamented difficulties in fitting ESG requirements with emerging technologies, which lowers CCS investment.

In summarizing, Abdelrahman said middle- and low-income countries need concessional or blended finance short-term, and private finance long-term, stressing local institutional and regulatory frameworks.

Unlocking the Potential of Carbon Markets for Emission Reductions and Removals in Supporting the Transition to Net-zero: This Thursday session was moderated by Axel Michaelowa, Senior Founding Partner, Perspectives. Participants discussed how efforts can be accelerated to achieve low-carbon development while ensuring environmental integrity.

Umamaheswaran Krishnan, UNFCCC-WGEO RCC, emphasized his organization's role in implementing Paris Agreement Article 6 within MENA, highlighting regional dialogues, webinars, and country-level and private sector engagement.

Maria AlJishi, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, noted that the GCOM allows Saudi Arabia to both create awareness and achieve emissions removals. On the current market price downturn, she

said Article 6 is causing the voluntary carbon market's "down-take," because its complexity and dependence on not-yet-existing regulations causes uncertainty. She added that market prices will not reflect the cost of certain technologies in some countries.

Ayman Refaie, Ministry of Environment, Egypt, reflected on the decline of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) certificates, cautioning the impacts of another potential carbon market crash. He cited the significant price difference between the compliance and voluntary markets. Refaie said guaranteeing zero greenwashing by producing good quality carbon credits is a significant cost.

Ousmane Fall Sarr, Group CEO, African Resilience Company – Holding, outlined initiatives creating enabling environments in West Africa to facilitate knowledge exchange on the functioning of carbon markets, particularly through Article 6. He said system integrity requires trust, which requires robust quantification methodologies, and these cannot be developed without a fair price.

Ashok Sarkar, World Bank, joining virtually, reported little benefit to Africa from the CDM. Saying the first CDM collapse was due to an overly complex process, he urged simplification to bring in the private sector, alongside technology transfer and attention to socio-economic co-benefits.

Paul Zakkour, Director, Carbon Counts, agreed there is little interest in financing carbon removal, due to potential leakage and the CDM's problems. He called for building "lessons learned" into the new Article 6.2 framework on trade in emission reductions and removals, saying the Gulf Cooperation Council's upcoming guidelines for countries lacking regulatory frameworks will help them assure appropriate due diligence.

In closing, Michaelowa noted a tenfold difference between prices of compliance and voluntary market.

Thematic Track 2: Cities, Urban and Rural Settlements, Infrastructure and Transport

Unlocking Finance for City-Scale Transformation through Multi-level Governance: This session was moderated by Nuran Ashraf Atef, UNEP, on Monday, 9 October.

Chitembo Kawimbe Chunga, Climate Investment Funds, stated that 60% of land in cities is "still underutilized" and



Chitembo Kawimbe Chunga, Climate Investment Funds

that concessional finance and partnerships with multilateral development banks for small- and medium-sized cities can be used to finance, among other things: low-carbon mobility across cities; green infrastructure solutions; integrated solid waste management; a reduced energy footprint in urban water supply; and improved resource efficiency in retrofitted buildings.

Nisreen Daoud, Greater Amman Municipality, Jordan, described her city's Climate Action Plan to reduce emissions by 40% by 2030, including through improved public transportation, land use and urban planning, a biogas project to turn waste to energy, and identification of 120 high-risk locations for flooding.

Firdaous Oussidhoum, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), highlighted key pillars for increasing finance for local governments in the MENA region, including: building readiness and resilience for cities in the face of climate change; improving accessibility through horizontal complementarity between cities and national banks for green territorial urban planning; transforming finance models that evolve with local needs; and addressing inequalities to ensure smaller towns and cities have access to climate-friendly finance.

Jamila El Mir, CCT, highlighted gaps and barriers for financing in the MENA region, including the need for municipalities to realign their daily basic services to climate impacts. She also noted the need to create dialogue with national governments and to unlock partnerships with the private sector to obtain climate finance, emphasizing that "trash is cash" and can be leveraged through waste fees to allow waste management to "break even."

Jon Kher Kaw, World Bank, gave recommendations for addressing gaps and barriers for climate finance, noting that, yes, "trash is cash in the MENA region, but land is also cash." He emphasized that improving livability in the region means being more responsive to market needs of retail and housing as the best way to attract the private sector investments that are key for climate resilience and sustainability.

Muhammad Aleid Al-Harashsheh, Cities and Village Development Bank, Jordan, emphasized that the public sector cannot leverage sufficient finance for recycling waste materials in his country's municipalities. He highlighted his institution's



Muhammad Aleid Al-Harashsheh, Cities and Village Development Bank, Jordan

financial support to 96 projects in municipalities in poorer rural areas to introduce recycling and sustainable waste management.

In conclusion, Oussidhoum mentioned that projects must be both geographically contextual and aligned with policies at the local, national, and global levels. El Mir stressed that small civil society organizations often serve as translators of climate language in local contexts and are key to developing innovative partnerships with big donors at the rural scale.

Andrew Deacon, Acting Managing Director, Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, emphasized that cities beyond the MENA region are keen to learn, share, and replicate their experiences to unlock climate finance in achieving their NDCs and NAPs. He highlighted the importance of COP 28 in building synergies for climate action at the subnational level.

Forging Pathways for Sustainable and Resilient Buildings in the MENA Region: This session on Tuesday, 10 October, was moderated by Yves-Laurent Sapoval, Ministry of Ecological Transition, France, and discussed ways to strengthen the buildings and construction value chain for transformative climate action.

In a video presentation, Razan Al Mubarak, COP 28 High-Level Champion, introduced two initiatives integrating resilience into the built environment: the [Buildings Breakthrough Initiative](#) to unlock near-zero emissions buildings; and the [Arab Regional Roadmap](#) that provides a menu of tailored policies guiding the buildings sector for investment in sustainable construction.

Majid bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Hogail, Minister of Housing, Saudi Arabia, in a video presentation, noted a royal decree issued to implement the [Future Saudi Cities](#) programme in collaboration with UN-Habitat, which will launch over 200 smart city initiatives across the country by 2025, including for sustainable building construction in residential and commercial areas.

In a panel discussion on paving the way for a low emissions-built environment in the MENA region, Rania Hedeaya, Egypt Programme Director, UN-Habitat, stressed that decarbonization will need to go beyond construction and include manufacturing, transportation, and waste management before and after buildings' construction.

Ayse Nesen Surmeli Anac, Associate Director, Guidehouse, lamented the cycle between growing demand for cooling

buildings and cooling's direct impacts in furthering global warming. She said cooling is critical infrastructure and can be handled sustainably by improving the energy efficiency of buildings, minimizing energy use from the grids, and using alternatives to refrigerant cooling agents, which are potent greenhouse gases.

Alida Saleh, CCT, said obstacles for climate-resilient buildings include lagging policies, financing, regulations, harmonization of definitions, value chain stakeholder training, and knowledge transfer.

Rasmi Hamzeh, CEO, Jordan Renewable Energy and Efficiency Fund, called on G20 countries to implement their commitments to financing for developing countries, to build capacity for planning, design, and implementation of green buildings.

Mohamed Amer, Regional Director of Operations, International Code Council, called for applying building standards along the whole supply chain, noting the need for strong regulatory frameworks that include a mandate, training, investment in infrastructure and building materials, implementation, monitoring, and enforcement.

Riding the Green Wave: Accelerate Sustainable Transport, a Deep Dive on Green Procurement Options, and Other Approaches: This session on Tuesday, 10 October, was moderated by Jocelyne Jabbour, World Bank.

