# Environment & Society

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**Zayed International Foundation for the Environment announces preparations for**

## DICEGAI 2027

## UAE joins global push to halve food waste

## Clean air is a strategic economic priority in the UAE

## WETEX 2026 to drive global investment in future-proof city infrastructure

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# Foreword



**Prof. Mohammed Bin Fahad**
Executive Editor

Every year, the global community marks dozens of observances dedicated to our planet—from World Environment Day to Earth Hour, to dedicated months celebrating our oceans, food systems, forests, and wildlife. These annual milestones serve as vital reminders of our shared responsibility, prompting necessary conversations about conservation, climate action, and biodiversity. While raising awareness is essential, the growing complexity of our ecological crises reminds us that mindful intervention and implementation are critical.

The upcoming 2nd Dubai International Conference & Exhibition on Green Artificial Intelligence (DICEGAI 2027), scheduled for March 24–25, 2027, is the direct response to our focus on actionable, technological solutions.

Artificial Intelligence presents an unparalleled opportunity to address modern environmental challenges, but only if we guide its evolution with intention, ethics, and a profound respect for our planet. For this reason, we are gathering under an ambitious theme: "Human – AI – Nature: A New Social Contract."

In this digital era, why are we still convening academics, environmentalists, researchers, media, and students? The answer lies in the limitations of working in silos. Cooperation, collaboration, and knowledge sharing must extend beyond laboratories and conference rooms to the people who will actually live with these outcomes.

An AI engineer cannot fully grasp the realities of a shifting coastline without the insights of a marine biologist. Likewise, a policymaker cannot draft effective regulations without understanding the capabilities and limitations of machine learning from the researchers building it.

Conferences like DICEGAI 2027 are vital spaces where diverse fields can converge and collaborate. By providing a global platform, we foster the debate, knowledge-sharing, and consensus-building required to move towards sustainable global action

The Zayed International Foundation for the Environment recognizes that true sustainability requires a coalition of voices. When we gather in Dubai in 2027, our primary objective is to facilitate the meaningful, transformative dialogue necessary to forge a new social contract and our roadmap to a resilient future.

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# Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum (1950-2026)

Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the younger brother of the Ruler of Dubai, has died at the age of 76. He was the fourth and youngest son of the late Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, who was the former Vice-President and Ruler of Dubai and the emirate's founder.

Sheikh Ahmed served as Deputy Chairman of Dubai Police and Public Security, Group Chairman of A.R.M. Holding, and President of Al Wasl Sports Club. He also had interests in business, real estate, and sports, including horse racing.

Following his death on September 21, Dubai declared 10 days of official mourning, with flags to be flown at half-mast across the emirate.

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, paid a personal tribute to his younger brother in a message on X.

"You are gone from our sight, Ahmed, but never from our prayers or our hearts," Sheikh Mohammed wrote. He prayed that his brother would be granted a place in Paradise and that his family and loved ones would find patience and solace.

HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, also mourned his uncle, sharing a prayer asking Allah to grant him mercy and forgiveness, honour his resting place and cleanse him of sins "as a white garment is cleansed of stains".

Following the announcement of Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum's passing, messages of condolences from world leaders poured in, offering sympathy and expressing solidarity with the Al Maktoum family during this difficult time

Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum graduated from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the UK before joining Dubai's Central Military Command, later becoming its Commander-in-Chief, according to Al Wasl Sports Club's official website.

He specified the technical design of Jebel Ali Racecourse alongside trainer Dhruba Selvaratnam. The track and grandstand were built in 1990, with the first racing season held in 1991, according to the Emirates Racing Authority.

On the business side, Sheikh Ahmed chaired A.R.M. Holding, a private investment firm whose portfolio spans real estate, hospitality and banking. The company's real estate portfolio includes three main brands: Dubai Real Estate Centre, which manages more than 3,200 residential and commercial units; Huna, a developer combining architecture, culture and commerce; and Hive Coliv, a flexible co-living operator.

Zayed International Foundation for the Environment

# OBITUARY

**With hearts faithful to the will and decree of Almighty Allah, the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment mourns the passing of**



## Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

**The Foundation extends its sincere condolences and sympathy to the Al Maktoum family and loved ones of the deceased.**

The Foundation recalls with deep respect his contributions and service to his nation and community, and prays to Almighty Allah to grant the deceased His boundless mercy and forgiveness, and to grant his family and loved ones patience and solace.

May Allah Almighty rest his soul in eternal peace and grant him a place in Paradise.

Indeed, to Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return.

# Opinion

## From Abu Dhabi to the Baltic Sea: An Emirati-German partnership shaping the future of clean energy in Europe



***Dr. Hamdan Khalifa Al Shaer***
*Vice Chairman of the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment*

Clean energy is one of the key pillars of building a more sustainable and secure global economy. Investments in this sector are no longer associated only with reducing emissions but have also become an important part of energy security policies and industrial growth, strengthening the competitiveness of countries.

Global investment in clean energy technologies reached approximately USD2.2 trillion in 2026, nearly twice the amount invested in fossil fuels. Renewable energy sources also accounted for 92.5% of the total new electricity-generating capacity added worldwide in 2024, reflecting the rapid transformations in the global energy sector.

This growth is also closely linked to the significant improvement in the economic viability of renewable energy. The average cost of generating electricity from solar photovoltaic energy fell by approximately 90% between 2010 and 2023, while the cost of offshore wind energy declined by around 63% during the same period. In addition to its environmental benefits, renewable energy is now a major economic sector, employing approximately 16.2 million people worldwide in 2023.

At the heart of this global transformation, the UAE has strengthened its international presence in the clean energy sector through investments and partnerships across some of Europe's most important markets. This direction gained further momentum during the state visit of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, to Germany from 9 to 11 September 2026. It was the first state visit by a UAE President to Germany.

The visit included the announcement of a new strategic dialogue between the two countries, as well as the signing of 29 Memoranda of Understanding and agreements between Emirati and German companies, valued at more than 9.35 billion euros. These agreements covered several sectors, including energy, investment, and technology.

The energy sector stands out as one of the most important areas of cooperation between the two countries. Through Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company, Masdar, the UAE has expanded its presence in the European market through partnerships in offshore wind energy, solar power, and electricity storage systems.

During the visit to Germany in September 2026, Masdar signed an MoU with RWE to explore joint participation in future offshore wind projects in Germany, with an indicative investment value exceeding 3 billion euros. Masdar also signed an MoU with the German company Luxcara to explore potential investments in battery energy storage systems, offshore wind energy, and other technologies, with a potential value of more

## The UAE and Germany are building on decades of trusted partnership to advance economic growth and shared prosperity

than 5 billion euros.

However, the UAE's presence in Germany is not limited to future plans. In the Baltic Sea, the Baltic Eagle project has become a practical example of this partnership. The project, developed by Masdar in cooperation with the Spanish company Iberdrola, includes 50 offshore wind turbines with a total capacity of 476 megawatts. It can supply renewable electricity to approximately 475,000 homes and avoid nearly 800,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions each year. The project is valued at approximately 1.6 billion euros and is now fully completed and connected to the electricity grid.

One of the best ways to understand the scale of this project is to imagine dozens of enormous wind turbines standing offshore near the German island of Rügen in the Baltic Sea. These structures are not simply major engineering installations at sea. They form part of a new energy infrastructure that European economies increasingly rely on to diversify electricity sources, reduce emissions, and strengthen the resilience of their energy systems.

Germany also holds an important position within Masdar's broader European expansion. The company's investments in Europe have exceeded USD13 billion, while its European portfolio has reached more than 15.6 gigawatts across several markets, including Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, and countries in Central and Southeastern Europe.

These investments have become even more significant in light of the major changes experienced by European energy markets in recent years. Energy supply security, diversification of energy sources, and grid resilience have become increasingly important in economic and energy policy. In this context, Emirati-German partnerships bring together capital and investment expertise on one side and Germany's strong industrial and technological capabilities on the other. This creates opportunities for projects in offshore wind energy, hydrogen, electricity storage, and energy infrastructure.

The importance of this partnership goes beyond producing additional renewable electricity. It also contributes to building long-term economic relationships, developing new technologies, and strengthening supply chains associated with clean energy. Cooperation between the two countries is also expanding in areas such as renewable energy, hydrogen, energy security, and innovation, creating further opportunities to develop new projects that support the transition toward cleaner energy.

In this way, the UAE's experience in Germany and across Europe demonstrates how sustainability can develop from an environmental objective into a platform for economic investment and technological cooperation. From wind turbines in the Baltic Sea to future energy storage and offshore energy projects, Emirati investment expertise is integrating with German industrial capabilities and helping reshape Europe's energy landscape.

These partnerships also demonstrate how international cooperation can play a practical role in supporting energy security and accelerating the transition toward a lower-carbon economy.

Cover Story

# Zayed International Foundation for the Environment announces preparations for DICEGAI 2027




The Zayed International Foundation for the Environment has announced that preparations are officially underway for the 2nd Dubai International Conference & Exhibition on Green Artificial Intelligence (DICEGAI 2027). Scheduled to take place in Dubai on March 24–25, 2027, the conference will convene academics, environmentalists, researchers, media, sector professionals, educators, and students to examine the role of artificial intelligence in advancing environmental sustainability.

Organised under the theme, "Human – AI – Nature: A New Social Contract," the 2027 conference is dedicated to rethinking the relationship between people, machines, and the environment. As global climate risks, water security issues, and ecosystem deterioration require increasingly complex interventions, DICEGAI 2027 focuses on the responsible, practical application of AI to mitigate these challenges.

The two-day event for thought leadership and applied discussions will cover critical environmental domains, including climate and marine ecosystems, smart infrastructure, circular economy technologies, and the governance frameworks necessary for ethical AI development.

Reflecting on the conference's underlying mission, Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Bin Fahad, Chairman of the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment, said: "The environmental challenges we face today require collaborative, cross-sector thinking. With DICEGAI 2027, our primary objective is to provide a global platform where experts can come together to discuss, debate, and find actionable solutions. By convening AI researchers, environmental scientists, policymakers, and civil society, we aim to facilitate the meaningful dialogue necessary to forge a new social contract, one that successfully balances technological innovation with long-term ecological preservation."

The Foundation is currently inviting submissions of scientific papers to be presented during the conference. Researchers, educators, urban planners,

## The 2nd Dubai International Conference on Green AI (DICEGAI 2027) is scheduled to take place from March 24-25, 2027, under the theme, "Human – AI – Nature: A New Social Contract"

and green-tech innovators are encouraged to submit abstracts detailing impactful, data-driven strategies that advance the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence for environmental sustainability.

**Papers should address any of the following domains:**

1. **Natural Environment**

- **Climate Resilience & Environmental Risk:** AI for climate modeling, early warning systems, and disaster response.
- **Biodiversity & Ecosystem Restoration:** Intelligent monitoring, habitat assessment, and nature-positive interventions.
- **Water Security:** AI for water quality monitoring, desalination optimization
- **Marine & Coastal Sustainability:** Oceanographic monitoring, marine pollution remedies, marine & coastal biodiversity.

2. **Built Environment**

- **Agriculture & Climate Smart Food Systems:** Precision farming, crop resilience analytics, and sustainable food supply chains.
- **Sustainable Cities & Smart Infrastructure:** AI-enabled urban planning, energy efficiency, mobility, and waste systems.
- **Circular Economy & GreenTech Innovations:** Robotics and machine learning for recycling, carbon reduction, and resource efficiency.
- **Frontier Technologies for a Green Planet:** Quantum-enhanced AI, edge AI, bio-inspired systems, and carbon removal technologies.

3. **Social Environment**

- **Governance, Ethics & Responsible AI:** Social equity, transparency, accountability, ESG verification, and environment-friendly algorithms & data centers in ethical AI frameworks.
- **Education & Capacity Building:** AI literacy, environmental training, and community engagement tools.

The conference will feature keynote presentations, plenary sessions, networking events, and an exhibitor showcase. Additionally, DICEGAI 2027 will host dedicated poster competitions designed to engage high school and college students in the global sustainability dialogue.

4. **Important Dates for Participants:**

- **Paper Submission Deadline:** October 30, 2026
- **Paper Acceptance Notification:** November 30, 2026
- **Early Bird Registration Deadline:** December 15, 2026
- **Final Registration Deadline:** January 15, 2027

For more information regarding paper submissions, registration, and conference guidelines, please visit: www.zayedprize.org.ae or contact the organizing committee at dicegai@zayedprize.org.ae.



Cover Story

# One billion meals wasted daily: UAE joins global push to halve food waste

Every day, over a billion meals are left uneaten, whether due to excess food production, spoilage or poor meal planning, according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). This issue was in the spotlight on the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, observed on 29 September. The focus this year was on what we eat, what we waste, and how we can reduce food waste as a pathway to environmental protection, greater economic stability, stronger community resilience and more accessible, efficient food systems.

