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creating green communities for a better tomorrow



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Dubai Walk Master Plan transforms Dubai into a pedestrian-friendly city

UN conference in Riyadh charts path for global action on land, drought

Chicago: Leading the way in sustainability



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Emirates Appreciation Award For The Environment

Together for a
green home





Chairman's Message



Prof. Mohammed bin Fahad
Executive Editor

As we embark on a new year filled with promise and potential, the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment looks forward to a period of continued progress towards a sustainable future for all.

The UAE's unwavering dedication to sustainability has been evident on both national and global stages, culminating in a year of significant achievements and setting the stage for even greater impact in the years to come. The principles of the UAE Consensus have significantly shaped global climate discussions. This consensus-driven approach fostered inclusive dialogue, bridging divides, and forging common ground among diverse stakeholders. The emphasis on practical solutions and tangible outcomes has laid the groundwork for accelerated progress in mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts.

Central to the UAE's climate leadership has been the championing of innovative financial mechanisms. The Loss and Damage fund, operationalized during COP28, represents a historic breakthrough in addressing the needs of vulnerable nations facing the devastating consequences of climate change. The UAE's substantial contribution to this fund, along with the commitment of other nations, signifies a crucial step towards climate justice and underscores the importance of global solidarity in tackling this shared challenge.

For us at the Zayed International Foundation, we begin the year with our participation at the global conference on "Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Future", underscoring our belief in the power of knowledge and collaboration to drive positive change. Our participation demonstrates our commitment to promote environmental sustainability through education, research, and international cooperation.

In the year ahead, we will be working alongside partners globally to advance the cause of sustainability. We believe that by fostering innovation and promoting education, we can build a greener, healthier, and more prosperous future for all.

I extend my warmest wishes for a happy and sustainable New Year, as we work towards a shared vision of a thriving planet.

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UAE champions international cooperation in combating desertification at COP16

The UAE delegation highlighted the nation's innovative solutions for sustainable agriculture and water management

The UAE concluded its participation in the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) by emphasising the importance of strengthening international cooperation to develop practical solutions for halting desertification and addressing drought. The UAE also underlined the importance of the active involvement of all community groups, with a focus on enhancing the role of women in global sustainable land management.

COP16 was held in Riyadh from December 2 to 13, 2024 under the theme “Our Land. Our Future”. The conference aimed to explore strategies for transforming land degradation into renewal. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) serves as the global advocate for bringing together governments, businesses, and civil society to address challenges and collaboratively shape a



sustainable future for land.

Dr. Amna bint Abdullah Al Dahak, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, who led the UAE delegation at the conference, said that with support of its visionary leadership, the UAE serves as an inspiring model for advancing sustainability within the country and globally. She highlighted the UAE's pioneering efforts and initiatives, which have contributed to the development of several communities in various nations.

Dr. Amna Al Dahak emphasized the importance of empowering future generations to lead the sustainability journey

global water crisis, particularly through the 'Mohammed bin Zayed Water Initiative' and other efforts."

She added: "The participation of the Emirati work teams, representing relevant authorities in the country, exemplified our collaboration and unity in pursuing shared goals. Our goals include addressing national challenges, expanding innovation-driven agriculture and food systems, promoting sustainable water management, and maximising the benefits derived from natural resources while preventing waste. Additionally, our teams played an active role in rallying global efforts in this regard."

Dr. Al Dahak thanked the members of the UAE delegation, and said they embodied the country's commitment to nurturing a generation with the expertise needed to lead the sustainability journey. She highlighted their role in reinforcing the UAE's position as a global capital of sustainability and a leader in shaping the future.

During his participation in a session titled 'Strengthening the Environmental Dimension of Food Systems Amid a Polycrisis in the Arab Region', Mohammed Saeed Al Nuaimi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, emphasised that water scarcity is a significant challenge for the Arab region. As one of the most arid places in the world, the Arab region faces immense pressure on its



She said: "COP16 on combating desertification marked a new chapter in the UAE's achievements to address the global drought crisis and halting land degradation. Through effective contributions to global efforts, the UAE has strengthened sustainable agriculture and food systems, and leveraged innovation to develop solutions to the



limited freshwater resources especially for agriculture.