Ibrahim Dajani, Practice Manager for Transport Global Practice for the MENA Region, World Bank Group, said green procurement can include green energy such as biofuels, innovative vehicles, and electrification of transport to combat MENA's severe air pollution problem.

Etel Patricia Bereslawski, Procurement Manager, World Bank, said few MENA countries have legislated sustainable procurement. She urged balancing quality and price in awarding contracts, not just accepting the lowest bid.

Walid Dhouibi, Senior Procurement Specialist, World Bank, defined green procurement as focusing on the entire life cycle of the product, meaning the "end of life price," not just the purchase price, saying this changes suppliers' mindset. He recommended that policymakers shift default procurement policies, requiring strong commitments to "green procurement" and relationships



Rania Hedeaya, Egypt Programme Director, UN-Habitat



Walid Dhouibi, Senior Procurement Specialist, World Bank

between public purchasers and contractors. He called for allowing innovative startups to access public procurement.

David Ramos Álvarez, Regional Head, Sustainability, HSBC, reported surveying transportation businesses to understand their financing needs for decarbonization, saying findings show larger companies spending relatively more on the pursuit of net zero. He highlighted evaluating risk in supply chains and said financial institutions can offer financing to improve them.

Elie Helou, Director, Project Development, Council for Development and Reconstruction, Lebanon, said the world “had learned nothing” from the reduced carbon footprint of transportation that the global pandemic caused. He urged MENA governments to incentivize purchases of “green cars,” noting that this costs less than new transportation infrastructure. He stated that governments must look further than just “the cheapest product,” but cautioned against making procurement specifications so narrow that only one bid is received, and said everyone is still learning.

Jean-Louis Morcos, IFC, reported that the IFC’s ongoing series of Country Climate Development Reports helps governments find the right policies to make climate-related projects bankable, as scarce capital must be allocated efficiently.

Accelerating the Transition to Climate-Friendly Waste Management through Circular Economy Principles in Cities and Human Settlements – The Role of Industry and Public-Private Partnerships: On Tuesday, Noor Balfaqeh, Head, Public Relations, Unilever, moderated a third session under Track 2, which explored options and challenges to encourage collaborative dialogue between regulators and industry stakeholders.

Emphasizing the need to raise public awareness on the role of the circular economy as a waste management solution, Mohammed Al-Yaqout, Saudi Investment Recycling Company, outlined his country’s objectives to go from 5% landfill divergence for recycling materials in 2023 to 82% by 2030.

Saad Al-Sharif, Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources, Saudi Arabia, stressed that the circular economy “must be a private sector transformation” and that plastic recycling offers a substantial opportunity for 20% annual economic growth in the “quest towards sustainability.”

Tariq Basmair, Director, Business Development, Circular Economy Company, noted the importance of cultural relevance

as a barrier for industry. He highlighted that industry in Saudi Arabia has undertaken research and development concerning oil, stating he “cannot disclose much about it, but we no longer need to recycle oil, we can now regenerate oil.” Enhancing the lifecycle of oil, he said, can promote circularity and “create a pathway towards sustainability.”

Firdaus Oussidhoum, Special Adviser to the UCLG Secretary General, stressed that building trust and transparency is key for circularity and to ensure we “practice what we preach.” She mentioned that “some parts of the world are talking about degrowth,” and highlighted the importance of small- and medium-sized cities for the circular economy.

Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Systems: Adapting to Extreme Weather Events in Urban MENA– Nature-based Solutions to Enable Sustainable Travel Amidst Everyday Extreme Weather Events: On Wednesday, 11 October, Mohamed Hegazy, CCT, moderated this session. In a video message, Georges Youssef, Mayor of Menjez, Lebanon, stressed urgent collaborative innovation to leave future generations a planet in good condition.

Savina Carluccio, Executive Director, International Coalition for Sustainable Infrastructure, noted the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s 2018 report on [climate-resilient infrastructure](#). She urged incorporating adaptation and resilience strategies throughout lifecycles.

Nuha Eltinay, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, said cities need capacity to develop bankable projects and provide monitoring data to leverage financing, urging stakeholders to be honest about barriers and challenges.

Ghaith Tibi, Arup, called for undertaking climate resilience efforts with what already exists in cities rather than building new island developments.

Tibi and Carluccio concluded by noting many factors must be considered in the transition, including materials used, scale, temperature extremes, and long-term durability.

In a second panel, moderated by Mahmoud Nady, CCT, on nature-based solutions (NbS) for infrastructure in the face of unpredictable climate impacts, Amira Ayoub, World Green Building Council, presented on sustainable urban infrastructure that follows a biomimicry approach to learn from natural systems,



Moderator **Noor Balfaqeh**, Head, Public Relations, Unilever



Moderator **Mahmoud Nady**, CCT



Amira Ayoub, World Green Building Council

using the example of how caddisfly larvae engineer their homes from local materials. She emphasized that changing mindsets through raising awareness is key for generative conversations on biomimicry for urban infrastructure.

Mohammed Al-Surf, Jacobs, stressed that NbS should be cost-effective in developing infrastructure that can address the urban heat island effect and improve human health and well-being.

Katja Eisbrenner, Guidehouse, highlighted ways to promote cooling in urban development, including by using natural refrigerants, such as propane, which have a lower global warming potential, using white colors to reflect the sun, and constructing wind corridors in cities to reduce energy demands.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed the importance of childhood education on protecting nature in the MENA region and awareness of NbS among construction sector contractors.

In a third panel on the nexus of NbS and sustainable transport, moderated by Jamila El Mir, CCT, Tibi emphasized that bringing more nature into cities can provide them with all the services nature delivers outside cities, such as preventing flooding and providing clean water. Eltinay added that NbS protect and restore ecosystems and opposed building infrastructure in the “same old ways.”

Tibi said transport must be part of strategic whole-city planning, connecting different areas and layers of users, including landscape, utilities, and infrastructure. He urged focusing on the few people who are actively interested in influencing action. He added that regulations can help change mindsets away from a focus on purely commercial “commodification of property” toward acknowledgement of cities’ values for all people.

Eltinay stressed: mapping and engaging key stakeholders to develop actionable projects; integrating biodiversity into legislation; and reporting on progress in the new ICLEI, the Nature Conservancy and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) data platform, [CitiesWithNature](#).

Ayoub said a systemic mindset change requires unlearning and relearning, noting that the ability to admit failure and learn from it is a barrier in MENA. She also called for making a business case for nature as a natural resource impacting human wellbeing.



Moderator **Matthew McCabe**, Director, Climate and Livability Initiative, and KAUST Professor

Thematic Track 3: Land, Ocean, Food, and Water

The Impacts of Climate Change in the MENA Region: On Monday, October 9, a panel discussion under Track 3 addressed the biophysical and socioeconomic impacts of climate change in the MENA region, alongside the need to focus on climate adaptation beyond mitigation. Discussions also noted the roles of data access and sharing, and examples of innovative technologies for food production in a changing climate were shared.

Moderator Matthew McCabe, Director, Climate and Livability Initiative, and Professor, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), invited Ibrahim Hoteit, Director, Aramco-KAUST Climate Change Research Center, to describe the state of affairs and future trends predicted for climate change in the region.

Hoteit reported that extreme weather events are already increasing in frequency and severity in MENA countries. He then described short-, medium-, and long-term forecasting models for the region, which predict land and sea temperatures rising at faster rates than the global average. He warned that the region may reach a greater than 5°C temperature increase by the end of the century.