The annual observance aims to highlight the issue of waste globally and raise awareness of national, subnational, regional and local zero-waste initiatives and their contribution to achieving sustainable development.

**An estimated 13% of food produced is lost globally after harvest and prior to reaching retail shelves**

While hundreds of millions around the world face hunger, the wastage of more than one billion tonnes of food, represents 19 percent of all food available to consumers, while 13 percent is lost post-harvest and before retail. Most food waste happens within households (60 percent), followed by food service (28 percent) and retail (12 percent), with households alone wasting over one billion meals every day.

**UAE: Cutting food waste strengthens food system resilience**

In her statement on the occasion of the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, Dr. Amna bint Abdullah Al Dahak, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, stressed that investment in increasing and diversifying food production must be accompanied by efforts to protect food from loss and waste at every stage, from farm to family table. She said the resilience of the food system is linked to its ability to provide food and ensure continued access to it even when production or supply comes under pressure.

“Every quantity of food that is lost or wasted also wastes the water, energy, resources and effort used to produce it, and

reduces the system's ability to meet needs amid changing conditions," she said.

Al Dahak added, "UN data shows that reducing food loss and waste enables us to make better use of the food already available, ease pressure on resources and reduce emissions, while strengthening the food system's ability to continue serving communities."

She continued, "In the UAE, we are addressing food loss and waste across the various stages of the food system as part of our efforts to strengthen national food security.

"Through ne'ma, the National Food Loss and Waste Initiative, and in cooperation with Emirates Foundation and our partners, we are working towards the target of reducing food loss and waste by 50 percent by 2030.

"This begins by measuring the scale of food loss and identifying its causes, followed by developing solutions with farmers, producers and the transport, retail and hospitality sectors to address vulnerabilities and enhance the efficiency of the food system."

Al Dahak stressed that community participation is a key pillar in achieving this target.

**Tackling food loss and waste can generate a triple win: improving food security and nutrition, reducing pressure on natural resources and greenhouse gas emissions, and enhancing productivity and economic growth**

She said, "Every family's contribution begins with its daily decisions on purchasing, storing and consuming food, supported by awareness efforts involving schools, young people and community institutions.

"Alongside reducing waste, it is equally important to redirect surplus food that remains fit for consumption to those who need it. This is supported by the efforts of the Emirates Food Bank, whose services have reached more than 128 million beneficiaries since its establishment in 2017.

"When the efforts of government entities, businesses and individuals come together, preserving food becomes a practice shared across the entire system."

Al Dahak stressed that every investment in production, technology and infrastructure loses part of its impact if food is not preserved until it reaches consumers.

She concluded that through collective action to reduce food loss and waste, the UAE can safeguard the impact of these investments, enhance the readiness and adaptability of its food system, and preserve resources for future generations.

**The US$1 trillion per year price tag**

Food loss and waste generate 8-10 percent of global greenhouse emissions, nearly five times the emissions from the aviation industry. Food waste alone accounts for up to 14 percent of global methane emissions, a gas 84 times more potent than $CO_2$ over 20 years.

"In a time of accelerating climate change, growing deforestation, water scarcity, spreading land degradation and

## A staggering 60% of food is wasted at the household level, 28% from food service, and 12% from retail

desertification, and rising food prices, we cannot afford to waste precious resources to grow food that is not eaten – or the US$1 trillion per year price tag that food loss and waste costs the global economy," said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP. "Reducing food waste makes strong economic sense, delivers real methane cuts, supports food security and helps build a circular, zero-waste, zero-emissions future."

"Cities that integrate food systems, water services and waste management show what is possible. They recover surplus food, reduce water loss, and turn organic waste into compost or energy, creating circular systems that save money, cut emissions and generate jobs," said Anacláudia Rossbach, Executive Director of UN-Habitat. "Informal workers, waste pickers and community water managers are at the heart of these solutions. Recognizing their contribution strengthens local systems, creates livelihoods and ensures that no one is left behind."

Food loss and waste cost the world US$1 trillion per year. Preventing food waste reduces the demand for land, including land threatened by deforestation, water resources, and energy needed for food production.

**'20 Cities Towards Zero Waste'**

In the lead-up to the International Day of Zero Waste, 20 cities worldwide were named the inaugural '20 Cities Towards Zero Waste'. This initiative highlights cities demonstrating ambitious and innovative approaches to reducing waste, advancing circular economy solutions, and building more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive urban systems.

A small but growing number of countries are proving that large-scale reductions in food waste are possible with the right policies, partnerships, and measurement systems in place. Japan, for example, had by 2022 achieved a 53 percent reduction in total food loss and waste compared to 2000 levels, while the United Kingdom has achieved a 22 percent reduction in food waste since 2007 through strong public-private collaboration and consumer behaviour change initiatives.

However, most countries — including many G20 economies — still lack robust data to track progress towards halving food waste by 2030, highlighting a major gap in global action. Countries that invest in measurement, set clear targets, and enable collaboration can drive rapid progress and lead the global transition to more sustainable food systems.

Through initiatives like the Food Waste Breakthrough – which focuses on action in cities and food businesses, through collaboration on data, policy, capacity building, advocacy and investment – launched at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Brazil in 2025, the world aims to halve food waste by 2030, cut its methane emissions by up to 7 percent, and build circular, resilient food systems.



# Dubai to host World Green Economy Summit on October 21-22

The 12th World Green Economy Summit (WGES) will be held on 21st-22nd October at the Dubai World Trade Centre under the theme “From Success to Scale: Showcasing the Green Economy”.

The summit will bring together decision-makers, business leaders, investors and experts in resilience and infrastructure, along with key representatives from government, the private sector and academia.

It will showcase practical, scalable solutions and focus on effective approaches to speed up the transition towards a low-carbon economy while strengthening the link between economic growth and environmental sustainability.

This year, the summit will shed light on a pivotal stage in the global transition to a green economy, he said. The green transition is no longer a future aspiration but a present reality, driven by proven technologies and innovative business models delivering scalable returns.

WGES 2026 will focus on accelerating the adoption of climate solutions and scaling successful models to support economic growth and strengthen resilience across sectors.

The summit underscores the need to move beyond showcasing success stories towards expanding and scaling them, and accelerating their implementation on the ground.

WGES 2026 will highlight four main thematic pillars: energy technology and infrastructure; business strategy and transition; water and food security; and finance. It will also explore three cross-cutting themes, including artificial intelligence as one of the green economy’s most powerful enablers for advancing climate projects.

**WGES 2026 will highlight four main thematic pillars: energy technology and infrastructure; business strategy and transition; water and food security; and finance**

The themes also address governance as the critical link between ambition and delivery, alongside system enablers such as supply chains and the circular economy. Together, these themes reflect the summit’s broad agenda and its response to rapid global changes.

The summit will also show how the green transition is already underway, supporting the adoption of innovative solutions across clean energy, sustainable infrastructure, green finance, water and food security. These efforts contribute to global and regional climate and development goals, reinforcing the UAE and Dubai’s leadership in climate action and offering practical models that can be applied at scale.

Cover Story

# Clean air is a strategic economic priority in the UAE

For decades, the global narrative surrounding economic development largely accepted poor air quality as an inevitable byproduct of industrial progress. However, the world is entering a new phase of planetary challenges, where governments face mounting economic costs from climate change and air pollution simultaneously.

Against this backdrop, the annual commemoration of International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies on September 7 highlights that clean air is no longer just an environmental metric to be monitored. Instead, it is a fundamental pillar of public well-being, climate action, and long-term economic resilience.

Exceeding 1.5 ºC of warming is now widely assessed as unavoidable. The policy debate is also shifting: the question is no longer only what needs to be done to reduce emissions, but how to implement proven solutions quickly enough to avert planetary and economic crises, and how to generate returns that justify private investment.

Clean air is fundamental to healthy people, resilient economies and a stable climate. New findings by UNEP in its Spotlight Report – *Hidden assets: The economic and health case for climate and clean air action*, highlight that integrated action on climate change and air pollution is a smart investment, and that proven solutions available today can generate economic returns while accelerating progress towards global climate and sustainable development goals.

Recognizing this dual economic and environmental imperative, the UAE has made enhancing air quality and balancing rapid industrial, urban, and economic expansion with environmental stewardship a strategic national priority. The National Air Quality Agenda 2031 provides a clear framework for aligning federal and local government entities and the private sector around three pillars - monitoring, mitigation and management to ensure the well-being of the community. It addresses outdoor and indoor air quality, ambient odour, and ambient noise, and is supported

**Air pollution is the greatest environmental threat to public health globally and accounts for more than 8 million premature deaths every year**



by federal environmental legislation and regulatory requirements that strengthen the prevention, control and management of emissions.

In a statement to mark the annual observance, Dr. Amna bint Abdullah Al Dahak, the UAE Minister of Climate Change and Environment, reflected on how the UAE is turning high-level ambition into actionable, data-driven policy. “Clean air is not only an environmental objective, but an investment in the community, stronger economy and shared prosperity,” she said.

“Turning policy into measurable action requires reliable, accessible and well-integrated data. The UAE’s National Air

**Air pollution doesn't just jeopardize our health and well-being: it contributes massively to climate change and threatens food security**



Quality Platform provides a real-time overview of air quality conditions across the country. Complementing this, the Ministry has operationalised a centralised digital dashboard for the collection and management of air-quality monitoring data from local environmental authorities," she added.

The dashboard replaces the previous reliance on fragmented submissions with a standardised national digital workflow that supports data quality assurance, analysis and national reporting. According to Al Dahak, the system strengthens data integration and cooperation between the federal and emirate levels, while enabling air-quality information to be translated efficiently into evidence-based policy and targeted action to enhance quality of life.

The Ministry has also completed the development of an integrated national emissions Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system that incorporates priority air pollutants alongside greenhouse gas emissions, she said.

The system establishes a consistent digital pathway for collecting, reporting, verifying and analysing facility-level emissions information, while supporting the development and improvement of national emissions inventories.

By bringing air pollutants and greenhouse gases within an integrated emissions-management framework, the MRV system strengthens the evidence base for identifying emission sources, tracking performance and directing mitigation measures where they can deliver the greatest benefits for air quality and climate action.

## Improving our air quality will bring health, development, and environmental benefits

“At the same time, work is progressing on national air-quality forecasting and early-warning capabilities,” Al Dahak said.

By combining monitoring observations, meteorological information and analytical tools, the UAE is strengthening its ability to move from understanding current conditions to anticipating potential pollution episodes and supporting earlier, more targeted responses.

“This proactive direction, together with stronger emissions inventories and scientific assessment of pollution sources, is central to future-ready air-quality management,” she added.

“Together, these initiatives represent an important shift from isolated monitoring to a connected national cycle of measuring, understanding, managing and anticipating air-quality risks,” Al Dahak said.

“Clean air is fundamental to quality of life and a resilient, competitive economy. The UAE will continue to work with federal and local authorities, the private sector, academia and international partners to accelerate practical solutions and help ensure cleaner air and blue skies for present and future generations.”

A national strategy, however, is only as effective as its localized execution. In Abu Dhabi, the Environment Agency (EAD) implemented a five-year air-quality policy (2021-2025). This multi-step strategy sought to strengthen regulatory frameworks, enhance infrastructure and local capacity of monitoring and management of air quality, improve public and institutional awareness on issues related to air quality, and deepen scientific research on air quality and its impact on public health and ecosystems.

Dubai’s ambitious Air Quality Strategy 2030 aims to achieve clean-air standards on 90% of the days by 2030. By establishing clear baseline pollutant levels and uncompromising emission reduction targets, Dubai is proactively benchmarking its environmental performance against the highest global standards.

The transition toward a greener economy is accelerating, and the private sector must step up as a proactive partner. The Ministry of Climate Change and Environment has called for aligned action across the private sector, and the businesses that will thrive in the UAE’s future economy are those that integrate environmental compliance into their core operational strategies today.

The International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies is a powerful reminder that the air we breathe is a shared resource and a shared responsibility. Through rigorous monitoring, strategic mitigation, and uncompromising management, the nation is proving that rapid economic growth and environmental integrity can go hand in hand.



# UAE prepares to host the 2026 UN Water Conference in Abu Dhabi

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has outlined the UAE's preparations to host the 2026 UN Water Conference from 8th to 10th December, in partnership with the Republic of Senegal. The Conference reflects the UAE's commitment to strengthening water security and advancing global efforts to develop practical and sustainable solutions for water resource management and ensure access to clean water and sanitation for all.

Speaking at a media briefing hosted by the National Media Authority, Abdulla Balalaa, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Energy and Sustainability, highlighted the significance of the UAE's hosting of the Conference, the latest developments in preparations, and the Conference's role in strengthening international dialogue and accelerating efforts to ensure access to clean water and sanitation for all.