Al Nuaimi said: "We must invest in climate-smart land solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change and enhance climate resilience across the Arab region. The success of these efforts hinges on cooperation, as the active participation and coordination among the various stakeholders is urgently needed to achieve the shared goals of our Arab nations."

He said that tackling the challenges of climate change, water scarcity, land degradation, and desertification calls for concerted regional efforts. These include leveraging advanced

technologies, strengthening resource management, and enhancing international cooperation. He said: "During our Presidency of COP28, we highlighted the critical role of agri-food systems in addressing these challenges and prioritised placing food systems at the heart of the climate action agenda."

The COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action, endorsed by 160 nations to date, underscores that achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement relies on addressing the interconnections between food systems, agriculture, and climate.

The UAE stressed the need for inclusive policies and projects to enhance women's leadership in land management

He also highlighted the 'Plant the Emirates' National Programme, which aims to empower local communities in achieving sustainable food security in the UAE by encouraging their participation in agricultural practices. He also referred to the 'National Agriculture Centre', which aims to advance research and innovation in agricultural technologies.

Hiba Obaid Al Shehhi, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Biodiversity and Marine Life Sector at MOCCA, participated in a session titled 'High Level Interactive Dialogue of the Gender Caucus: HerLand: Women's leadership on sustainable land management'. She emphasised the UAE's commitment to gender equality as part of the nation's efforts to address the impact of climate change, particularly in sustainable land management.

She added: "The climate crisis does not affect one gender more than the other; both women and men are significantly impacted by climate change. This presents a unique opportunity to strengthen efforts to combat desertification, land degradation, and drought, while enhancing the leadership role of women and girls by leveraging their expertise, knowledge, and skills."

She added: "The presence of women in this field globally remains modest, which necessitates the formulation of more effective and inclusive policies and projects. Women constitute nearly 50% of the agricultural workforce worldwide; however, they own less than one-fifth of the total land globally."

Al Shehhi highlighted the significant role of the



UAE in empowering women in agriculture through efforts that included a project to enhance the capabilities of refugees in Uganda, funded by the Sheikha Fatima Fund for Refugee Women, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

She added: "The call to enhance the role of women in achieving climate resilience and land restoration aligns with our national strategies."

UNCCD COP16 Riyadh | 2024

10. QATAR
11. SAUDI ARABIA
12. SYRIA
13. TRNC
14. TÜRKIYE
15. UAE
16. YEMEN



food security, water availability and livelihoods while threatening the
all.



Women play a pivotal role in shaping policies and driving innovative solutions to combat land degradation and desertification.”

Hiba Al Shehhi also participated in a session titled ‘Multilateral Environmental Agreements Synergies for Strengthened Environmental Governance: Insights from the Bern III Conference’, where she emphasised that climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation represent a link between interconnected environmental crises. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive response, she said.

Al Shehhi described the launch of the Mangrove Alliance for Climate (MAC) by the UAE in collaboration with the Republic of Indonesia, which aims to globally expand the planting of mangrove trees, which act as natural carbon sinks, and serve as a vital link in preserving the marine environment and biodiversity. The alliance currently includes 45 countries. She also shed light on the groundbreaking ceremony of the Mohamed bin Zayed - Joko Widodo International Mangrove Research Centre in Indonesia, which will lead research and innovation efforts to

expand mangrove forests globally.

Al Shehhi emphasised the importance of enhancing international cooperation by aligning actions with global frameworks such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure coherent strategies.

She said: “Policy tools at national level can help enhance cooperation among diverse sectors.”





UAE President confers Zayed the Second Medal on Ministers of Environment in China and Chile

UAE President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan conferred the Zayed the Second Medal on Huang Runqiu, Minister of Ecology and Environment of China, and Xie Zhenhua, China's former Special Envoy for Climate Change, in recognition of their remarkable contributions to the success of the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), which was hosted by the UAE in 2023.

The award ceremony was held during a reception hosted by Hussain Al Hammadi, UAE Ambassador to the People's Republic of China, in honour of the Minister of Ecology and Environment of China and the former Special Envoy for Climate Change in China.

The reception took place as part of their visit to the UAE-China Friendship Festival, organized by the UAE Embassy in Beijing, celebrating the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two nations.



The UAE President also conferred the Zayed the Second Medal on Professor Maisa Rojas, Minister of Environment of Chile, in recognition of her contributions to the success of COP28. The award ceremony was held during a reception hosted by Rojas in honour of Mohammed Saeed Al Neyadi, UAE Ambassador to Chile, at the Ministry's headquarters in the capital, Santiago.