Carol Chouchani Cherfane, Director, Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies, ESCWA, underscored that adaptation should be the priority for the region. She then emphasized the importance of taking into account a country’s adaptive capacity for climate change resilience, as this differentially impacts a country’s ability to recover from the same extreme weather event. Cherfane outlined the challenges of ensuring “climate-proof” investments and policy decisions, and urged more attention on identifying and supporting the most vulnerable communities and regions.

Jumaan Al-Qahtani, CEO, Gulf Cooperation Council-Regional Sand and Dust Storms Warning Advisory and Assessment Center, presented on the Center’s ongoing work to enhance climate observation and models, noting that intra- and interregional collaboration is important for continuing to improve and strengthen these mechanisms. Al-Qahtani stressed that although the region has recently experienced fewer dust and sandstorms, these events have been more intense, leading to an increased concentration of dust in the region.

Aly Abousabaa, Director General, International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, noted that increased temperatures are predicted to have severe consequences on food security within the region and beyond. He shared case studies on improving the resilience of food production systems, including using genetic resources for climate resilient, water-efficient, and affordable food production. He also stressed the importance of increasing research organizations’ capacity to explain the value and impact of their work and innovations in economic terms.

Tarek Alkhoury, Regional Coordinator, Climate Change, UNEP, underscored that coherent adaptation planning is key, recalling that the IPCC’s [Sixth Assessment Report](#) (AR6) indicates most adaptation responses are fragmented and sector specific. He reported ongoing partnerships and initiatives supporting countries across governance levels in facilitating adaptation strategies, calling for more inclusive and solid NAPs. Alkhoury also noted that adaptation does not currently hold the same appeal to investors as mitigation, as the former requires longer-term investment and the latter is a shorter-term “win,” both in terms of reducing emissions and earning revenue.

Cassie Flynn, Global Director, Climate Change, UNDP, noted the importance of promoting and funding climate solutions that are well-adapted for impacted communities, encouraging continued discussions on determining the components that make up effective adaptation. She said that adaptation today will look different from adaptation 20 years from now. Flynn also emphasized that policies generated now directly influence policies in the future, saying policymakers’ discussions must be guided by on-the-ground experience and science. Flynn highlighted opportunities to strengthen the third round of NDCs and put adaptation at the heart of every NDC to protect current and future livelihoods.

MENA Strategic Initiatives to Adapt to Climate Change and Build Long-Term Resilience: Andrei Marcu, Founder and Executive Director, European Roundtable on Climate Change and Sustainable Transition, moderated this session on Tuesday, 10 October.

Shahira Wahbi, Chief, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, LAS, underlined the need for viable capacity building in the region, guided by a strategy for suitable resource allocation.

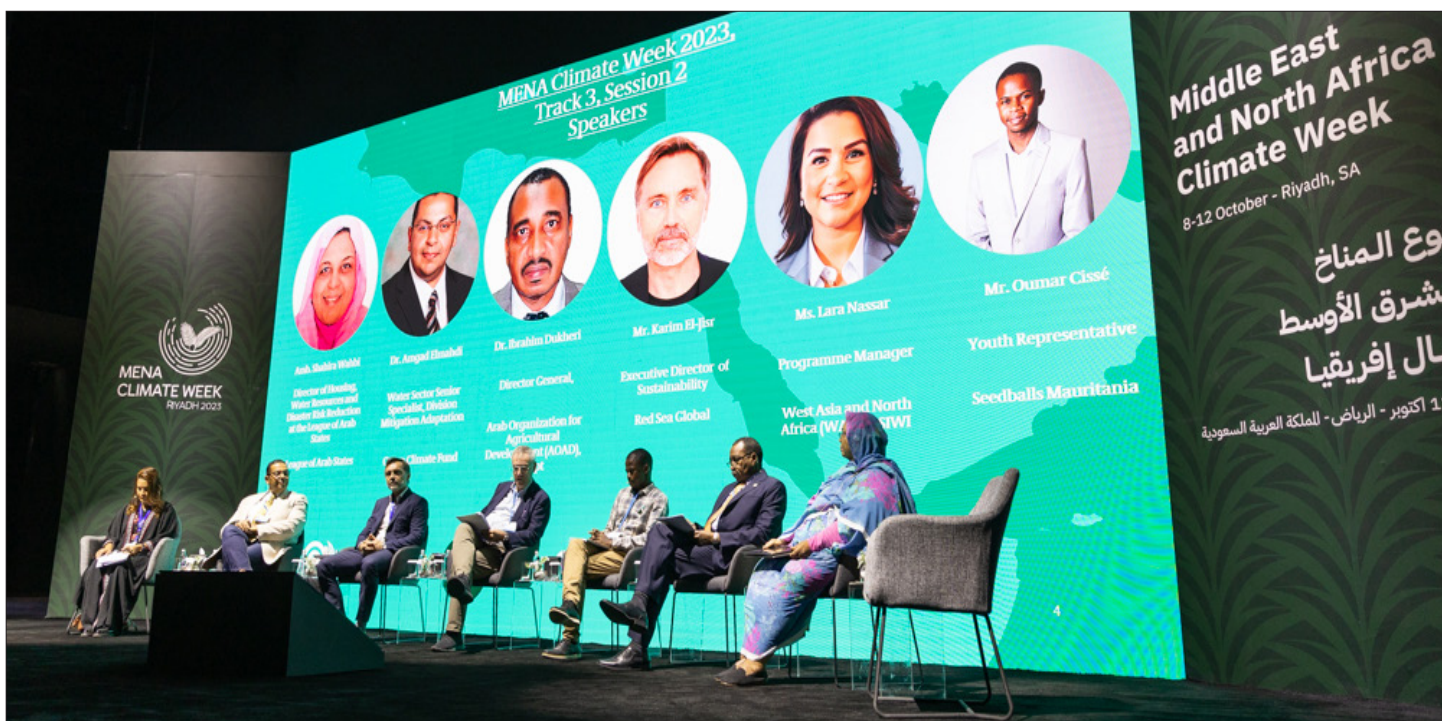
Ibrahim El-Dukheri, Director General, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, outlined the region’s agricultural sector’s vulnerabilities, requiring enhanced technology, financing, and capacity-building along the entire value chain.

Oumar Cissé, Youth Representative, Seedballs Mauritania, noted difficulties in garnering institutional and governmental support and called for inclusiveness strategies for meaningful youth integration in all climate work.

Karim El-Jisr, Executive Director, Sustainability Performance and Accreditation, Red Sea Global, highlighted examples of sustainable energy, food production, and mangrove restoration underway to facilitate and develop tourism destinations along the Red Sea, stressing public-private partnerships for land concessions to rehabilitate ecosystems.

Amgad Elmahdi, Water Sector Lead, GCF, outlined GCF programmes, emphasizing that the quality of finance will be key to meeting targets and generating co-benefits.

Lara Nassar, Stockholm International Water Institute, noted the MENA region’s poor record with finance and capacity building in relation to climate change and water scarcity. She provided examples of participatory stakeholder engagement, including a risk assessment in Yemen to identify climate hazards.



Panelists in Track 3 discussed shared experiences on MENA strategic initiatives to adapt to climate change and build long-term resilience.



Abdulaziz Alshaibani, Deputy Minister for Water Affairs, Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture, Saudi Arabia

Systems Innovations in the Water Sector: During this Tuesday session, panelists shared national and regional experiences and institutional insight on opportunities for strengthening water security in the region.

Abdulaziz Alshaibani, Deputy Minister for Water, Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture, Saudi Arabia, presented on the Saudi water sector, stressing the fundamental human right to water access. He called for continued collaboration in the region on water policies for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Ziad Khayat, ESCWA, noted that groundwater depletion rates in the MENA region have more than doubled in less than 20 years, lamenting that the lack of finance hinders water security.