The 2026 UN Water Conference focuses on translating international commitments into actionable measures and strengthening the integration of finance, technology and innovation to develop practical solutions in the water sector, while building international partnerships capable of




Abdulla Balalaa, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Energy and Sustainability in the UAE

**The 2026 UN Water Conference, co-hosted by the UAE and Senegal, will be the global moment of implementation and action on Sustainable Development Goal 6: ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all**

delivering sustainable and scalable impact.

The Conference will bring together governments, international organisations, financial institutions, the private sector, experts and civil society to explore ways to strengthen cooperation, exchange knowledge and expertise, and develop practical and sustainable solutions for water resource management. He reaffirmed the UAE's commitment to sustained collaboration with the international community to ensure that the 2026 UN Water Conference marks a genuine turning point in climate and water action by accelerating innovation and adopting sustainable technological solutions that safeguard the future of



generations to come.

The 2026 UN Water Conference aims to accelerate the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), which seeks to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, while strengthening international cooperation to address growing challenges facing water resources worldwide.

**UAE participates in Sweden's World Water Week**

Abdulla Balalaa, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Energy and Sustainability in the UAE, led a delegation at the World Water Week 2026 in August in Stockholm, as part of the country's preparations for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference.

The delegation joined international leaders, executives from the financial and business sectors, policymakers, researchers, and representatives of civil society to take part in one of the world's foremost gatherings on water, sustainability, and development.

Held under the theme "Water for People and Progress", the 2026 World Water Week focused on the growing role of water in supporting economic growth, public health, food security, energy systems, climate resilience, and long-term prosperity. The week provided an important platform to examine how innovation, investment, policy, and partnership can help accelerate

**To be held from December 8 – 10 at the ADNEC Exhibition Centre, this is the first UN Water Conference to be led by two nations from the Global South**

progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 6, which aims to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

At the event, Balalaa chaired a high-level ministerial panel titled 'The 2026 UN Water Conference: Where the Future Will Be Built'. The panel brought together the Conference co-hosts, Interactive Dialogue co-chairs, government representatives, and key partners to discuss ways to accelerate implementation through investment, innovation, capacity-building, and cross-sectoral cooperation.

During the high-level session, Balalaa outlined his vision for the success of the conference, stating: "Success for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference will be measured by what happens after it; by the partnerships and projects that move towards implementation, the finance that scales solutions and creates new opportunities and jobs, and the tangible impact on people's lives."

He added: "If we can leave Abu Dhabi with stronger investment pipelines, partnerships built on clear accountability, and innovative and inclusive solutions that can be applied across different markets, then we will have succeeded in turning the water conversation into practical action and tangible results."

Representatives and delegates from several UAE entities also participated, including the Department of Energy, the Mohamed bin Zayed Water Initiative, Clean Rivers, and the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy.

Discussions in Sweden underscored the growing global recognition that water is a strategic economic, financial, and development priority. Balalaa also participated in the launch of the Global Water Investment Platform, where he highlighted the role of blended finance and de-risking mechanisms in catalysing investment in climate-resilient water projects that benefit communities and contribute to development and progress.

The UAE's participation in Stockholm followed a series of major international water-related meetings and events held this year on the road to the Conference, including, most recently, the Africa Water and Sanitation Systems Leadership Symposium in Kigali, Rwanda, Japan's Water Day celebration, and the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York.

World Water Week in Stockholm also marked the launch of registration for 'The Oasis', the open zone of the 2026 United Nations Water Conference in Abu Dhabi. The Oasis will bring together innovators, investors, thought leaders, policymakers, and experts from across sectors, alongside some of the brightest young minds, for three days of interactive exhibitions and diverse programming.

News

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ABU DHABI WATER & POWER WEEK

# Abu Dhabi unveils agenda for inaugural Water and Energy Week

The Department of Energy – Abu Dhabi (DoE) will host the inaugural Abu Dhabi Water & Power Week (ADWPW) – Special Water Edition 2026. The event will take place from 8-10 December 2026 at the ADNEC Centre Abu Dhabi, in conjunction with the United Nations Water Conference 2026, co-hosted by the UAE and the Republic of Senegal.

With water at the heart of its inaugural edition, the programme will help reinforce Abu Dhabi's position as a leading global hub for innovative water solutions.

ADWPW will bring together policymakers, investors, utilities, technology pioneers and international organisations through an integrated programme comprising the Policy and Regulation Summit, Finance and Investment Summit, and Technology and Innovation Summit, alongside strategic collaborations. The programme aims to advance dialogue and knowledge exchange and explore and implement practical solutions that strengthen water resilience and support sustainable economic development.

The department also outlined the focus areas of the three flagship summits, which will address the development of governance and regulatory frameworks that support water resilience, opportunities to finance and invest in infrastructure projects, and the accelerated adoption of technology and innovation to develop more

**The event, held in conjunction with the United Nations Water Conference 2026, will focus on water security, investment, innovation and sustainable solutions**



efficient and sustainable solutions. ADWPW will also feature a series of strategic engagements, including the 4th Abu Dhabi Water & Power Majlis, showcases of the latest technologies and innovative solutions in the water sector, and announcements of strategic partnerships.

A comprehensive agenda includes launches of a specialised platform to support innovation and practical solutions to the challenges facing the sector, and the Youth Water Program, in collaboration with a number of academic institutions, designed to attract talented young people and empower them to develop innovative and practical solutions. The department invited young people interested in participating to register and apply for the programme through the DoE website.

**The inaugural edition is aligned with the UAE Water Security Strategy 2036 and UAE Energy Strategy 2050**

The week will also feature the Abu Dhabi Pavilion, offering an integrated interactive experience across 55 stations. The experience traces Abu Dhabi's journey, from its rich heritage to achievements today and its ambitions for the future. The pavilion showcases key milestones and transformations that have contributed to the development of the emirate's water system, while highlighting Abu Dhabi's journey and its vision for a more sustainable future.

Aligned with the UAE Water Security Strategy 2036 and UAE Energy Strategy 2050, the inaugural Abu Dhabi Water & Power Week – Special Water Edition aims to accelerate collaboration and promote the policies, investments, and innovations needed to strengthen water and energy resilience.

# Middle East Energy 2026: AI and the global energy transition




The technologies and capital shaping the next phase of the region's energy transition were in the spotlight at Middle East Energy's 50th edition, held at Dubai World Trade Centre September 1–3.

The three-day show served as a global meeting point for trade professionals, investors and policymakers driving the evolution of energy infrastructure. The annual event is recognised as the place where the global industry comes to source technologies, compare suppliers and build partnerships across the full power value chain.

In his opening address, His Excellency Suhail Mohamed Al Mazrouei, UAE Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, highlighted the critical juncture the industry faces. While acknowledging the UAE's efforts in building one of the region's most diversified energy portfolios and strengthening energy security, he emphasized that achieving a sustainable, resilient and energy-secure energy future requires collective action.

**AI reshapes energy transition**

This collective action is now increasingly being driven by intelligent algorithms.

**50th edition of Middle East Energy brought together the global energy community with thousands of attendees, 1,500+ exhibitors and energy stakeholders from more than 120 countries**



**"Governments, industry, investors, technology companies, academia and financial institutions must work together to meet the world's growing demand for power."**

*His Excellency Suhail Mohamed Al Mazrouei, UAE Minister of Energy and Infrastructure*

Nowhere is this equation more evident than in the modernization of regional power grids. To successfully achieve net-zero emissions by mid-century, energy networks must be capable of handling an influx of clean, yet highly variable, power sources. By integrating AI software and digital sensors, traditional infrastructure is evolving into automated 'smart grids' capable of dynamically balancing electricity supply and demand in real time.

As the global push towards net-zero emissions by 2050 intensifies, Middle Eastern nations are embracing AI-driven technologies to modernise their energy systems, reduce carbon footprints, and enhance overall operational efficiency.

Leading the charge, Saudi Arabia's Saudi Electricity Company (SEC) is laying the groundwork for a highly responsive network by installing 10 million smart meters by 2025, enabling precise, real-time consumption monitoring. Similarly, NEOM's energy subsidiary, ENOWA, is engineering a fully renewable high-voltage smart grid designed to slash the physical footprint of energy corridors in half.

In the UAE, the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) also boasts advanced infrastructure that incorporates cutting-edge technologies such as the smart grid, AI, blockchain, energy storage, Internet of Things (IoT), and 3D printing. Their goal is to manage facilities and services more efficiently. Notable among DEWA's smart grid initiatives is the Automatic Smart Grid Restoration System (ASGR). This groundbreaking advancement in fault detection and service restoration functions autonomously without human intervention.

**AI in energy forecasting**

From smart grids and infrastructure management to energy forecasting, AI is redefining how energy is generated, distributed, and consumed in the region.

One of the most common applications of AI in the energy sector is enhancing predictions of when renewable power will be available and when it will be needed. This is crucial for the effective integration of renewable energy into power systems, especially since the availability of solar and wind energy is highly dependent on factors such as weather and time of day.

To solve this, grid operators in the Middle



East are increasingly turning to AI-driven Short-Term Energy Forecasting (STEF). STEF involves predicting energy production and consumption within a short window, typically from minutes to days ahead. This allows grid operators to make real-time adjustments to balance supply with demand, opening more possibilities for optimising energy efficiency.

This predictive power extends beyond just generation. For example, UAE-based utility provider Tabreed uses AI to forecast cooling demands based on weather conditions, a significant factor in a region where air conditioning accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. This initiative aims to boost cooling-plant efficiency by 30%, reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions.

**The energy cost of AI and data centers**

However, this technological leap comes with its own energy burden. The computational power required for AI means that global data center electricity consumption is projected to increase to 3 to 4% of global electricity by 2030.

Recognizing this, Middle East Energy 2026 launched the inaugural Powering AI Sessions, sparking critical conversations on how to power the rapid growth of AI data centers, exploring grid capacity, storage, and digitalization at scale.

**Innovative tech**

Across the show floor, exhibitors also highlighted their innovative products engineered for tomorrow. These included Comacon's sustainability-focused engineering solutions for intelligent infrastructure; Lucy Electric's newly launched Nuventura Nu1, a sustainable SF6-free switchgear for a sustainable future delivering reliable performance up to 36kV; Saudi Meters' smart water and electricity metering solutions for real-time utility monitoring and management; and Astro Cables showcasing low-voltage copper and aluminium power cables, building wires, fire-resistant and solar cables, delivering reliable cable solutions for residential, commercial, industrial, infrastructure and renewable energy applications.

On the AI innovation front, InfiVR showcased AI-powered training solutions for health, safety and environmental applications. China's Shandong Taikai exhibited high-voltage power transmission and conersion equipment, while Hunan Guochuang Electric highlighted precision-engineered transformer components for ultra-high voltage sectors.




CMC Markets' history dates back to 1989, and we know that our longevity is in no small part down to our recognition and understanding of sustainability. This principle needs to sit at the heart of every successful business, so as we continue to build out our presence across the MENA region and with our hub office in Dubai's thriving DIFC, we were honoured to be invited to participate in the One Million Trees campaign. Initiated by The Zayed International Foundation for the Environment, this project gives CMC Markets Middle East the ability to show our commitment to the UAE and enables us – quite literally – to become an integral part of the natural landscape, as we simultaneously establish our position in the nation's financial ecosystem.

At group level, we have a proven track record of working with CSR and ESG initiatives across our global office network. From providing grants to support disadvantaged children in New Zealand, to staff in the London office participating in charity sleep-outs to raise awareness of homelessness, we have a global focus on assisting where we can in the best – and most impactful – ways. Our commitment to sustainability, the environment and simply doing the right thing remains unwavering.

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# WETEX 2026 to drive global investment in future-proof city infrastructure

The 28th edition of the Water, Energy, Technology and Environment Exhibition (WETEX 2026), to be held from October 20 – 22 at Dubai World Trade Centre, will highlight sustainable and resilient technologies that support smart cities. Bringing together companies, developers, engineers, technology providers and decision-makers, the event will focus on how the construction and infrastructure sectors respond to climate change, population growth and rising demand for energy and resources.

Recent data from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) indicate that the buildings and construction sector accounts for around 37 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions and nearly 50 percent of global material extraction, placing the built environment at the centre of efforts to develop low-carbon, resilient cities.

The exhibition will showcase solutions across construction, infrastructure development, engineering services, sustainability, energy, water and digital transformation, with a focus on improving efficiency, reducing carbon footprints and





strengthening resilience to climatic and operational changes.

WETEX also covers sustainable cities, decarbonisation, artificial intelligence (AI), digital transformation and green technologies.

Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, MD and CEO of DEWA, Founder and Chairman of WETEX, said, “Through WETEX, we work to accelerate the transition of promising solutions from development and experimentation to large-scale implementation, while creating opportunities to forge significant partnerships, develop pioneering business models and attract major investments.”

**WETEX 2026 strengthens its role as a global platform connecting innovative technologies with investment opportunities, projects and strategic partnerships**

**Promising solutions**

Reducing the carbon footprint of buildings increasingly begins with material selection. Low-emission alternatives for cement, concrete and steel, recycled materials and improved resource efficiency are gaining importance, alongside tools for measuring embodied carbon throughout an asset’s lifecycle.