During the ceremony, Rojas expressed her appreciation to the UAE President and commended the historic UAE Consensus, which became the cornerstone for global climate action and sustainability.

Al Neyadi emphasised the need for greater international partnership and cooperation in implementing sustainability concepts on a broader scale. Al Neyadi also commended Chile's support of the historic UAE Consensus, which fosters coordination and collaboration to safeguard humanity and the planet.



Mohammed bin Rashid unveils visionary Dubai Walk Master Plan

The ambitious plan aims to increase pedestrian and soft mobility from 13 percent to 25 percent by 2040, promoting healthier lifestyles and transforming Dubai into a year-round pedestrian-friendly city

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, has approved the Dubai Walk Master Plan (Dubai Walk), a visionary initiative aimed at transforming Dubai into a pedestrian-friendly city. The plan was approved in the presence of H.H. Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, First Deputy Ruler of Dubai, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the UAE.

The Dubai Walk Master Plan will establish an integrated network of walkways across the Emirate with a unique identity, focusing on accessibility, safety, and a comfortable walking experience, featuring uninterrupted pathways and expanded green spaces.

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum said that enhancing the quality of life in Dubai remains a key focus of the emirate's strategic vision. He emphasised that innovative infrastructure projects and the development of a distinctive, modern destination reflect Dubai's

global stature, further strengthening its position as the preferred city to live, work, and visit.

His Highness said: “We have approved the Dubai Walk Master Plan, a 6,500 km network of modern walkways covering 160 areas across the emirate. The plan includes constructing 3,300 km of new walkways and rehabilitating 2,300 km of existing ones by 2040, in addition to more than 900 km of walkways planned beyond 2040. It also involves developing 110 pedestrian bridges and underpasses to enhance connectivity. This

Plan, which outlines development strategies for walkways through 2040 and sets design standards to ensure seamless integration with the distinctive character of each area.

Mattar Al Tayer, Director General and Chairman of the Board of Executive Directors of the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA), provided a detailed briefing on the new initiative and its role in strengthening Dubai's global competitiveness in pedestrian and soft mobility. Aligned with the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan's '20-Minute City'



ambitious plan aims to increase pedestrian and soft mobility from 13% to 25% by 2040.”

His Highness added: “Dubai is a city of the future, committed to creating a healthy and happy urban environment. The Dubai Walk Master Plan promotes active lifestyles and provides exercise opportunities for all, making walking a central part of our culture and daily lives. This vision will position Dubai as one of the world's healthiest and most sustainable cities.”

His Highness reviewed the Dubai Walk Master

goal—enabling 80 percent of residents to access essential services within a 20-minute commute—and the Quality of Life Strategy 2033, the Dubai Walk Master Plan aims to transform Dubai into a pedestrian-friendly city.

The plan focuses on enhancing pedestrian safety, connecting areas with existing walkways, and integrating creative and cultural elements into soft mobility infrastructure, reflecting the unique identity of each area. It also promotes collaboration with strategic partners to deliver



innovative infrastructure solutions while engaging youth to contribute creative ideas for walkway design and amenities.

The Dubai Walk Master Plan envisions a 6,500 km interconnected walkway network, constructing 3,300 km of new walkways and upgrading 2,300 km of existing ones. The pilot phase runs from 2025-2027, with full implementation in three stages from 2027-2040.

The plan includes the development of 110 pedestrian bridges and underpasses to enhance connectivity across urban areas. Key projects include a bridge on Al Ittihad Road connecting Al Nahda and Al Mamzar, a bridge on Tripoli Street linking Al Warqa and Mirdif, a bridge on Al Khawaneej Street joining Mushrif and Al Khawaneej, and a bridge on Dubai-Al Ain Road connecting Dubai Silicon Oasis and Dubailand.

The project will seamlessly link major landmarks such as Burj Khalifa, Dubai International Financial Centre, Dubai Marina, and Jumeirah Lakes Towers. Each route will feature distinctive designs, colours, lighting, and landscaping, reflecting the unique identity of its surrounding area.