Oday Haddawee, Ministry of Environment, Iraq, highlighted desalination, irrigation efficiency, and water retention for wildlife as sustainable options for water scarcity.

Belal Shqarin, Director, Climate Change, Ministry of Environment, Jordan, noted Jordan's pioneering reuse of treated wastewater, saying projects such as roof-water harvesting and agricultural field schools are increasing agricultural production while minimizing energy consumption in transporting and treating water.

Tarik Hassan, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), explaining that water scarcity often results in community displacement, said crucial early warning systems for droughts are being employed.

Ihab Jnad, Director, Water Resources Department, Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands, urged improving irrigation management with instruments that facilitate cost reduction and water efficiency. He noted the efficacy of traditional methods including rainwater harvesting and community-led water management.

Muhammad Saqib Nawaz, KAUST, highlighted the potential of integrating wastewater into the region's water management strategies and the potential for MENA to employ several methods from other regions.

Raya Makawi, Regional Leader, Sustainability, 3M, noted 3M has integrated the SDGs and climate-related goals in its business strategy, including on reducing water use in their manufacturing plants.

Anna Katharina Lehmann-USchner, ESCWA, emphasized that water-associated benefits are often undervalued, calling for mainstreaming interlinkages across the policy cycle and mobilizing climate finance for the water sector.

Systems Innovations and the Nexus of Water-Land-Food: This session was moderated by Theresa Wong, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), on Wednesday, 11 October.

Kishan Khoday, UNDP, presented initiatives in the region to support capacity building and mobilize public and blended finance for stronger NAPs, noting these have a role as a policy platform to channel investment. Khoday also emphasized the utility and long-term benefits of integrating land and ecosystem restoration into community recovery from humanitarian crises.

Daouda Ndiaye, Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), outlined the accelerator role of research and development, noting successes in the region including the [Reverse Linkage](#) mechanism, a South-South triangular technology-transfer initiative developed by the IsDB, and the [Tadamon](#) partnership with UNDP. Ndiaye called for integrating environmental and social safeguards in interventions to prevent negative externalities and deliver climate co-benefits.

Mohammed Qurban, Executive Chairman, National Center for Wildlife, Saudi Arabia, described how his organization monitors impacts using early warning systems and is currently rehabilitating habitats such as coral reefs in marine protected areas. He stressed that monitoring and rehabilitation of marine protected areas will be crucial for residents of the future city of Neom, which is to be constructed along the Red Sea, and for tourism destinations being operated by Red Sea Global.

Mia Fant, Associate Director, Environmental Assessment, Red Sea Global, described her company as having a mandate in "luxury tourism that makes a positive impact on the environment, drives economic growth, and uplifts communities in the region." She stressed that "biodiversity value is core to what we offer to our future visitors," highlighting immersive excursions to "pristine landscapes" and associated economic development, including luxury hotels, residential units, and a new international airport. She noted that integrated carbon and natural



Mia Fant, Associate Director, Environmental Assessment, Red Sea Global

capital accounting aids in quantitatively capturing the value of environmental and cultural assets, while showcasing these same assets to future visitors in achieving a net-zero carbon emissions goal and a 30% net gain of conservation benefits by 2040.

Jaspreet Stamm, Crop Trust, described gene banks as holding plant material that is critical for maintaining crop diversity and food systems resilience. She stressed that innovative financing mechanisms need not be new, but can focus on what works well for global common goods such as food crops. She underscored the positive potential of endowment funding, noting that although development financing is typically outcome- or results-based, perpetual sources of funding are required for global common goods, which require long-term, stable, and operational financing. She concluded by underscoring that “we should not be financing what is most easily investable.”

Noting that “sustainable finance is a minority of global finance,” Jérôme Ponrouch, Regional Head, Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility, BNP Paribas, stated that “we need to make a market out of scientific progress” to develop key climate resilience innovations that can enhance private sector ESG portfolios. He stressed that the resilience of climate innovations “must translate into companies making sense of it.” He gave several examples, including how financing desalination facilities in the UAE also generates new assets in terms of marketable social and environmental benefits.

Collaborating Around Common Resources to Scale up Adaptation and Resilience: Rafeef Abdel Razek, World Bank, moderated this Track 3 session on Thursday, 12 October.

In keynote remarks, Osama Faqeeha, Deputy Minister for Environment, Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture, Saudi Arabia, emphasized the interlinkages between water, food, land, and the Ocean. He stressed that one challenge cannot be tackled fully without considering these synergies and addressing all challenges, adding that climate change impacts in these sectors have potential spillover effects on others, including healthcare.

In ensuing discussion, Faqeeha noted the role of finance as an enabler for solutions. He explained that more work needs to be done to establish business models for enabling financial flows that will result in “net-positive” financial outcomes for funders while

also achieving economic, environmental, and social objectives. He also stressed the need to improve existing supply chains and reduce losses within them, highlighting that current losses in water, food, or energy supply chains are also financial losses.

Margaret Jones Williams, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP, underlined the need for adaptation across water, land, and agricultural systems, to reduce the impact of climate-related hazards. She stressed integration of disaster risk reduction (DRR) in policy and governance to ensure housing and infrastructure development is placed, zoned, and governed appropriately. She reported on UNDP’s [Climate Promise](#), which supports countries in developing and implementing strong and country-context-relevant NDCs. She also urged support for science-based, modernized DRR interventions and said the MENA region is leading the charge in digitization.

Mahamadou Tounkara, Regional Director, Global Green Growth Institute, emphasized the need to bridge the finance gap between investors and project developers. Underscoring the importance of collaboration, public-private partnerships, and non-party stakeholder inclusion, he explained that decentralized institutions and stakeholder groups must be integrated into climate planning throughout the design and planning stages. He said this can ensure sustainable solutions and facilitate proactive action on disaster preparedness. Tounkara also highlighted the benefits of debt-for-nature swaps, saying the pipeline for these falls under climate finance mechanisms and are a “win-win,” where money is invested back into the country.

Nuran Ashraf Atef, Africa and Middle East Regional Lead, UNEP, lamented the lack of clarity on how financial institutions can leverage climate adaptation. He stressed the need to change the narrative by quantifying the costs of loss and damage instead of restricting the focus to a return on investment. As an example, she said financial institutions can invest USD 800 million on early warning systems and present the return as a “savings of USD 30 billion in recovery costs and saved lives.” She said banks identifying climate change as a key impact area often have climate adaptation financing available, but may not be able to identify it, since “it is not the main purpose of the projects they are financing.”



Osama Faqeeha, Deputy Minister for Environment, Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture, Saudi Arabia



Nuran Ashraf Atef, UNEP

Bradley Hiller, Lead Climate Change Specialist, IsDB, highlighted the bank’s bespoke [Reverse Linkage](#) mechanism, in which countries with specific knowledge on climate adaptation activities can exchange knowledge and experience with others to upscale benefits, including on technology for adaptation and on early warning systems. He also described innovative financing mechanisms that extend climate insurance options to those rural communities most vulnerable to climate shocks.

Aya Salah, Resilience and Climate, World Food Programme (WFP), stressed the need for emergency climate responses to financing, including restructuring finance’s timing to be more shock responsive. On challenges to facilitating this, she said “we need data to know what to do and data to prove what we have done.” She stressed reframing efficiency in adaptation and resilience extends beyond cost-saving to sustainability and human well being.