Advances in energy-efficient engineering design are also supporting this transition through improved building envelopes, natural lighting, thermal load management, efficient cooling and lighting systems, renewable energy, energy storage and water solutions.

Digitalisation, AI and the Internet of Things (IoT) are creating further opportunities for building management. Sensors and digital platforms enable real-time monitoring of energy and water consumption, air quality, cooling and lighting systems and occupancy levels, while advanced analytics can predict faults and optimise performance.

Digital twins and Building Information Modelling (BIM) also help connect design,

construction and operations, allowing engineers and operators to test scenarios and make more informed decisions throughout an asset's lifecycle.

District cooling remains an important component of sustainable urban infrastructure, particularly in high-density environments. Such systems can reduce cooling energy consumption by up to 50 percent compared with conventional systems, while thermal energy storage, AI, data analytics and treated water can deliver further efficiency gains.

Specialised engineering services are increasingly integrating energy and water efficiency, lifecycle emissions, climate resilience, digital technologies, and risk and asset management, while linking architectural and engineering design with energy, cooling, water, mobility and communications systems.

WETEX 2026 will provide participating companies with opportunities to showcase solutions spanning low-carbon construction materials, energy-efficient design, smart buildings, district cooling, digital construction and infrastructure resilience.

**The annual event spotlights cutting-edge solutions in low-carbon construction, AI-driven infrastructure, district cooling, and smart building management to decarbonise future urban environments**

**Sustainable mobility**

WETEX 2026 will also showcase sustainable mobility solutions spanning vehicles, clean energy, charging infrastructure and fleet management at the Green Mobility Zone.

The exhibition comes amid accelerating global demand for electric vehicles (EVs). According to the International Energy Agency's (IEA) Global EV Outlook 2026, sales grew by 20 percent to exceed 20 million in 2025, accounting for one quarter of new cars sold.

Charging infrastructure remains central to EV growth, with priorities extending beyond charger numbers to charging speed, station distribution, load management and fleet requirements. Dubai's EV charging points reached 2,223 in the first quarter of 2026. The emirate had 47,944 EVs at the end of 2025, compared with 37,486 a year earlier, an increase of nearly 28 percent.

Vehicle-to-grid (V2G) technology also enables compatible EVs to return stored electricity to the grid, supporting load management and renewable energy integration. Wider adoption depends on vehicle compatibility, standards, regulation and viable business models.

DEWA and Dubai Taxi Company (DTC) launched the first phase of an ultra-fast charging hub with 24 360-kW points, part of a WETEX 2025 deal to deploy over 200 chargers for DTC's fleet. Meanwhile, Dubai's RTA targets a fully electric and hydrogen public bus fleet by 2050.

Complementing EVs for heavy-duty transport, DEWA's solar-powered Green Hydrogen project already refuels vehicles in Expo City Dubai. WETEX 2026 will showcase how these combined technologies drive sustainable urban transport.


Zayed International Foundation for the Environment
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Human – AI – Nature:
A New Social Contract
Rethinking Relationships between People, Machines & the Environment
24 – 25 March 2027

News



# 28 Dubai Police sites go solar, cut annual carbon emissions by 26,000 tonnes

Dubai Police has completed the first phase of an ambitious solar energy project that has transformed 28 police sites, delivering an estimated annual reduction of 26,000 tonnes of carbon emissions.

The reduction represents 20 per cent of the total carbon emissions generated by Dubai Police buildings, marking a significant step in the organisation's long-term transition towards cleaner energy, greener buildings and more efficient use of resources.

The project, led by the General Department of Logistics Support, was originally launched during COP28 in 2023 and forms part of a 25-year strategy to progressively introduce solar energy solutions across Dubai Police buildings and facilities.

The first phase covered 28 locations, including police stations, general departments and other police buildings and facilities.

Rather than applying a single solution across every site, the project considers the age, design and operational requirements of individual buildings to ensure that sustainable technologies can be introduced without affecting police operations or services.

Engineer Maryam Rashid Bonfour, Director of the Energy Efficiency Projects Portfolio at the Environment, Health and Safety Department of the General Department of Logistics Support, said the initiative goes beyond simply installing solar energy systems.

"The project extends over 25 years and is being implemented through carefully planned phases that take into consideration the nature, age, design and operational requirements of police buildings," she said.

This includes both existing facilities and new buildings developed according to Dubai Police operational requirements.

Dubai Police is now preparing to begin the second phase during the final quarter of 2026, progressively extending solar energy solutions to additional buildings and facilities.

The project supports the Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050 and Dubai's strategy to reduce carbon emissions, with the aim of helping double the reduction in carbon emissions to 50% by the end of 2030.

Dubai Police previously became the first police organisation in the world to officially join the United Nations Global Compact, adopting its ten principles covering human rights, decent labour standards, anti-corruption and environmental responsibility.

# DECCA and IUCN partner to develop integrated master plan for Dubai's nature reserve network

The Dubai Environment and Climate Change Authority (DECCA) launched a strategic project with the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Regional Office for West Asia (IUCN ROWA), to develop an integrated plan for Dubai's nature reserve network.

The one-year initial work programme will establish a science-based framework to assess Dubai's reserves, paving the way for their development in line with international best practices to ensure biodiversity sustainability and enhance community well-being.

This collaboration was announced during the inaugural Dubai Environment Conference and Exhibition 2026 by Ahmed Mohammed bin Thani, Director-General of DECCA, and Dr. Hany El Shaer, Regional Director of IUCN West Asia.

The project covers the eight existing reserves while exploring future expansion opportunities aligned with the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan. It provides a roadmap to transform these sites from independently managed locations into a unified network aligned with international standards.

Through a participatory methodology, DECCA and IUCN ROWA will hold national workshops involving experts, the private sector, local communities, and youth to ensure the plan reflects community needs. Dubai will benefit from IUCN expertise in applying the "Green List" for protected areas, the highest global certification for management effectiveness.

Beyond conservation, the project serves as a driver for Dubai's Green Economy. Through sustainable eco-tourism, the reserves will create job opportunities for Dubai nationals in environmental guiding, resource management, and scientific research.

Furthermore, the project provides natural spaces that improve quality of life and public health, reinforcing the "Ecosystem Services" nature provides, such as air purification, climate regulation, and recreation.

**The cooperation involves two integrated tracks:**

**1. Strengthening the network:** A system-level assessment to establish a baseline for habitat representation, ecological connectivity corridors, climate resilience, and management effectiveness against IUCN Green List standards, complemented by stakeholder visioning workshops.

**2. Modernising legislation:** Updating the legal framework using IUCN governance principles to clarify community roles, sustainable resource use, conservation mechanisms, and enforcement.

Dubai Environment and Climate Change Authority manages eight nature reserves in the Emirate: Hatta Mountain Reserve, Al Marmoom Desert Conservation Reserve, Ghaf Nazwa Conservation Reserve, Jebel Nazwa Conservation Reserve, Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary, Jebel Ali Wildlife Sanctuary, Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, and Al Wohoosh Desert Conservation Reserve.

# World Cities Day: The global push for urban regeneration and housing for all



The 2026 edition of World Cities Day, observed annually on October 31, focuses on “Regenerating the City: Adequate Housing for All,” emphasizing the vital role of urban regeneration in improving neighbourhoods, expanding access to housing, and revitalizing informal settlements.

The theme highlights the importance of integrating housing, infrastructure, public spaces, climate resilience and social inclusion into comprehensive area-based regeneration strategies.

It promotes combining area-based regeneration with housing and informal settlement strategies to create inclusive, climate-resilient neighbourhoods, led by communities and protected against displacement, so current residents benefit from improved housing.

**Global activities**

Governments, city leaders, planners, researchers and community organizations will participate in a range of global and local events showcasing policies and projects that contribute to more inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities.

The global observance will be hosted this year in Fuzhou City, China. The activities include an opening ceremony, thematic forums, parallel sessions, city tours, a flagship event, and an interactive zone

**World Cities Day 2026 spotlights the urgent need for inclusive, community-led urban renewal, making urban regeneration the defining challenge of our time**

exhibition. Participants include officials from international organisations, representatives of UN-Habitat member states, government agencies responsible for housing, urban development and construction, cities around the world and professional visitors.

**The interactive zone exhibition**

The interactive zone exhibition offers visitors from around the world first-hand insights into technological innovations, practical achievements, and solutions presented by participating organisations for sustainable urban development.

The exhibition has three parts: the preface hall, the "high-quality" scenario interactive zone, and the technology and industry innovation zone. Approximately 200 participating organisations and 50,000 visitors are expected.

- **Preface hall** showcases the evolution of World Cities Day, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), global innovations in urban governance, urban regeneration practices and achievements in China, and case studies from Fujian Province and Fuzhou City.
- **"High-quality" scenario interactive zone** presents integrated living solutions for urban regeneration through immersive settings featuring full-scale model units, smart property management, and comprehensive community services.
- **Technology and industry innovation zone** consists of three sections—urban construction, urban operation, and urban future.

**Urban regeneration in the UAE**

The UAE is globally recognized for its modern skyline and expansive master planned communities. However, with several forward-looking zoning reforms and long-term urban planning strategies, most notably the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, the concept of adaptive reuse is reshaping the communities we live in.

Rather than demolishing aging infrastructure, urban planners in the UAE are focusing on regeneration, catalysing derelict and under-utilized areas into vibrant community centres. This approach views abandoned industrial zones and aging warehouses not as eyesores, but as blank canvases with immense social and economic potential.

A prime example is Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. What was once a basic cluster of manufacturing warehouses in the Al Quoz industrial sector has been meticulously repurposed into the city's premier arts and culture district. Today, this area is home to several award-winning art galleries, homegrown cafes, event venues, and creative startups. Through this adaptive reuse, Alserkal Avenue is now one of the UAE's most influential cultural districts, creating long-term value for stakeholders in the creative economy.

In Abu Dhabi, the Mina Zayed (MiZa) redevelopment is transforming



decades-old port warehouses into a thriving innovation hub for entrepreneurs, makers, and food concepts. For decades, Zayed Port had been the backbone of the city's economy but with Abu Dhabi's rapid growth, it had become disused. To repurpose this part of the city, MiZa uses existing buildings and assets, transforming them into public spaces that promote creativity, well-being and social activities. Spaces within MiZa are designed to be versatile, from micro-units to warehouses. This flexibility allows a range of uses, from workshops to retail concepts.

Similarly, in Sharjah, a 1970s ice storage facility has been repurposed into a cultural venue, restaurant and hotel for the Sharjah Art Foundation. The distinctive sawtooth-roofed building, formerly a fish feed facility that was subsequently used to store ice, is now a unique space for displaying large-scale temporary artworks.

More than just the reuse of a building, these regenerated areas serve as powerful economic incubators. They also shape how people live, interact and feel connected to their surroundings. They attract a diverse mix of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and creatives who might be priced out of traditional, high-end commercial districts. This localized influx of activity fosters more resilient and inclusive communities, creating accessible destinations that symbolize environmental responsibility with economic vitality.

Transforming existing structures into creative, community assets aligns with the UAE's broader sustainability and Net Zero 2050 goals. Adaptive reuse reduces the embodied carbon footprint associated with manufacturing and transporting new construction materials. It minimizes demolition waste while maximizing the lifespan of the built environment. It proves that true urban innovation is about cultivating inclusive, sustainable, and economically thriving communities within the spaces we already have.

# M42 spotlights environmental intelligence at ADIHEX

M42, a global health leader powered by artificial intelligence (AI), technology and genomics, participated for the first time at the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX) held in September at ADNEC Centre Abu Dhabi.

M42 spotlighted its growing work in environmental intelligence and how advanced science, AI and data can generate insights that support public health, environmental resilience and community wellbeing.

At the event, M42 showcased RASID, an AI-powered platform that measures a city's health by transforming wastewater sample analysis into hyper-localised and predictive city health intelligence. Developed in partnership with the Abu Dhabi Quality and Conformity Council (ADQCC), the platform is designed to help authorities detect emerging public health risks through wastewater analysis across 100 testing sites in Abu Dhabi, predictive analytics and AI-supported insights that inform data-driven decision-making.

Eng. Abdulla Hassan Al Muaini, Executive Director - Central Testing Laboratory, said, "Through our work with M42 on RASID, we are bringing together complementary expertise in environmental monitoring, science and technology. ADIHEX is an opportunity to demonstrate the value of this collaborative approach and its contribution to a healthier, safer and more resilient Abu Dhabi."

Operational since 2022, the RASID Laboratory has analyzed more than 75,000 wastewater samples across the UAE, covering more than 400 chemical and biological analytes. This work has created one of the region's largest wastewater surveillance datasets, offering a clearer view of public health, environmental quality and community trends.