The walkways will incorporate greenery, shaded areas, misting systems, interactive digital screens, art displays, sports and entertainment equipment, rest areas, and commercial spaces. Accessibility and safety are prioritised through the use of signage, ground markings, lighting, integrated pavements, art displays, and integration with navigation systems and smart applications.

H.H. Sheikh Mohammed reviewed plans for the 17 km first phase of pedestrian walkways, featuring two key routes. The 15 km Al Ras Historical Route

The network will feature innovative designs, shaded areas, and amenities, reflecting the unique identity of each area



in Al Ras and Al Souk Al Kabeer highlights the emirate's heritage, including 5 km along the revitalised waterfront with 25 rehabilitated public squares featuring shaded rest areas, green spaces, and art displays.

His Highness also reviewed 'The Future Loop' project which will be implemented at the Museum of the Future area. This iconic elevated walkway, spanning 2 km with a width ranging from 6 to 15 meters, seamlessly connects key landmarks, including the Dubai World Trade Centre, Museum of the Future, Emirates Towers, Dubai International Financial Centre, and nearby metro stations.

His Highness then viewed the model of 'The

Future Loop', highlighting its connection to 10 key locations, a 30,000-square-metre air-conditioned level for year-round walking, and an additional 30,000 square metres of shaded, green open spaces.

The project, which will include commercial spaces, is set to be developed through a public-private partnership.

His Highness also reviewed models for three types of pedestrian walkways. The Scenic-Leisure Walkways include 112 km of waterfront paths, 64 km in urban areas, 124 km of green paths, and 150 km of rural and mountain trails. The City Connectivity Walkways focus on first- and last-mile connections to public transport in



30 areas, including Al Rigga, Business Bay, Al Bada'a, and the Trade Centre. The Community Walkways are designed to link residential areas to nearby attractions in 50 areas, beginning with Al Barsha 2, Al Khawaneej 2, and Al Mizhar 1.

Additionally, His Highness reviewed three models for urban spaces. The first model, Plazas, will be implemented in four locations: Etihad Museum, 2nd of December Street, Al Mamzar, and Mushrif. The second model, Superblocks, will cover four areas in its initial phase: Al Fahidi, Al Quoz, Al Karama, and Abu Hail.

The third model, Boulevards, will be executed on four streets: Jumeirah, Baniyas, Al Khaleej, and Al Muraqqabat, transforming them into pedestrian-friendly spaces.

H.H. Sheikh Mohammed was briefed on road

infrastructure developments in 'The Future Loop' area, including enhancements to the Trade Centre Roundabout and Al Mustaqbal Street.

The project will construct 6,200 metres of vehicle bridges and tunnels, transforming the roundabout into a surface-level intersection, improving traffic flow for seven surrounding areas and benefiting approximately 500,000 residents and visitors. These enhancements will increase road capacity by 30 percent (from 9,000 to 12,000 vehicles per hour) and reduce travel time from eight minutes to just over three.

A global competition, attracting six renowned international consultancy firms, sought innovative walkway designs for Al Ras and the Museum of the Future area. LXA's first-place concept was selected for the Museum of the Future area, envisioning a 2 km iconic bridge

"The Future Loop" will connect key landmarks with an air-conditioned level and shaded green spaces



reflecting the area's elegance and premium infrastructure, complementing landmarks like the Museum of the Future. Supporting the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan and the '20-Minute City' concept, the bridge provides seamless pedestrian and soft mobility access.

The elevated walkway integrates with the area's futuristic vision, creating a new tourist landmark and ensuring smooth pedestrian and traffic flow. Adopting global best practices, the project promotes walking and soft mobility.

The design includes air-conditioned sections, shaded areas, green spaces for temperature reduction, and interactive spaces for recreation and events. The bridge connects major attractions

and integrates three Red Line metro stations to encourage metro use.

The Al Ras area design preserves its historical character using minimalist interventions for walkways and plazas. Simple designs, materials, and harmonious colours are emphasised. Public spaces between historical buildings will be rehabilitated to create shaded rest areas, green spaces, and areas for art and cultural displays. Innovative microclimate control, leveraging the area's natural layout, will ensure pedestrian comfort. Diverse flooring materials will guide visitors to key attractions, and the complete street concept will redesign roads to prioritize pedestrians and soft mobility.