In concluding remarks, Faqeeha stressed that climate and biodiversity cannot be addressed in isolation and that “everyone should be more mindful of their footprints.” Jones Williams emphasized the role of NbS and “the need to financially value ecosystem services” to convince decision makers to protect them. Ashraf Atef stressed that impact investors and philanthropists sometimes have a higher risk appetite than banks, which can help de-risk climate adaptation. Hiller reiterated a remark heard during MENACW: “It’s not biodiversity and nature that needs finance, but finance that needs biodiversity and nature.” Tounkara emphasized the importance of marketing climate adaptation solutions to the private sector as “making business sense.”

Thematic Track 4: Societies, Health, Livelihoods, and Economies

Managing Cascading Risks – Integrating Extreme Heat Resilience into Just Transition Planning in the MENA Region:

Mariam Allam, UNFCCC Adaptation Committee Co-Chair, moderated this first session under Track 4 on Monday, 9 October.

Jennifer Austin, Director, Strategy and Policy, CCT, noting that resilience-building is insufficiently funded, highlighted the business case for taking a holistic and inclusive approach to investment to reduce the impacts of climate change in health, water, and food availability.

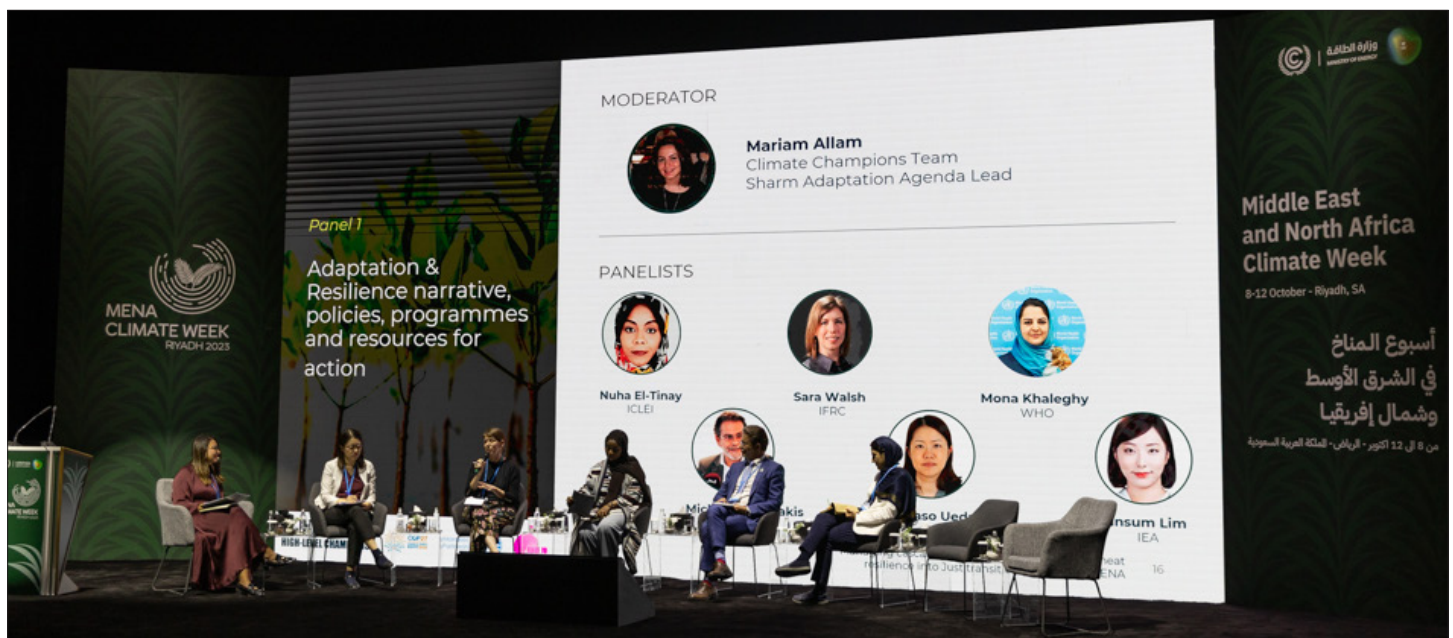
Princess Mashael AlShalan, Co-Founder, AEON Collective, stressing that those most impacted by climate change are often those with the least responsibility, mentioned that MENACW is an opportunity for inclusive conversations on addressing climate change. She emphasized the importance of having “home-grown science” in addressing these problems.

Allam introduced the Sharm El-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda, outlining its role as the action arm of the [Global Goal on Adaptation](#) to address adaptation systemically, alongside its objective to integrate adaptation at all scales by convening actors and sectors not traditionally involved in climate finance.

Richard Klein, Senior Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute, mentioned the cross-boundary and cascading effects of climate risks. He emphasized the need to recognize the global dimension of adaptation strategies in guaranteeing a just transition, to ensure that adaptation in one country does not lead to redistributed or increased risk in another.

In a panel on adaptation and resilience narratives, policies, and resources for action, Nuha Eltinay, Senior Urban Resilience and Climate Adaptation Officer, ICLEI, outlined the impacts of increasing heat levels on cities and urban planning. She noted ICLEI’s work using qualitative and quantitative experience-based data to fill gaps in local-level data availability and to identify and trace the most vulnerable communities. Eltinay underscored the importance of continued monitoring to reduce maladaptation and strengthen climate risk understanding and resilience.

Sara Walsh, Thematic Lead, Climate Resilience, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), discussed opportunities for building substantive plans, policies,



Panelists in Track 4 discussed managing cascading risks and integrating extreme heat resilience into just transition planning in the MENA region.

and frameworks. She noted challenges persist in data gaps, risk mapping, and finance.

Masako Ueda, Regional Migration, Environment and Climate Change Specialist International Organization for Migration (IOM), noted the high proportion of international migrant workers present in the MENA region, stressing their vulnerability to climate change and disaster-related impacts. She noted migrants' contribution to economies and highlighted their precarious conditions, which are exacerbated by climate change, including limited access to water and shelter.

Michael Kandarakis, International Labour Organization (ILO) Project Office for the State of Qatar, noted that climate change not only creates social and geographical situations that displace workers but also changes the world of work, pointing to the disappearance of entire sectors such as the coal sector. Kandarakis stressed this creates the need to reeducate workers in new models of work and contributes to displacement.

Mona Khaleghy Rad, World Health Organization (WHO), spoke about the importance of creating short-term planning frameworks to prepare and respond to heatwaves. She highlighted that negative health effects from heat can be mitigated by having good alert systems and appropriate urban planning, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Jinsun Lim, Energy and Environmental Policy Analyst, IEA, joining virtually, said the MENA region is expected to experience higher temperatures than the world average, which would pose a double challenge to energy supply and demand. She noted increased temperatures would trigger high energy demand in the summer and stressed the need for power plants to reduce their dependence on fresh water for cooling.

Helmy Abouleish, CEO, SEKEM Initiative, presented success stories on combining adaptation and mitigation actions for improving development, livelihoods, and transitioning to regenerative agriculture in Egypt. He noted that the multiple benefits arising from these initiatives include carbon storage and methane emission avoidance, as well as equitable supply chain revenues and ecosystem protection.

Omar Farook, Specialist in Early Action and Climate Services WFP, stated that the traditional food aid system is changing, and the WFP strategy is also changing in order to incorporate climate resilience and adaptation.

Nouhad Awwad, Greenpeace MENA, presented the [Ummah for Earth](#) campaign, a climate movement within Muslim communities vulnerable to climate change. She urged agency in climate action, sharing examples of community-led efforts to successfully implement suitable climate adaptation strategies.