**RASID is an AI-powered platform that measures a city's health by transforming wastewater sample analysis into hyper-localised and predictive city health intelligence**

Dimitris Moulavasilis, Group Chief Executive Officer, M42, said, "Our environment tells us a great deal about the health and wellbeing of our communities. By interpreting these signals, we can generate actionable intelligence that supports earlier, more informed decision making."

Unlike traditional environmental monitoring, which typically provides a snapshot at a particular point in time, RASID is designed for continuous, population-level monitoring. Its AI models analyse large wastewater datasets to determine a city's health by creating an AI-generated risk score for all threats, use predictive analytics to forecast risk and support with source identification to help channel resources and response.




# New UAE partnership to accelerate innovation, adoption of water solutions

The Mohamed bin Zayed Water Initiative and the World Economic Forum have signed a partnership agreement to advance water innovation and strengthen the enabling conditions needed for practical water solutions to move more rapidly toward adoption and deployment.

The partnership brings together The Mohamed bin Zayed Water Initiative's focus on accelerating innovation, supporting real-world deployment and elevating water as a global priority with the World Economic Forum's convening reach and ability to bring together leaders across government, industry, finance and civil society.

At the centre of the collaboration is a shared ambition to help close a persistent gap in the global water ecosystem: the pathways between solutions and the policies, financing, market demand and partnerships required for them to scale.

Through the partnership, the organizations will work together to accelerate and scale water innovation and articulate pathways for the effective adoption of solutions, helping them reach the people and markets that need them. They will develop resources to share knowledge and expertise, support investments, and bring together leaders and stakeholders who can help turn ideas into action.

The partnership will also use major international water conferences and forums to strengthen collaboration and drive progress on innovation, investment and implementation.

Commenting on the announcement, Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak, Vice-Chairman of The Mohamed bin Zayed Water Initiative, said, "The UAE has established a long-term approach to addressing water scarcity challenges based on strategic planning, innovation, and partnership building. As these challenges grow with their implications on economies, societies and future generations expanding globally, uniting efforts and accelerating the development and adoption of practical solutions become essential."

The partnership, which will run through September 2028, reflects a shared recognition that water innovation encompasses more than technology alone.

Progress at scale also depends on new approaches to financing, policy, market development and cross-sector collaboration, alongside the exchange of knowledge and expertise on policies and enabling environments that foster innovation.

Together, these efforts can help reduce barriers to adoption and create stronger conditions for solutions to achieve wider deployment and impact.




# Sharjah to drive future of farming with new smart agri-tech innovation centre

Sharjah Research, Technology and Innovation Park (SPARK) is setting up an integrated, smart Agri-Tech Innovation Centre in partnership with Tathmeer Agri Tech (FZC), to boost Sharjah's position as a hub for sustainable agricultural innovation.

The Tathmeer Agri Tech Innovation Centre, established on a dedicated land plot within SPARK, will create a real-world environment for agricultural technologies to be demonstrated, tested and validated before commercial deployment and scale-up.

The centre will bring together controlled-environment agriculture, hydroponics, vertical farming, automation, IoT and AI-enabled monitoring, alongside Tathmeer's FarmBridge digital platform. It will also support applied R&D pilots, farmer training, technology selection, startup development and connections between agricultural producers, technology providers, investors and markets.

Tathmeer Agri Tech has also partnered with Elevate Farms, a leading vertical farming technology company with operations and presence in Canada, the United States and Switzerland, to strengthen the centre's access to advanced vertical farming technologies and support their demonstration, validation and potential deployment in the UAE and the wider region.

A key component of the centre is Tathmeer's FarmBridge Agri-Ecosystem, designed to connect farmers, technology companies, investors, government entities, entrepreneurs, SMEs, supply-chain operators and food and beverage businesses through a coordinated digital and physical platform.

The model aims to help farmers address three fundamental commercial questions — what to grow, how to grow and where to sell — while enabling agricultural technologies to be tested under practical conditions before wider investment and deployment.

The new venture supports wider UAE priorities in food security, sustainability, entrepreneurship, innovation and economic diversification, while reinforcing Sharjah's efforts to attract technology companies capable of developing and scaling commercially relevant solutions.

# Profit Maximization: The hidden factor shaping most global crises



**By Dr. Eisa M. Abdellatif , Ecologist**
Chief Technical Advisor at the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment, Dubai

By prioritizing revenue metrics over planet health, profit maximization has become a structural force shaping modern economies, institutions, social structures and technologies. When left unchecked, it systematically undermines human development, accelerates environmental challenges, and pushes societies toward chronic crises and potentially uncontrollable catastrophes.

**I. A Systemic Paradigm**

Profit maximization is now globally treated not merely as a business goal but as the central organizing principle dominating business, social structures and diplomatic relations. Research shows that this paradigm acts as an "invisible environmental designer," influencing governance, institutions, and even cultural norms in ways that prioritize financial gains while marginalizing human and ecological costs.

This model has become deeply embedded in markets, corporate structures, and policy frameworks. It shapes how cities are built, how education and healthcare systems operate, how digital infrastructures evolve, and how environmental resources are consumed. The result is a global system where short-term financial gains consistently outweigh long-term human well-being.

**II. Environmental Action Stalled by Profit Motives**

Since 1992, the United Nations has convened hundreds of global conferences and meetings to address pollution, climate change, desertification, and biodiversity loss. They usually come up with strong recommendations and innovative solutions, but lack the legal commitment. Thus, the implementation always lags behind. Industries resist any measures that undermine profit margins, and governments—often influenced by corporate interests—hesitate to enforce

**By prioritizing revenue metrics over planet health, education, and ecological stability, profit-driven models are eroding the foundations of human dignity and forcing societies to choose between financial returns and planetary survival**

regulations that may slow economic growth.

This dynamic is not accidental. It is a predictable outcome of a profit-centric system that rewards short-term gains over long-term planetary stability. Research confirms that ecological instability is a direct consequence of business models targeting continuous growth and profit maximization. The consequences are visible everywhere; global warming is rising, more species are going extinct, deserts are expanding, and pollution burdens on vulnerable communities are worsening every year.

Environmental degradation is not a simple technical failure, but a structural economic choice.

**III. Human Development Under Pressure**

Profit maximization affects more than the environment. It shapes the core systems that sustain human life and dignity.

1. **Public Health:** Healthcare systems driven by profit often prioritize expensive treatments over preventive care. Pharmaceutical companies may focus on profitable drugs rather than essential medicines. This leads to widening health inequalities and chronic underinvestment in public health infrastructure.
2. **Agriculture and Food Security:** Industrial agriculture prioritizes yield and profit, resulting in soil depletion, water overuse, and dependence on chemical inputs. Small farmers are pushed out, biodiversity declines, human health is undermined, and food systems become more vulnerable to shocks.
3. **Urban Development:** Cities increasingly reflect profit-driven planning: luxury developments overshadow affordable housing, public spaces shrink, and infrastructure caters to commercial interests rather than community needs. This contributes to social fragmentation and declining mental and physical health of the human population.
4. **Education Systems:** Education becomes commodified, emphasizing marketable skills over holistic human development. Students face cognitive overload and disengagement as institutions prioritize metrics and revenue over learning and creativity.

**As corporate competition outpaces ethical safeguards in AI and environmental governance, experts warn that unchecked market forces are pushing humanity toward irreversible tipping points**

**IV. Artificial Intelligence: A New Frontier of Profit-Driven Risk**

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly transforming economies, but its development is increasingly shaped by corporate competition and profit incentives. As companies race to dominate AI markets, ethical safeguards, transparency, and long-term societal and environmental impacts are often sidelined.

This “fever of profit maximization” makes regulating AI extremely difficult. Without strong governance, AI could amplify inequality, disrupt labor markets, and create security vulnerabilities. The risks are not hypothetical; they are structural outcomes of a system that rewards speed and market capture over safety and human-centered innovation.

**V. The Moral Limits of Profit Maximization**

Some scholars argue that profit maximization can have moral or efficiency benefits under certain conditions, such as promoting honesty or respecting contributors and consumers. However, these arguments assume ideal markets and ethical constraints that rarely exist in practice anywhere.

Profit maximization encourages short-term gains, externalizes costs onto society and the environment, concentrates wealth and power, widens the gap between rich and poor betwen and within countries, undermines democratic decision-making, and reduces human beings to economic units.

The “capability approach in economics”* offers an alternative, advocating for firms that expand human well-being and social value rather than merely maximizing financial returns. This model, sometimes called the “Senian enterprise”, redefines success in terms of human development, equity, and sustainability.

**The capability approach, developed by Amartya Sen in the 1980s and further advanced by Martha Nussbaum, is a framework for assessing human welfare that emphasizes what people are actually able to do and be, rather than just the resources or utilities they possess. Unlike traditional welfare economics, which often focuses on income, wealth, or utility, the capability approach centers on real opportunities and substantive freedoms that allow individuals to live fulfilling lives.*



**VI. A World at Risk: Chronic Crises and Potential Catastrophes**

When profit maximization becomes the

dominant logic across all sectors, societies face a convergence of crises:

- Ecosystem collapse driven by unchecked exploitation and pollution
- Social inequality as wealth concentrates in the hands of a few
- Public health vulnerabilities due to underinvestment in prevention
- Urban dysfunction shaped by commercial interests
- Educational erosion as learning becomes a commodity
- Technological risks from unregulated AI development

These crises are interconnected results of a shared systemic root. If left unaddressed, they could escalate into uncontrollable catastrophes such as climate tipping points, food system failures, economic breakdowns, and widespread social unrest.

**VII. Toward a Human-Centered Economic Future**

To prevent these outcomes, societies must rethink the role of markets and firms. Profit cannot remain the sole metric of success. Instead, economic systems must integrate human development, ecological stability, and social value into their core objectives.

This requires:

- Stronger global governance
- Ethical corporate models
- New metrics beyond GDP and profit, targeting sustainability
- Policies that prioritize long-term well-being
- Public participation in economic decision-making

The shift is not merely desirable; it is necessary for human survival.

**VIII. Closing Reflection**

When elevated to a universal principle, profit maximization becomes a barrier to human progress and a driver of global instability. It shapes decisions that prioritize financial gain over life, dignity, and planetary health. Unless societies redefine economic purpose, the world will continue moving toward chronic crises and potentially irreversible calamities.

Humanity must choose between “a future built on profit” and a “future built on human welfare & sustainability”.

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World News

# ‘Every US$1 invested in climate and clean-air action can return US$15’

Every US$1 invested in tackling climate change and air pollution together can generate around US$15 in economic benefits, according to a new report published by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC). This is higher than tackling climate and clean air separately, and it includes both market and non-market economic gains.

Released on the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies, *Hidden assets: The economic and health case for climate and clean air action* is the first comprehensive global economic assessment of integrated climate and clean-air action.

“For too long, we have treated climate action as a cost to be managed and air pollution as the unfortunate outcome of development. This report shows the opposite: clean air is a key driver of development, health, food and energy security, and climate stability – an asset we must invest in,” said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP. “Proven solutions already exist. What we lack is the decisive leadership from governments, financial institutions, and businesses to deliver them with the speed and coordination this crisis demands.”

*Hidden assets: The economic and health case for climate and clean air action* is the first comprehensive global economic assessment of integrated climate and clean-air action

**The human cost of air pollution**

The US$15 return includes measurable market benefits – such as lower healthcare expenditure, greater labour productivity, and avoided physical damage – and the monetary value of fewer premature deaths and healthier lives.

In 2025, exposure to human-caused outdoor air pollution (PM2.5 and ozone) was linked to an estimated 6.4 million premature deaths worldwide. Household air pollution was linked to a further 2 million premature deaths, including around 300,000 children.

Unlike previous assessments, the report factors in the economic effects of air pollution-related illness, including pressure on health services, losses to productivity and well-being. In 2025, outdoor air pollution contributed to 5.5 million new cases of childhood asthma, 2 million new cases of dementia and millions of cases of heart attack, pulmonary disease, diabetes, stroke and lung cancer.

**A package of 25 proven measures**

The package of measures examined in the report spans six sectors - energy and fossil fuel systems, industry, transport, agriculture and food systems, residential cooking and heating, and waste management – and combines both long-term decarbonisation measures and measures that target super pollutants such as methane, black carbon, and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

Measures include renewable power and energy efficiency, increasing clean cooking and heating solutions, tighter vehicle emission and efficiency standards, inspection and maintenance, electric vehicles and low-sulfur shipping fuels, recovery of associated gas to end routine venting and flaring and reduce oil and gas leaks, livestock and manure management, more efficient fertilizer use, improved rice cultivation and alternatives to crop residue burning, better solid waste and wastewater management, and phasing down HFCs.

**Failure to act carries a huge economic price, with each year of delayed action estimated to forgo more than US$1.5 trillion in benefits, equivalent to about 0.5 per cent of global GDP**

## The economic value of cleaner air materializes quickly enough to outweigh the implementation cost within a decade

By 2050, full implementation of the 25 measures could cumulatively prevent 144 million air pollution related premature deaths, including 96 million from ambient air pollution alone, and hundreds of millions of cases of chronic disease.