Zayed International Foundation for the Environment to participate in three-day global conference on Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Future in Kerala, India

The Zayed International Foundation for the Environment has announced its support for the upcoming global conference on 'Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Future', hosted by the Adi Shankara Institute of Engineering and Technology (ASIET) in Kalady, in the south Indian state of Kerala, from January 6 to 8, 2025. The three-day global conference aligns with the Foundation's mission to promote environmental sustainability through education and global cooperation, and to empower individuals to become responsible stewards of the planet.

Prof. Mohamed Ahmed bin Fahad, Chairman of

the Higher Committee of the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment, is among the line-up of noted speakers addressing the event.

Leading national, regional and international luminaries and thinkers including Kamlesh D Patel (Daji), the Global Guide of Heartfulness Institute and Founder of Heartfulness Education Trust; Dr. Séamus Ó Tuama, Director of ACE (Adult Continuing Education) and a senior lecturer in politics at University College Cork, Ireland; and Prof. Prasad Krishna, Director, National Institute of Technology, Kozhikode, will also be speaking at the event.

This was announced at a press conference by Anand Krishna, Managing Trustee, Adi Shankara Trust; Dr. Jacob George, Senior Associate Director, Adi Shankara Institute of Engineering and Technology; and N. Sreenath, General Manager, Adi Shankara Group of Institutions.

The conference also brings together prominent scholars, practitioners, researchers, and



policymakers from around the world. Academics from 18 countries will also present research papers that explore the crucial link between lifelong learning and sustainable development across environmental, economic, and social contexts.

"We believe that empowering individuals through lifelong learning is essential for creating a sustainable future," said Prof. Mohamed Ahmed bin Fahad, Chairman of the Higher Committee of the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment. "Education fosters environmental

awareness and inspires action, driving global cooperation to protect and preserve our planet for generations to come. This conference provides a vital platform for sharing knowledge, fostering innovation, and building partnerships to address the complex environmental challenges facing our world."

He added: "Lifelong learning is not just about acquiring knowledge; it's about cultivating a mindset of continuous improvement and empowering individuals to become agents of change in their communities. The environmental challenges we face demand urgent action, and this conference represents a critical opportunity to mobilize the global community and accelerate the pace of change. By bringing together diverse voices and perspectives from around the globe, this conference will strengthen international cooperation as we transition to a more sustainable and equitable world."

Key themes of the conference include resource mobilization for lifelong learning, the role of digitization and AI in sustainability, climate change, community engagement, and innovative curriculum development. The conference will also serve as a platform for fostering global partnerships, particularly within South Asia, and promoting the concept of lifelong learning, including the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in higher education.

Although India has been a member of the Asia-Europe Meeting since 2007, this is the first time that a global conference on the subject is being staged in Kerala. The conference is being held against the backdrop of the University Grants Commission's recent finalization of guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Higher Education to provide access, recognition, and career progression opportunities. RPL can enable lifelong learning by exploring the diverse learning experiences of individuals and enabling access to education.



COP16 in Riyadh charts path for global action on land, drought

Global leaders commit to prioritizing land restoration and drought resilience for food security and climate adaptation

After two weeks of intense negotiations on how to tackle land degradation, desertification and drought, the largest and most inclusive United Nations land conference wrapped up in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on December 13, 2024.

The nearly 200 countries convening at the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) committed to prioritise land restoration and drought resilience in national policies and international cooperation as an essential strategy for food security and climate adaptation.

Nations also made significant progress in laying the groundwork for a future global drought regime, which they intend to complete at COP17 in Mongolia in 2026. In the meanwhile, more than USD12 billion were pledged to tackle desertification, land degradation and drought around the world, especially in the most vulnerable countries.

Among the main agreements reached at COP16 were the creation of a Caucus for Indigenous Peoples and a Caucus for Local Communities to ensure that their unique perspectives and challenges are adequately represented; a continuation of the Convention's Science-Policy Interface to strengthen science-based decision-making; and the mobilization of private sector engagement under the Business4Land initiative.

COP16 secures over USD 12 billion in pledges to combat desertification and land degradation worldwide



COP16 was the largest and most diverse UNCCD COP to date: it attracted more than 20,000 participants, around 3,500 of them from civil society, and featured more than 600 events as part of the first Action Agenda to involve non-state actors in the work of the Convention.