Whole-of-society Approaches to Transformation: Advancing Climate Education through the Greening Education Partnership (GEP): This event, the first of two under Track 4 on Tuesday, 10 October, was moderated by Farida Aboudan, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Ghaya Saad Al Ahabbi, UAE Youth Advocate, UNICEF, highlighted the importance of engaging with youth and children on the climate development agenda.



Jumana Haj-Ahmad, Deputy Representative to the Gulf Area, UNICEF

Abdul Moneim bin Abdul Salam Al-Hayani, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia, spoke on integrating climate change into schools, extracurricular, undergraduate, and post-graduate education.

Salah Khaled, Regional Director, UNESCO, presented projects his office supports within the region, stressing the need for youth and children to acquire climate education and skills.

Eltayeb Adam, Representative to the Gulf Area, UNICEF, noted 82 million children in the MENA region are facing severe climate challenges leading to displacement and exploitation, and highlighted the importance of providing youth and children with necessary skills to face the challenges related to climate change.

Jumana Haj-Ahmad, Deputy Representative to the Gulf Area, UNICEF, moderated a subsequent 'spotlight' panel session in which Bassam Saleh, UNICEF, presented the [Learning Bridges](#) programme implemented in Jordan: a cross-curriculum and interdisciplinary approach to develop skills and foster environmental awareness in students and provide guidance to educators.

Badr Al Harthy, Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, outlined his country's [Green Schools](#) initiative in partnership with UNESCO, noting it focuses on achieving Target 7 of SDG 4 (quality education), which aims to "ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development" by 2030.



Abdul Moneim bin Abdul Salam Al-Hayani, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia

Issa Saleh Al-Hammadi, Director, Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, presented outcomes from a study on integrating climate education in all Arabic language courses, pointing to benefits of linking green education and regional identities.

Abdulla Al Abdulla, Executive Director, Reach Out To Asia – Education Above All, noted that climate education is an effective instrument in building the skills youth will need.

Circular Carbon Economy Solutions and Policies for Resilient Societies and Sustainable Economies: This Tuesday session was moderated by Rafeef Abdel Razek, Sustainable Development Program Lead, World Bank.

Joseph McMonigle, Secretary General, International Energy Forum, stressed opportunities for private sector investment in carbon capture and removal, technology development and scaling, and development of a new circular economy.

Tarek Alkhoury, Regional Coordinator, Climate Change, UNEP, noted that MENA can address mitigation while prioritizing adaptation, and applying a circular economy can preserve financial resources.

Belal Shqarin, Director, Climate Change, Ministry of Environment, Jordan, said governments should start to develop tools and regulatory frameworks to help investments in circular economy.

Eyad Aljubran, General Director for Climate Negotiations, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia, promoting the concept of circular economy, said the only way to reach our ambitions is by utilizing all solutions at our disposal.

Rehan Baig, Chief Corporate Affairs, Strategy and Sustainability, ACWA Power, highlighting technological advancements in Saudi Arabia, called for a “special ecosystem” to enable partnerships between the private sector and the government.

Cosmin Ghita, CEO, Nuclearelectrica, noted conversion of oil fields to implement carbon sequestration and ammonia production. He lamented the lack of interest in nuclear energy to achieve the energy transition.

Arshi Zaveri, CEO, Oxygenate, noted that the Paris Agreement goals “are 100% achievable” if bamboo-sourced technologies are

used, underscoring that “anything that the human eye can see can be made from bamboo.”

Zoë Knight, Group Head, Sustainable Finance and Climate Change, HSBC, said the financial system can act as a “super-connector” linking different actors working on climate change.

Cornelia Meyer, Chairman and Chief Economist, LBV Asset Management, urged creating frameworks to administer resources for the growing populations in developing countries.

In subsequent discussion, the panelists noted, *inter alia*, the need: to create an enabling environment and framework to accelerate private sector involvement; for governments to provide signals for the market to follow and “catch up” with climate science; and for carbon markets to facilitate private sector investments.

Whole-of-Society Approaches to Transformation: Non-Party Stakeholders’ Role in Implementing NDCs in the MENA Region: This session on Wednesday, 11 October, was moderated by Monica Echevoyen, UNFCCC Secretariat.

Prince Mishari Al-Saud, Chairman and Co-Founder, Faseel, outlined Saudi Arabia’s role in spurring transformative action toward the Paris Agreement goals in the region, including the [Saudi Green Initiative](#) and [Middle East Green Initiative](#). He emphasized the need for a whole-of-society approach, noting the role of fostering a sense of ownership in bringing all stakeholders onboard.

James Grabert, Mitigation Director, UNFCCC, highlighted outcomes from the [Synthesis Report of the technical dialogue of the first Global Stocktake](#), noting the need for party and non-party stakeholders to work together in developing and implementing the next generation of NDCs.

Al-Saud said a major challenge for youth-led non-profit organizations such as Faseel is their perceived lack of credibility. He shared successes, including in raising community awareness through bottom-up approaches for national government-level engagement and impact, and in establishing environment- and climate-related clubs in universities to help build a non-party stakeholder network in Saudi Arabia.

Haya Al Aseer, Youth Representative, Global Council on SDG 13 (climate Action), shared her experience being



Moderator **Rafeef Abdel Razek**, Sustainable Development Program Lead, World Bank



Haya Al Aseer, Youth Representative, Global Council on SDG 13 (climate Action)



León Díaz-Bone, Chief, Secretary General's Office, ICLEI

involved in the development of the UAE's NDC, lamenting the lack of institutionalized platforms that facilitate meaningful consideration of youth contributions.

León Díaz-Bone, Chief, Secretary General's Office, ICLEI, underscored the key role of local and municipal authorities in direct implementation, emphasizing that the benefits of operating at this level include having direct access to on-the-ground realities for citizens, and the ability to test initiatives through pilot projects before scaling up.

Moderated by Mary Awad Menassa, UNFCCC-WGEO RCC, a second panel focused on guidance for non-party stakeholders in implementing NDCs.

Jasmin Blessing, Gender Specialist, Climate Change and NDC Implementation, UNDP, shared good practices from the [Climate Promise](#) programme, which supports countries in implementing their NDCs. She noted that 95% of countries planning to submit their NDCs between 2021-2023 have included issues related to women's empowerment.

Jennifer Austin, Director, Strategy and Policy, CCT, reflecting on why businesses should care about NDCs, said it provides a real opportunity to be informed on their country's strategy and direction for planning business activities. She noted the wealth of resources available for non-party stakeholders to act on climate change.

Harika Masud, Senior Social Development Specialist, World Bank, noted the region's system-wide transformations and long-term pathways for a low-carbon, resilient, inclusive, and peaceful future require whole-of-society engagement. She recommended "taking a serious look" at good practices in the MENA region and applying similar principles and blueprints to boost non-party stakeholder action.

Lea Ranalder, UN-Habitat, reflecting on why inclusion of urban aspects in NDCs is needed, said having a relevant hook that many stakeholders can use to hold their governments accountable is useful. She underscored that only 10% of financial assistance reaches local governments, and called for enhancing the flow of support to cities.

Rafeef Abdel Razek, Sustainable Development for the GCC and Urban Development Specialist, World Bank, closed the meeting noting: achievement of a clear blueprint on where we



Moderator Masako Ueda, IOM

need to go, which can be employed going forward; the need to continue the discussion at the national and sub-national levels and institutionalize this dialogue; and the importance of stakeholder mapping as a tool to involve them in climate decision making.