Many deliver domestic health and economic benefits within a single term of government.

**Air quality and climate gains**

Compared with the report's baseline scenario, immediate implementation of the measures would halve global carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, reduce methane emissions by 60 per cent and cut major air pollutants – including black carbon, sulphur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides — by around 70 per cent.

The measures would avoid approximately 0.34°C of global warming by 2050 and 1.4°C by 2100. Because land temperature rises faster than the global average, avoided warming in most regions would be greater, reaching an estimated 1.5–2°C by 2100. By the end of the century, carbon dioxide emissions under the scenario would be net negative, while major air pollutants would fall by up to 85 per cent.

"This report provides the most rigorous evidence yet that treating climate change and air pollution as separate problems causes us to underestimate the benefits of tackling either. When we modelled them together, the returns were larger than each could show alone, because the same sources, sectors and policies so often drive both," said Simon Dietz, Co-Chair of the Assessment and Professor of Environmental Policy, London School of Economics.

The economic value of cleaner air materializes quickly enough to outweigh the implementation cost within a decade and continues to make up almost half of the total economic benefits in 2100, as detailed in the report.

**Closing the implementation gap**

Institutional barriers – including fragmented decision-making, limited enforcement capacity, and weak government coordination – are the most significant of the implementation barriers identified.

Cumulatively, these barriers risk delaying full implementation by almost eight years globally. Addressing them, including through fiscal policy incentives and regulation that enable the private sector to roll out technologies that are both profitable and reduce emissions, could accelerate deployment and unlock up to US$10 trillion in additional health benefits by 2040.

This report calls for integrated climate, air-quality, health and economic planning, stronger institutions and enforcement, and better alignment of public and private finance.



# UN urges swift action to avoid climate catastrophe

Record heat waves, deadly flooding and extreme weather reflect an ever-warming planet poised to soon breach safe temperature limits, according to a UN report, but doubling down on climate action now could avoid a climate catastrophe.

The scorching heat in the northern hemisphere in recent months, raging wildfires and deadly floods are a warning of what lies ahead, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said.

He recalled that the historic 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change saw world leaders pledge to keep temperature rise to the 1.5°C limit above pre-industrial levels, which scientists say is critical to avoiding the worst climate devastation.

Indeed, the world is failing to keep that promise, according to the new report from the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

“The fight for 1.5 degrees is the fight for humanity,” he said. “We are set to breach the 1.5°C limit within the next few years.”

There are no good outcomes if temperatures remain above 1.5°C consistently, warned UNEP chief Inger Andersen.

“Across the globe, extreme heatwaves are already proving that climate impacts will strike faster, hit harder, and last longer, costing more lives and causing deeper disruption,” she said.

“Now is the time we must double down on climate action. We can and must get on the right path. By cutting greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening resilience and adaptation and ensuring exceedance of 1.5°C is as small and short as possible.”

“Every fraction of a degree will cost lives, destroy livelihoods, deepen inequality and push ecosystems closer to irreversible damage,” the Secretary-General said. “Humanity is speeding past the limit to avoid climate catastrophe.”

However, swift climate action can bring the world back from the brink, Guterres said.

“We can still bring warming back below 1.5°C by the end of the century,” he said. “We must make the overshoot as small and short as possible, limiting how high temperatures rise and how long they remain above 1.5.

“The science is clear,” Guterres said. “The solutions are at hand, and the world has never been better equipped to deploy them. Now is the time to raise ambition and accelerate action.”



# ‘Himalayas approaching tipping point, millions of livelihoods at stake’

The Himalayas are approaching a tipping point as glaciers melt faster than a decade ago, threatening water security as the region approaches “peak water” by mid-century, according to a study released in September.

The findings come after the collapse of a Himalayan glacier in late August along the Nepal-Tibet border, which caused cascading landslides and flash floods in the valleys below. At least 1,300 people have been confirmed dead and more than 5,300 are missing across Nepal and China’s Tibet region. The study highlights the growing risks from a rapidly changing Himalayan environment.

**With glaciers melting 65% faster than a decade ago, a landmark study warns of catastrophic outburst floods, critical monitoring gaps, and impending “peak water” by mid-century**

As glaciers retreat, they are leaving behind unstable glacial lakes held back by little more than loose rock and ice, above valleys where millions of people live, the study found.

The study was produced by Systemiq, a sustainability advisory firm, together with the Integrated Mountain Initiative, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, and India’s G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment.

Himalayan glaciers are now losing mass 65% faster than they were a decade ago, the study found. Yet, only 21 glaciers were currently monitored on the ground out of an estimated 40,000 glaciers across the Hindu Kush-Himalaya region, a vast mountain system spanning eight countries from Afghanistan to Myanmar, the study found. This monitoring gap matters

because the physical landscape is changing rapidly.

As glaciers retreat, they can leave behind expanding lakes held back by unstable deposits of rock and ice. At the same time, warming is destabilising permafrost - permanently frozen ground that can thaw as temperatures rise - and high mountain slopes, increasing the possibility of cascading hazards, the report says.

Close to 200 glacial lakes in India are identified as high risk, with 56 classified as "very high risk", leaving millions exposed downstream. This was based on a 2025 scientific assessment of 189 high-risk lakes in the Indian Himalayan region. The Central Water Commission is monitoring 2,485 glacial lakes larger than 10 hectares across India's Himalayan river basins.

The Himalayas have already seen devastating examples of what can happen when glacial lakes burst their natural dams.

In 2023, a glacial lake outburst flood in Sikkim killed at least 70 people and caused widespread damage to roads, bridges and hydropower projects. In 2021, a similar disaster in Uttarakhand killed more than 200 people after a massive flood swept through the Rishiganga and Dhauliganga valleys.

**But the danger is not confined to spectacular floods.**

The Himalayas are a vast natural water system feeding rivers that sustain hundreds of millions of people across South Asia. ICIMOD says "peak water" is expected around mid-century in most Hindu Kush Himalayan river basins - the point at which glacier runoff reaches its maximum before declining as glaciers lose mass. This will have profound implications for water security.

The new research puts an unusually large economic number on that dependency. It estimates that Himalayan water underpins roughly 20% of India's GDP, sustaining wheat, rice, tea, hydropower and pilgrimage economies.

Yet the mountain states capture only about 5% of that value, it says. And, though making up only around 18% of India's land, the Himalayan region accounted for roughly 35% of the country's natural disasters.

**Not all the forces driving glacier loss are beyond the region's control.**

The Systemiq research estimates that roughly a third of Himalayan glacier melt is driven by black carbon, much of it originating from brick kilns in the plains. Soot deposited on snow and ice absorbs more sunlight and accelerates melting.

Unlike global greenhouse-gas emissions, black-carbon pollution is a lever that India and its neighbours can act on directly, the report argues.

The report proposes 10 priority transitions, ranging from reducing black-carbon emissions and expanding glacier monitoring to improving disaster early-warning systems and changing the way tourism is developed in the mountains.

Another priority is to strengthen disaster preparedness, with governments agreeing in advance what action to take when hazards emerge - from evacuation to protecting vulnerable infrastructure.

The Indian Himalayan region receives roughly 400 million tourist visits a year, and researchers call for a rethink about tourism and shift goals from maximising visitor numbers towards generating value that is retained and reinvested locally.



# UNCCD COP17 advances new pathways for land restoration, drought resilience

After two weeks of negotiations on how to tackle land degradation, desertification and drought, the 17th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP17) concluded in August in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Across the negotiated and Action Agenda tracks, Ulaanbaatar brought together key elements of implementation: political direction, science, finance, investment-ready projects, partnerships and stronger participation by the people who manage the world's land.

The biannual meeting of the UNCCD's 197 Parties put the world's rangelands — which cover 54 per cent of the Earth's land surface, support around two billion people and are stewarded by some 500 million pastoralists — at the centre of the global land agenda.

Alongside the negotiations, COP17 delivered a series of initiatives and financial commitments aimed at accelerating action on land restoration and drought resilience.

Governments, development banks, funds and companies announced a US$1.3 billion portfolio of finance across 23 countries on five continents, at different stages of

**US$1.3 billion portfolio of finance for land restoration and drought resilience across 23 countries, with rangelands at its centre through a US$1.2 billion portfolio spanning 45 projects**

development. This includes US$644.5 million identified as new finance, of which US$216.4 million is already confirmed and moving towards implementation.

**From commitments to implementation**

The conference took place against a stark global backdrop. Up to 40 per cent of the world's land is degraded, while countries have committed to restoring more than one billion hectares by 2030. More than 70 countries now have national drought plans, compared with only three in 2013, but financing and implementation continue to lag behind the scale and speed of the challenge.

Against this backdrop, Parties called for greater mobilization of financial resources, capacity-building and technical cooperation to strengthen proactive drought management, particularly in African countries, without neglecting other affected developing countries.

A significant body of new evidence presented in Ulaanbaatar highlighted both the costs of inaction and the benefits of investing in healthy land. New reports examined the economics of restoring the world's rangelands, the growing human and economic impacts of drought, the particular challenges facing Small Island Developing States and Central Asia, and the value of investing in soil health.

The findings showed that 18.8 million hectares of land are degraded across SIDS, while in Central Asia more than 80 million hectares — over a quarter of the region — are already degraded, affecting 24 million people. At the same time, all five Central Asian countries have adopted voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality targets, half of which have already been met.

Together, the reports showed how land degradation and drought are affecting food and water security, livelihoods and economies across diverse regions, while making the economic case for prevention, sustainable land management and restoration.

**A new global architecture for drought resilience**

Following sustained negotiations, Parties decided to continue discussions at COP18, building on progress made at COP16 and COP17, with a view to adopting a decision on the proactive management of drought at all levels. Parties also decided that drought will remain a stand-alone agenda item at COP18 and at each ordinary session thereafter.

The Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership, established at COP16, moved towards implementation in Ulaanbaatar. Its first Assembly of Partners advanced work on a proposed pooled fund intended to help around 70 low- and lower-middle-income countries through capacity-building,

**The Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership, launched by Saudi Arabia at COP16, moved closer to operational delivery, advancing work on a proposed pooled fund to support around 70 vulnerable countries**

investment-ready programmes and financing for drought resilience.

COP17 also saw the launch of the Drought Resilience Investment Facility (DRIF), the first global catalytic financing platform dedicated to drought resilience. Co-created by UNCCD and Luxembourg with support from the International Drought Resilience Alliance, the Facility aims to mobilize up to US$400 million in public and private capital for investments in water security, sustainable agriculture, nature-based solutions and land restoration. Its first strategic partnership with the Global Environment Facility will explore opportunities to unlock private and philanthropic finance.

Phase II of the International Drought Resilience Observatory also introduced the world's first Drought Resilience Index, providing countries with a new tool to assess their capacity to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to drought and to better target policies and investment.

**Finance for land moves up the agenda**

COP17 also sought to narrow the gap between global land commitments and the finance available to deliver them.

An estimated US$355 billion a year is needed through 2030 to meet global land restoration commitments, compared with around US$77 billion currently invested, leaving an annual financing gap of US$278 billion. Private finance accounts for only around six per cent of global investment in land restoration.

Governments, development banks, funds and companies announced a US$1.3 billion portfolio of finance for land restoration and drought resilience across 23 countries on five continents, at different stages of development. Of this, US$644.5 million is identified as new finance, with US$216.4 million already confirmed and moving towards implementation. The portfolio spans rangeland and landscape restoration, drought resilience and locally led adaptation.

Discussions in Ulaanbaatar also focused on addressing barriers that have kept investment in land low, including how to make land, soil health and drought resilience more visible and trackable within existing nature-finance categories. Participants also explored greater use of guarantees, first-loss capital, insurance and project-preparation facilities to turn restoration plans into investment-ready projects.

**Rangelands: From overlooked ecosystems to economic assets**

Hosted by Mongolia during the United Nations International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, COP17 gave prominence to rangelands and the people who manage them. Parties recognized pastoralists as



essential stewards of rangeland ecosystems, highlighting the importance of transboundary mobility and the value of pastoralists' knowledge and experience. Despite their global importance, rangelands remain largely overlooked in policy and investment: they contain roughly one-third of the world's key biodiversity areas, yet feature in the national climate plans of only 24 countries, compared with 181 for forests.

New economic analysis presented in Ulaanbaatar estimated that rangelands generate US$21–47 trillion in ecosystem services every year — up to nearly half of global GDP — through benefits including food production, water, carbon storage and biodiversity. Restoring rangelands typically returns US$4–6 for every dollar invested, rising to as much as US$36 when wider public benefits such as water supply are included.

**UNCCD and Luxembourg launched the Drought Resilience Investment Facility, which aims to mobilize up to US$400 million in public and private capital for drought resilience**

The Rangelands Flagship Initiative announced at COP17 seeks to translate that economic case into investment, bringing together projects supporting sustainable rangeland management, restoration and pastoralist livelihoods.