Addressing Health Impacts of Climate Change on Vulnerable Segments of Society with a Focus on Migrants and Other Mobile Populations in the MENA Region: On Thursday, October 12, Masako Ueda, Regional Migration, Environment and Climate Change Specialist, IOM Regional Office in Cairo, moderated a session on the health impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable segments of society. It specifically focused on migrants in the MENA region. She stressed that the climate change-human health-human mobility nexus requires greater attention.

Keynote remarks were made in two video messages. Othman Belbeisi, Regional Director, IOM, said that health impacts are not equally distributed, noting links to gender, disability, age, and migration status. Belbeisi reported ongoing work under the [Global Compact for Migration](#) and urged collaborative partnerships for achieving climate- and sustainable development-related goals.

Ahmed Al-Mandhari, Regional Director, WHO, underlined the multiple interlinked dimensions of climate change impacts on health, including: compromised water, land, and food resources; increased incidence of chronic diseases; and spread of infectious diseases. He also said climate change has significantly reduced the Occupied Palestinian Territories' groundwater volume, noting this drives up the cost of agricultural products. He reported the WHO's estimate that 70% of Palestinian farmers have had to abandon their lands due to this water resource scarcity and cost.

In a joint presentation on Kuwait's vulnerability and adaptation assessment, Mohammad AlSeaidan, Ministry of Health, Kuwait, highlighted desertification and urban heat islands as potential climate change effects with associated health impacts, including: airway diseases and allergens; food- and water-borne diseases; and mental illness and stress.

Ali Zankawi, Ministry of Health, Kuwait, outlined processes in implementing the vulnerability and adaptation assessment, noting that gaps and challenges include: participants' time constraints; minimal prior experience; unexpected delays in cross-sectoral

work; lack of data availability and format; authorization process delays; and loss of data prior to 1990 due to war.

Michela Martini, Head, Migration and Health Unit, IOM, moderated an ensuing panel discussion on health effects on migrants, refugees, and workers, noting 30 million people are dying annually from preventable direct or indirect effects of climate change, with linkages between health, climate change, and human migration. Pointing to the 60 million international economic migrants in the MENA region, she said the act and method of migration and migrants' experience in their destination country all contribute to vulnerability.

Michael Kandarakis, ILO, reported on recent ILO climate action, including the [2022 International Labour Conference Resolution](#) that a safe and healthy working environment is a fundamental right. The resolution requires all ILO Member States to realize this right, incorporate it into national frameworks, and report on progress every year. He noted the multidimensional risks climate change poses to occupational safety and health, including from heat stress, extreme weather events, and infectious diseases.

William Gois, Regional Coordinator, Migrant Forum in Asia, said more than half of MENA's population are migrant workers, emphasizing that migration is a climate adaptation strategy for many people. He said a climate change loss and damage assessment "should look at root causes of why people move" and bring a "human" element to resilience and adaptation. He stressed "fantastic opportunities to learn from this region at the global level" and questioned whether the mental health of migrant workers is not also a fundamental aspect of climate change resilience and adaptation.

Hosam Faysal, Regional Head, Health, Disasters, Climate, and Crises Unit, IFRC, stressed that deaths along migration routes through MENA in 2023 are the highest since 2017, noting that migrants attempt the "deadly crossing" of the Mediterranean Sea due to threats caused by climate change.

Ahmed Owda, UNFCCC Youth NGOs (YOUNGO) Health Working Group, described his personal experience as a Palestinian refugee, stressing the importance of removing barriers to universal healthcare access for refugees and migrants. He lamented how neither the [1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#) nor the Paris Agreement have a legal framework committing Member States to protect climate refugees. He called for negotiations on refugee rights related to climate security at COP 28.

Closing Plenary

Report Back on Outcomes from the Thematic Track

Discussions: During the Thursday closing plenary, Lindita Xhaferi-Salih, UNFCCC, presented a summary of outcomes from Tracks 1 (Energy Systems and Industry) and 2 (Cities, Urban and Rural Settlements, Infrastructure, and Transport).

On Track 1, she highlighted that the energy transition should align with NDCs, noting the region's significant potential for: renewable energies; upscaling technologies for carbon capture and use; and leadership in these technologies.

On Track 2, she highlighted, *inter alia*, that: cities play a major role for carbon resilient infrastructure; large cities tend to attract more finance; more engagement is needed for smaller cities; and



Lindita Xhaferi-Salih, UNFCCC

resilient infrastructure and adaptive capacity for climate change impacts are crucial, with NAPs already providing cities with initial guidelines.

Alejandro Kilpatrick, Climate Finance and Capacity Building Team Leader, UNFCCC, reported key messages and outcomes from thematic Tracks 3 (Land, Oceans, Food, and Water) and 4 (Societies, Health, Livelihoods, and Economies). Under Track 3, he noted discussions underscoring water as the priority for the MENA region, which is home to 14 of the world's 20 most water insecure countries. Kilpatrick outlined the many innovative technologies and solutions shared throughout the week, highlighting the interconnected nature of food and water security and the need for additional policy and regulatory support in these areas.

Kilpatrick reported that Track 4 events: addressed the need for context-relevant climate solutions; shared initiatives to integrate climate learning in education; and discussed methods to strengthen meaningful participation of non-party stakeholders at all NDC levels and stages. He noted the identification of research and development as essential tools for: achieving progress towards sectoral transitions; attracting private sector investment; and creating culturally informed solutions, tailored to the MENA context, that will strengthen NDCs. Finally, he underlined the importance of anticipatory approaches regarding heatwaves.

Closing Ceremony: The closing ceremony was moderated by James Grabert, Mitigation Director, UNFCCC, on Thursday afternoon. Kishan Khoday, UNDP, highlighted multiple actions



Kishan Khoday, Nature, Climate and Energy/MENA, UNDP

identified during MENACW to de-risk climate change and build into the Global Stocktake, including:

- synchronizing DRR and climate change adaptation;
- strengthening the science-policy interface with interventions reaching those most in need;
- ensuring climate finance is geared towards adaptation, including through low-cost insurance mechanisms and blended finance for fragile and vulnerable conflict regions in MENA; and
- showcasing examples of community-driven energy efficiency, such as women in Palestine and Yemen improving energy security with solar power.

Ayman Eltalouny, UNEP, commended the hosts of MENACW, expressing gratitude for the attention given it by Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman al Saud, Saudi Minister of Energy, and commending the engagement and leadership of Saudi youth. Stressing mitigation of both methane and CO₂ emissions, he urged implementation of commitments, including the [Global Methane Pledge](#), and called for an integrated approach across supply chains. He applauded MENA's energy efficiency programmes, noting conflicts, extreme conditions, or climate disasters affecting many countries, and urging that no individual or sector be left behind.

Sonya Sampson, Climate Change Specialist, World Bank, highlighted clear messages from this meeting, including: the world is not moving fast enough to avert the climate crisis; we know additional finance is needed to create enabling environments for the private sector to engage; and extreme temperatures could become the norm in the MENA region, with devastating effects. She said green hydrogen, carbon capture, and methane reduction are examples of steps that will grow into “real change for a livable planet” in the future, but the scale of effort needed is greater than what we are doing, and everyone must do more.

Grabert said MENACW has shown that working together is possible, emphasizing that regional collaboration is a powerful driver of global progress.

Khalid Almeheid, Chief Climate Negotiator, Saudi Arabia, stated five messages to carry to COP 28 from MENACW, calling for unity and inclusion and leaving no one behind.