**From Mongolia to Egypt**

The next session of the UNCCD Conference of the Parties, COP18, is expected to take place in Egypt, in 2028, carrying forward the momentum built in Ulaanbaatar.

Looking ahead, Egypt has emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation and promoting integrated approaches to land degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss that strengthen food and water security and resilience.

COP18 will provide the next major milestone for countries to assess progress on land restoration and drought resilience and build on the outcomes reached in Ulaanbaatar.

# World Ozone Day 2026: Global action for a cooler planet



Every year on 16 September, World Ozone Day commemorates the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which was ultimately signed by every country in the world. This protocol is crucial to control the production and use of ozone depleting substances (ODSs) such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and other substances that replaced CFCs.

The continuous monitoring of ozone has played a key role in evaluating the effectiveness of the Montreal Protocol and supporting its evolution through successive adjustments and updates, including the Kigali Amendment signed in 2016.

The Montreal Protocol has demonstrated how science-based policies, international participation, effective compliance mechanisms, dedicated financing and partnerships can deliver measurable environmental results. The agreement has contributed to the recovery of the ozone layer while supporting the transition towards safer and more sustainable alternatives.

This year's theme, "Global action for a cooler planet", celebrates 10 years of the Kigali Amendment, with the focus now shifting from repairing the damaged ozone layer to building a more sustainable and climate-friendly cooling sector.

The Kigali Amendment to the Montreal

**The Montreal Protocol has demonstrated that science-based policy, universal participation, strong compliance, dedicated financing, and effective partnerships can deliver real and measurable results**

Protocol, adopted in 2016, expanded the global effort from ozone protection to climate action by calling for the phased reduction of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), potent greenhouse gases widely used in refrigeration and air-conditioning.

HFCs are substances used as replacements for CFCs, and subsequent HCFCs (hydrochlorofluorocarbons) have also been phased out by the original Montreal Protocol. Although those HFCs do not deplete the ozone layer themselves, unlike CFCs and HCFCs, they are very powerful greenhouse gases and thus contributors to climate change.

As global temperatures continue to rise and demand for cooling systems accelerates, sustainable approaches are more important than ever. The Kigali Amendment plays a critical role in this effort by driving the phasedown of these potent greenhouse gases while promoting energy-efficient technologies, strengthening industrial capacity, and supporting innovation across the cooling sector.

**Why sustainable cooling matters**

Demand for cooling is rising as temperatures increase and urbanisation expands. Air conditioners and refrigeration are increasingly important for homes, workplaces, food supply chains, healthcare and vaccine storage.

The challenge is to expand access to cooling without creating additional pressure on the climate. The 2026 campaign consequently places greater emphasis on energy-efficient cooling equipment, climate-friendly refrigerants, responsible servicing and stronger implementation of the Kigali Amendment.

**Road to recovery**

The Montreal Protocol has since evolved through a series of amendments and adjustments as scientific understanding has improved.

According to UNEP, the agreement regulates nearly 100 man-made chemicals classified as ozone-depleting substances. Global action under the Protocol has led to the phase-out of the overwhelming majority of these substances, putting the ozone layer on a recovery path.

The recovery, however, does not mean the ozone problem has disappeared. Scientists continue to monitor the atmosphere, particularly the Antarctic ozone hole, and stress the need for continued compliance with international controls.

The success of the Montreal Protocol and its Kigali Amendment demonstrates that sustained observations and scientific assessments remain essential to track progress, identify emerging challenges, and inform future action to protect both the ozone layer and our climate.



# Reimagining the urban landscape through the 7 Wonders of Future Cities

A new global initiative to identify and celebrate the most innovative urban visions that will shape our collective future has kick-started in the run-up to World Cities Day.

The 7 Wonders of Future Cities is a new global initiative by New7Wonders celebrating the world's most visionary urban developments. It invites people everywhere to discover, nominate, apply, and then vote for cities and districts that best embody innovation, sustainability, and human progress.

Individuals worldwide can decide and choose what will become the definitive 7 Wonders of cities and urban developments for the future. Participants can decide which Future Cities, from the hundreds being built and planned across the world, will be chosen to be forever known as the 7 Wonders.

Global voting begins on October 31 this year on www.7wondersfc.com. The final decision will be announced on World Cities Day 2027.

**Cities of the Future**

A Future City is any built, planned and being built, or evolving urban development that integrates technology, design, and

**In the run-up to World Cities Day, New7Wonders invites citizens worldwide to nominate and vote for the most visionary, sustainable, and human-centric urban developments shaping our future**

sustainability to improve quality of life, while restoring balance between people and the planet.

The 7 Wonders of Future Cities campaign celebrates how cities are reimagining themselves for a sustainable future, inspiring collaboration, innovation, and hope for generations to come.

**What makes a future city?**

Our shared destiny is about where we live, how we live, in human-centred cities and developments that grow together with nature, guided by eco principles and smart systems, and setting new standards for the quality of life for all: these are our Future Cities.

The top three factors that are integral to a future city are:

**Sustainability:** Cities that prioritise renewable energy, circular economies, and minimal environmental impact while maximising liveability.

**Innovation:** Urban environments that leverage technology and creative design to solve complex challenges and improve daily life.

**Inclusivity:** Communities designed for all residents, ensuring accessibility, affordability, and opportunities for everyone to thrive.

During the global rollout of the 7 Wonders of Future Cities in Dubai in September 2026, campaign Chairman Jean-Paul de la Fuente presented "Designing for the Future City", where he explored the transition from simply connected cities to intelligent, adaptive and increasingly context-aware urban environments, while arguing that technology alone cannot define a successful

## The 7 Wonders of Future Cities campaign places public participation and human progress at the heart of smart city design

future city. Smart infrastructure, AI, data, mobility and digital systems need ultimately to improve the everyday experience of the people who live, work and participate in cities.

"The future city needs to be smart enough to adapt and human enough to belong," he said. "But there is another essential element: people need to understand, participate in, and feel part of the transformation. We see participation itself as a form of design infrastructure – because lasting urban success is much easier to achieve when people trust, support and champion the decisions being made around them."

The presentation addressed themes central to the Future Cities and Design agenda, including context-aware urbanism, mobility-as-a-service, digital infrastructure as a public utility, adaptive public spaces and digital placemaking.

De la Fuente added: "Smart-city technology should make life simpler, safer, healthier and more inclusive – not more complicated. Human-centric design gives those systems purpose, while public participation turns an urban vision into a shared cause. When governments, communities, investors, businesses, media and citizens can all engage with and champion a place, that is when a development can move beyond being simply a project and become a recognised city brand with enduring value."

# Publications

**The Hoopoe**

The Hoopoe is the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment's eighth title in its Environmental Knowledge Series, designed for nonspecialists, educators, students, youth, and environmentalists

**Title:** *The Hoopoe*

**Author:** Mohammed Ahmed AlFeelabi

**Review & Foreword:** Professor Mohammed Abdullah AlRayeh




This engaging book unfolds across five chapters, introducing readers to the "crowned king," exploring the hoopoe's behavior and ecological habits, and examining the bird as an environmental indicator. It also traces the hoopoe's place between scientific reality and myth. The fifth chapter discusses the threats facing the species, while the sixth outlines practical steps for protecting it. Before the conclusion, the author provides simple, actionable guidelines that any young person, institution, school, or farm can easily adopt to conserve the hoopoe.

In his foreword, Professor Mohammed Ahmed bin Fahd, Editor-in-Chief of the series, writes: "I believe many people have never seen a hoopoe in the wild, yet they certainly know it through its story in the Holy Qur'an or the many tales woven around it.

"The hoopoe is one of those birds where myth and fact coexist, to the extent that some cultures have granted it the title 'King of Birds,' competing with the peacock, long regarded as the crowned monarch of the avian species."

The author blends narrative storytelling with scientific insights, guiding readers through seven chapters about the hoopoe — the crowned king, the farmer's friend capable of protecting crops from pests, and a distinguished environmental creature. He also explores the bird's lofty status, straddling legend and reality, while highlighting the most pressing truth: the bird's growing risk of extinction.

The book ultimately confronts readers with a vital question: Will humanity ever fully recognize its responsibility in preserving biodiversity and protecting the ecosystems that God has entrusted to us — by stopping or reducing our destructive environmental practices?

**The Red Sea: Biodiversity and Future Sustainability**




This is the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment's Book No. (40) in its World of Environment series.

**Title:** *Red Sea: Biodiversity and the Future of Sustainability*

**Author:** Dr. Adel Sidahmed Omar Red Sea University – Marine Research Institute

**Review & Foreword:** Professor Sayed Mohammed Ali Ibrahim, Professor of Marine Biology – Sudanese and Libyan Universities

The book is organized into eight chapters covering:

• An environmental introduction presenting the Red Sea as a global reservoir of biodiversity, followed by an examination of coastal ecosystems and their role in sustainability.

• Chapter Three focuses on biodiversity in the Red Sea.

• Chapter Four explores ecological systems and marine protected areas in the region.

• Chapter Five discusses fisheries and seaports along Sudan's Red Sea coast.

• Chapter Six is a case study on Sudan's Red Sea State, with analysis of environmental and climatic challenges.

• Chapter Seven addresses the blue economy and environmental governance in the Red Sea.

• Chapter Eight examines environmental pressures and human-induced threats to the Red Sea ecosystem. The book concludes with a set of important appendices.

In the series foreword, Dr. Mohammed Ahmed bin Fahd, Chairman of the Higher Committee of the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment and Editor-in-Chief of the World of Environment series, writes: "This book represents a significant addition to contemporary Arabic environmental literature. It sheds light on one of the world's most important and most distinctive seas: the Red Sea, a unique ecological space that combines rich biodiversity, rare geological features, and plays a vital role in supporting both regional and global sustainability."

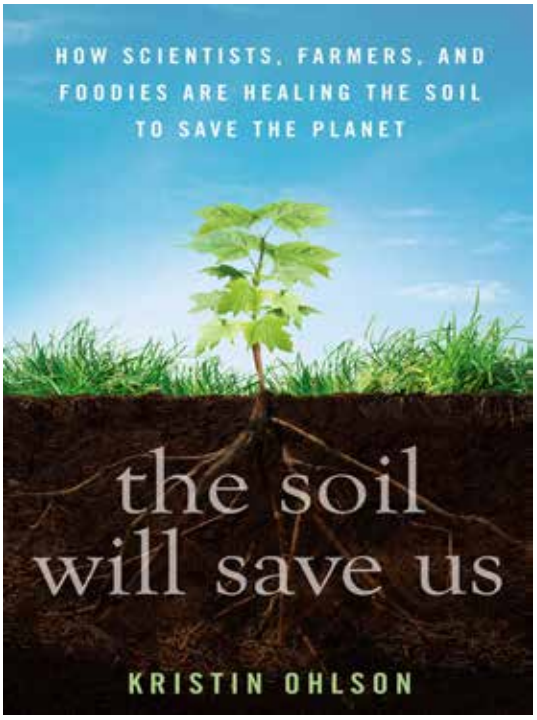
He adds that publishing this book aligns with the Foundation's mission to advance environmental knowledge, raise awareness, and strengthen efforts to protect marine ecosystems and preserve their resources for future generations — especially given that seas and oceans cover more than 70% of the Earth's surface and support the majority of the world's population in water security, food supply, transport, and tourism.

The foreword concludes with a reminder: Threatening the marine environment is, ultimately, a threat to the future of life on Earth.

# Books

***The Soil Will Save Us: How Scientists, Farmers, and Foodies Are Healing the Soil to Save the Planet***

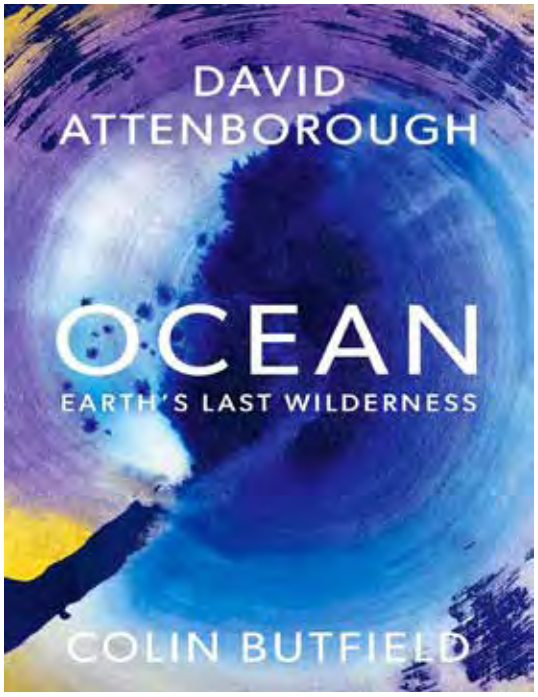
By Kristin Ohlson




Centuries of poor farming and modern industrial agriculture have stripped up to 80 percent of carbon from the world's soil. This displaced carbon now warms our atmosphere. Even ending fossil fuel use would not stop its effects. In *The Soil Will Save Us,* journalist Kristin Ohlson presents a passionate case for healing the Earth by returning atmospheric carbon to the soil, potentially reversing global warming. Inspired by a conversation with a chef, Ohlson explores an ecological approach uniting science, farming, food, and environmentalism. By nurturing surface ecosystems and underground microorganisms, we can fix carbon back into the earth. Her vivid storytelling revolutionizes how we view agriculture and our vital planet.