- The science is clear that greenhouse gas emission reductions, abatement, and removal are needed before 2030 and that “hydrocarbons will remain in the energy mix for decades to come.”
- Inclusion of all sectors, including industry perspectives, “will bring us closer to our mission to confront the challenges of climate change by addressing emissions head on.”
- The transition must be just and equitable, taking into account regional priorities and circumstances of all regions, respecting CBDR and respective capabilities.
- Mitigation and adaptation must go together to ensure the protection of populations most vulnerable to climate change.
- Finance and investment are key enablers in achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement, requiring flexible financial tools for the private sector, especially for regions like MENA, which are on the frontlines of climate change and at the center of the global energy sector.



Khalid Almeheid, Chief Climate Negotiator, Saudi Arabia

Almeheid thanked the UNFCCC Secretariat and all participants for their rich contributions during the week and adjourned the meeting at 4:34 pm.

Upcoming Meetings

Latin America and the Caribbean Climate Week (LACCW) 2023: LACCW 2023 is one of four Regional Climate Weeks held to build momentum ahead of COP 28 in Dubai that will see the conclusion of the first Global Stocktake, which is designed to chart the way forward for fulfilling the Paris Agreement's goals. LACCW 2023 will provide a platform for policymakers, practitioners, businesses, and civil society to exchange climate solutions, and discuss barriers to overcome and opportunities to realize in the LAC region. **dates:** 23-27 October 2023 **location:** Panama City, Panama **www:** unfccc.int/LACCW2023

14th Meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs): The UN Statistical Commission established the IAEG-SDGs to develop an indicator framework to monitor progress on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, and to support its implementation. The meeting will focus on updates from the 2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF 2023) and the SDG Summit. **dates:** 23-25 October 2023 **location:** Copenhagen, Denmark **www:** unstats.un.org/sdgs/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-14/

Pre-COP to the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference (Pre-COP 28): Pre-COP 28 will bring together ministers to prepare for COP 28 by discussing key political aspects of the negotiations and possible solutions to outstanding issues. **dates:** 30-31 October 2023 **location:** Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates **www:** www.cop28.com/en/accelerate-climate-action-at-pre-cop28

Climate Change 2023: Climate Change 2023 is a two-day interactive event that will discuss how to accelerate progress on climate and biodiversity goals. Sessions will explore innovative approaches and collaborative solutions to accelerate the climate transition and the role of NbS in tackling the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and resource scarcity. **dates:** 1-2 November 2023 **location:** London, United Kingdom (hybrid) **www:** www.chathamhouse.org/events/all/conference/climate-change-2023

Asia-Pacific Climate Week (APCW) 2023: APCW 2023 is one of four Regional Climate Weeks held this year to build momentum ahead of COP 28 in Dubai and the conclusion of the first Global Stocktake, which is designed to chart the way for fulfilling the Paris Agreement’s key goals. Along with the other Climate Weeks, APCW 2023 will consider four major systems-based tracks with a view to providing region-focused contributions to inform the Global Stocktake. **dates:** 13-17 November 2023 **location:** Johor Bahru, Malaysia **www:** unfccc.int/APCW2023

28th UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 28): The first Global Stocktake to assess progress made on implementation of the Paris Agreement will conclude at COP 28. The Global Stocktake is a two-year process, initiated every five years, with the aim of assessing the world’s collective progress towards achieving its climate goals. **dates:** 30 November - 12 December 2023 **location:** Dubai, United Arab Emirates **www:** www.cop28.com/en/

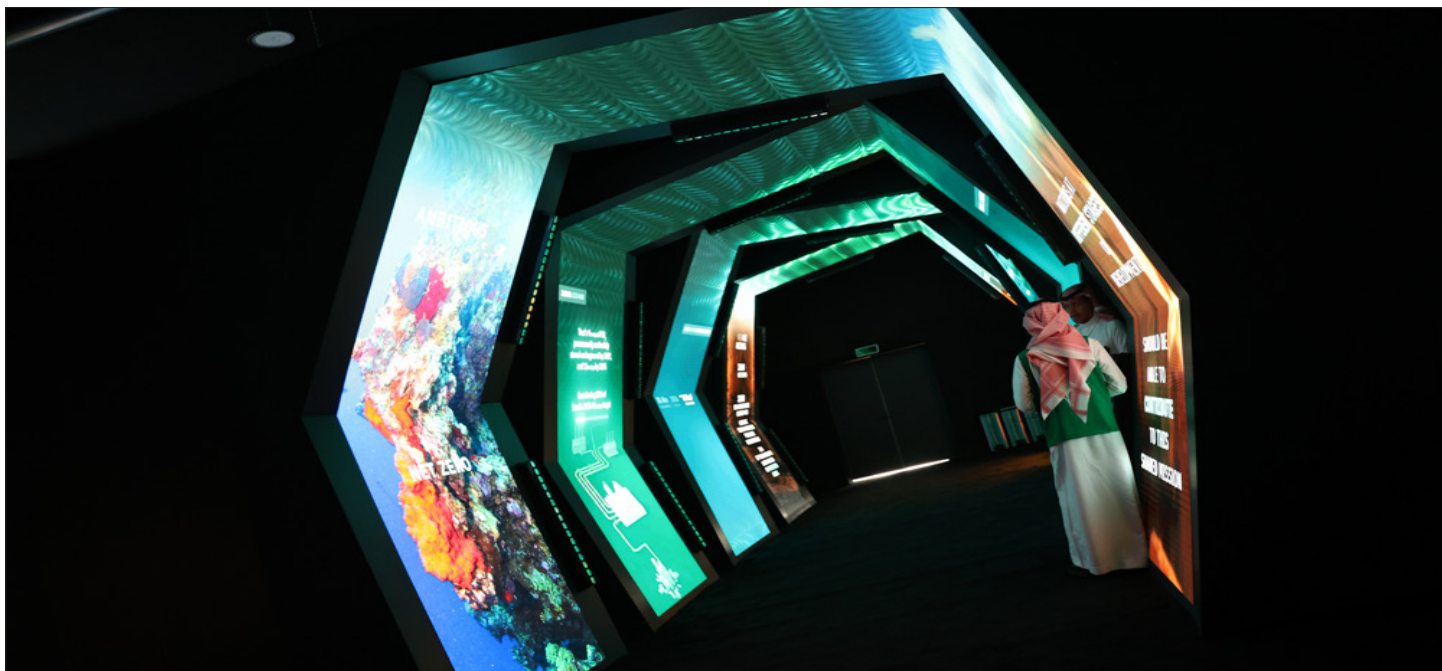
UN Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum) 2024: The ninth annual STI Forum will take place during the 2024 session of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The collaborative STI Forum is convened annually by the ECOSOC President and discusses science, technology, and innovation cooperation around thematic areas for implementation of the SDGs, congregating all relevant stakeholders to actively contribute on their areas of expertise. **dates:** 9-10 May 2024 **location:** New York City, US **www:** sdgs.un.org/tfm/sti-forum

60th Session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies: The 60th sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) are scheduled to take place in June 2024.

dates: 3-13 June 2024 **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** sdg.iisd.org/events/60th-sessions-of-the-unfccc-subsidiary-bodies/
For additional upcoming events, see sdg.iisd.org/

Glossary

CCS	Carbon capture and storage
CCT	Climate Champions Team of the UAE COP 28 Presidency
CCUS	Carbon capture, utilization, and storage
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
COP 28	28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC
ESCWA	UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
ESG	Environmental, social, and governance
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GCOM	Saudi Arabian Greenhouse Gas Crediting and Offsetting Mechanism
IEA	International Energy Agency
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency
LAS	League of Arab States
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MENACW	Middle East and North Africa Climate Week
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution



The exhibition space hosted a variety of displays showing sustainability initiatives within Saudi Arabia.