***Ocean: Earth's Last Wilderness***

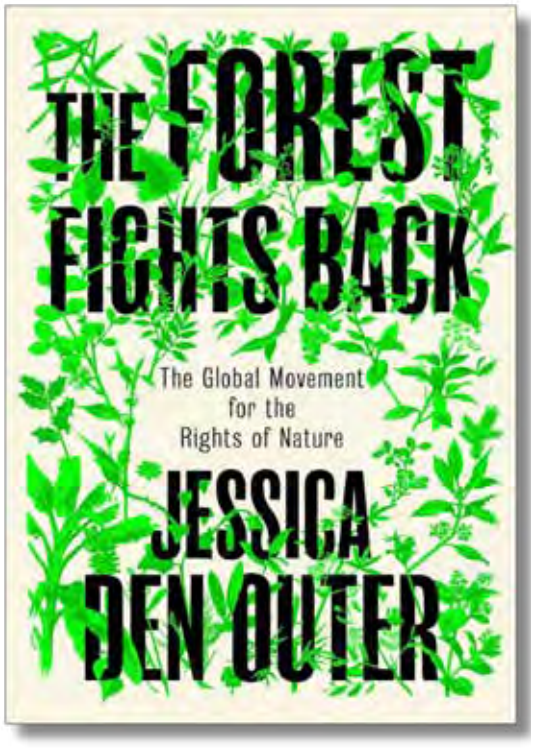
By Sir David Attenborough




From the icy seas of our poles to remote coral islands, David Attenborough has filmed in every ocean habitat on planet Earth. Alongside Colin Butfield, he shares the story of our last great wilderness, which regulates our climate and provides the air we breathe. The book takes readers into eight unique saltwater environments, from mangroves and kelp forests down to the deepest, most unexplored corners of the planet. It is a journey of wonder, populated by green turtles, blue whales, bioluminescent jellyfish, and the strange vampire squid. With Attenborough's trademark warmth, intelligence, and awe, Ocean reveals a world that is desperately fragile yet remarkably resilient, with an extraordinary capacity to repair itself.

***The Forest Fights Back: A Global Movement for the Rights of Nature***

By Jessica den Outer

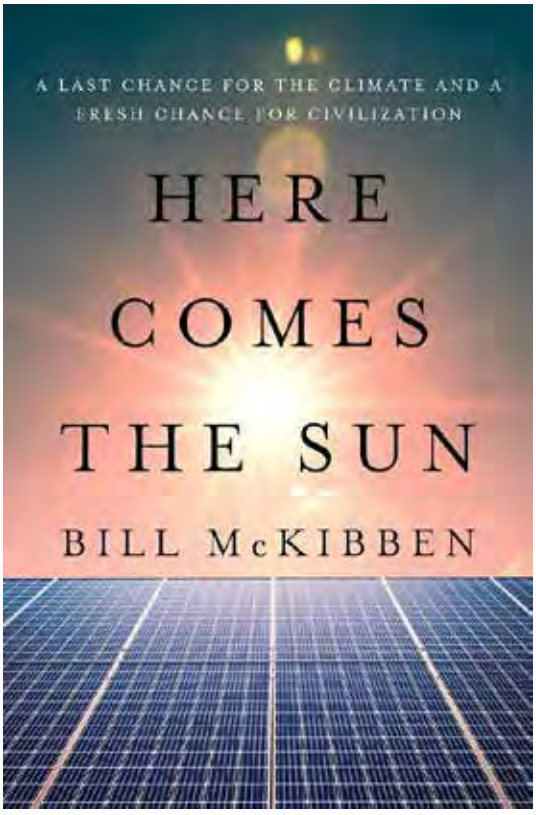



As the world grapples with an escalating climate crisis and collapsing ecosystems, our planet's future hangs in the balance. For centuries, legal systems treated nature as property to be exploited. Now, a bold movement challenges this paradigm.

In *The Forest Fights Back,* Jessica den Outer explores the groundbreaking Rights of Nature movement, which fights to legally recognize the rights of rivers, forests, and mountains to exist and flourish. From the Whanganui River in New Zealand to Spain's Mar Menor lagoon, den Outer highlights grassroots campaigns, sharing stories of determination and legal ingenuity. This movement goes beyond law; it represents a cultural shift reshaping how we live and advocate for nature.

**Here Comes the Sun**

By Bill McKibben

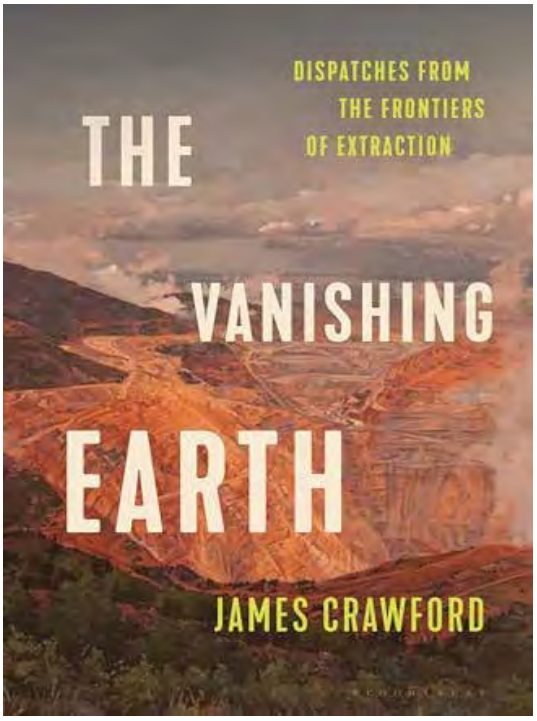



Our climate and democracy are melting down, but Bill McKibben, who first sounded the alarm on the climate crisis, insists the moment is full of possibility. Energy from the sun and wind is suddenly the cheapest power on the planet.

*Here Comes the Sun* tells the story of this sudden spike in renewable power, and the desperate fight of the fossil fuel industry to hold it back. From everyday citizens installing solar panels in Pakistan to California halving its natural gas use, McKibben traces the arrival of inexpensive solar energy. Solar power is our best hope to escape this crisis, offering a chance to reorder our civilization on humane grounds.

**The Vanishing Earth: Dispatches from the Frontiers of Extraction**

**By James Crawford**




Over the last half-century, humanity has taken more from the Earth than in all prior history combined. The planet is littered with the vast scars of extraction – yet, ironically, it is only by confronting the ruins of our 'old' world that we can find the path towards the 'new'.

In *The Vanishing Earth*, James Crawford takes readers to the literal and ideological frontiers of extraction. Beginning with the story of humanity's decoupling from nature, Crawford embarks on an epic journey to five resource landscapes rapidly trending towards exhaustion: landscapes of rock, metal, sand, and water.

From the salt flats of Chile's Atacama Desert lithium mines to the 'sacrifice zone' of Florida's phosphorus-rich Bone Valley, and even chillingly advanced attempts to harvest personal data from the brain itself, Crawford explores some of the most extreme scenes of the Anthropocene. Along the way, he asks what lies behind our insatiable appetites and explores emerging alternatives that might just spare our vanishing natural resources, transform our economies, and save our relationship with nature itself.

*The Vanishing Earth* is a consummate exposé of the pumping, blasting, stripping, felling, and leaching of what remains of the material planet. Some of the most shocking tales collected along his journey reveal extractive capitalism at the edge of the law. A recurring theme is baneful abandonment. In Florida's Bone Valley, mining companies gouge out trainloads of fossil rock to crush, and then chemically harvest the embedded phosphate for fertilizer production. But when a rock deposit inevitably plays out, firms declare bankruptcy and disappear.

The book's vital last section, "Repair", features interviews with carbon-capture engineers, rebel architects, conservation biologists, and climate-lawsuit litigants who signal that the "anti-extraction movement" is diverse and growing. Crawford writes movingly about an Indigenous-led campaign to stop oil drilling in an Ecuadorian rainforest, where saving giant otters, spider monkeys, 567 bird species, and trillions of insects is as important as supporting villages and reducing carbon emissions.

In 2008, the effort culminated in the world's first constitution to recognize rights for the natural world. To Crawford, that victory represents a perceptual shift toward understanding that "not extracting could be worth as much as extracting."



*"Over just the last 50 years, we have taken more out of the earth than in all of the rest of human history combined. As a result of all this extraction, in 2020, a staggering threshold was crossed. For the first time ever, the mass of everything that humans have made came to exceed the weight of all living things on the planet.*

*In 1900, human-made materials accounted for around three per cent of the Earth's total biomass. It was only in the second half of the 20th century that it exploded upwards, at least doubling every 20 years. To feed this incredible boom in construction and manufacturing the growth rate of extraction has been far greater than the growth rate of both the global population and the global economy.*

*Between the beginning of the 20th century and now, the number of people on the planet has increased fivefold, whereas the volume of materials we have unearthed annually has risen by a factor of fourteen.*

*As a result, today, the immense wounds left behind by extraction lie across every continent: mines, quarries, poisoned rivers, and hollowed-out industrial towns - known as sacrifice zones - that now form an alternative map of our civilisation and our age. And ironically, it is only by confronting the ruins of this 'old' extracted world that we can find the path towards the 'new'."*

**- James Crawford.**

## Green Flash

# COP31: Implementation of UN Conventions



**Dr. Eisa M. Abdellatif**

Chief Technical Advisor, Zayed International Foundation for the Environment

"Turkey is honored to host COP31 at a pivotal point to move from Negotiation to Implementation. We invite all parties to strengthen cooperation and turn commitments into concrete action." With this message, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan highlights a challenge facing the international community: agreements matter only when they produce meaningful change.

For decades, the UN has provided a forum where countries negotiate conventions and make commitments on issues that cross borders. These agreements establish shared goals and principles, but reaching consensus is only the beginning. The real test is whether governments, industries, and communities translate promises into practical, sustained action.

The gap between negotiation and implementation has persisted for 32 years, mainly because responsibility has rested with politicians and industry leaders, while the people most affected by global challenges have had limited opportunities to shape decisions.

A common pathway is expressed through three steps: Dialogue, Consensus, and Action. Dialogue helps parties understand different perspectives. Consensus creates a basis for shared commitments. Action puts those commitments into practice. Each step is essential, but the sequence is incomplete if it excludes community awareness and participation.

People need to understand how policies affect their lives. When communities are informed and involved, policies are more likely to reflect local realities, earn public trust, and identify challenges that may be missed during discussions.

This calls for greater attention to "HUMANWARE": the personal ethics, values, and consumption patterns necessary for Sustainable Living, combined with the Leadership & Collaboration that spark participation. Nurturing these qualities will strengthen the relationships and skills needed to turn ideas into action. Alongside laws, funding, institutions, and technology, conventions need citizens ready to act, local organizations that connect policy to everyday practice, and leaders who listen and respond. HUMANWARE is not a substitute for government responsibility; it is a way to make that responsibility more inclusive and effective.

Moving from negotiation to implementation takes more than another declaration. It requires cooperation beyond conference halls, including the people who will live with the outcomes. By completing Dialogue, Consensus, and Action with community awareness and participation, we can turn UN conventions into concrete, sustainable global action.

مصرف أبوظبي الإسلامي ADIB

على الأصول.
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# على درب المستقبل، ستجدنا معك. بقربك. إلى جانبك.

**مهما كانت الظروف.**

سواء توقعتها أم لا.
فخدماتنا المصرفية واضحةٌ شفافة، **هديها الشريعة الإسلامية.**

هدفها **تسهيل** معاملاتك المصرفية وتحقيق أهدافك، بثقة متبادلة **ومنفعة**

**مشتركة**، ونجاح يعود عليك قبل أن يعود علينا.

**اليوم نعاهدك:**
على الالتزام **بدعمك ومساندتك** مدى الحياة، في شراكة مبنية على الصدق والإنصاف.
سنستمع. سننصت. ونفتح أمامك طرقاً، تشقّها بثبات.

هنا الدار دارك، **فما نجاحنا إلا نجاحك** ..

**في حياةٍ .. جديرة بأن نحياها.**

حياكم في **مصرف أبوظبي الإسلامي - شريكك مدى الحياة.**

مصرف أبوظبي الإسلامي، شركة مساهمة عامة مرخصة من مصرف الإمارات العربية المتحدة المركزي


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