In her statement, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed emphasised: “Our work does not end with the closing of COP16. We must continue to tackle the climate crisis—it is a call to action for all of us to embrace inclusivity, innovation, and resilience. Youth and Indigenous peoples must be at the heart of these conversations. Their wisdom, their

voices, and their creativity are indispensable as we craft a sustainable future with renewed hope for generations to come.”

In his closing remarks, COP16 President, Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture Abdulrahman Alfadley, said the meeting marked a turning point in raising international awareness of the pressing need to accelerate land restoration and drought resilience. “The Kingdom’s hosting of this important conference reflects its ongoing commitment to environmental issues and sustainable development. It reaffirms its dedication to working with all parties to preserve



ecosystems, enhance international cooperation to combat desertification and land degradation, and address drought. We hope the outcomes of this session will lead to a significant shift that strengthens efforts to preserve land, reduce its degradation, build capacities to address drought, and contribute to the wellbeing of communities around the world.”

Addressing COP16 closing plenary, Under-Secretary-General and UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw stated: “As we have discussed and witnessed, the solutions are within our grasp. The actions we took today will shape not only the future of our planet but also the lives, livelihoods, and opportunities of those who depend on it.”

He further emphasised a significant shift in the global approach to land and drought issues, highlighting the interconnected challenges with broader global issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, food security, forced migration, and global stability.

During the Conference, participants heard that UNCCD estimates that at least US\$ 2.6 trillion in

total investments are needed by 2030 to restore more than one billion hectares of degraded land and build resilience to drought. This equals US\$ 1 billion in daily investments between now and 2030 to meet global land restoration targets and combat desertification and drought.

New pledges for large-scale land restoration and drought preparedness were announced, such as the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership which attracted USD 12.15 billion to support 80 of the world’s most vulnerable countries in building their resilience to drought. This included a USD 10 billion pledge from the Arab Coordination Group.





Mohamed bin Zayed Water Initiative drives action on water scarcity at COP16 in Riyadh

COP16

The Mohamed bin Zayed Water Initiative concluded its engagements at the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (COP16) in Riyadh, where it addressed the importance of water scarcity on the global agenda, explored water scarcity solutions, and engaged with key stakeholders in water resource management.

At a panel session, 'Harnessing Innovation for Water Management', which featured representatives from XPRIZE, UAE University, The Nature Conservancy and the International Water Management Institute, the Initiative explored technology's role in reshaping water resource management.

The Initiative also hosted a panel discussion titled 'Storytelling for Water Awareness' to explore communications strategies that can generate greater attention and galvanise action to address the issue of water scarcity.

Henk Ovink, Executive Director, Global Commission on the Economics of Water pointed out, "There is a disconnect between 50 percent of the world who take water for granted and the other half who have to work really hard to get it. Art and communications and storytelling can help bridge that gap."

Ayesha Al Ateeqi, Executive Director of the Mohamed bin Zayed Water Initiative, said, "Water scarcity is a pervasive threat globally. Effectively tackling water scarcity demands urgent attention and investment. Platforms such as COP16 are crucial for convening key stakeholders, facilitating collaboration, and advancing innovative solutions to address this critical issue."

As part of its ongoing Youth Consultations, the Initiative invited young leaders advocating for sustainable water practices and water resilience to share their perspectives on how to engage youth more effectively in the global effort to address water scarcity.

UAE's "Green Tourism" theme marks fifth season of 'World's Coolest Winter' campaign

The "World's Coolest Winter" campaign promotes agritourism and community engagement with the UAE's natural landscapes

The UAE has transformed its deserts into thriving green spaces, establishing itself as a leading global tourism destination prioritizing eco-tourism and cultural heritage. Underpinned by numerous environmental initiatives, the UAE's commitment to sustainable development is exemplified by the fifth season of the "World's Coolest Winter" campaign, themed "Green Tourism."

Launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy, the National Agricultural Centre, and local tourism authorities, the campaign encourages agritourism and community engagement with farms and agricultural projects. Aligned with the national domestic tourism strategy, spearheaded by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, the initiative aims to solidify the UAE's position as a premier global destination.



This year's "Green Tourism" focus promotes environmental awareness while showcasing the UAE's natural beauty. Visitors can explore diverse attractions, from islands and beaches to mountains and nature reserves, while contributing to their preservation. This approach strengthens the UAE's position as a leading destination, uniting its rich culture, nature, and advanced infrastructure.

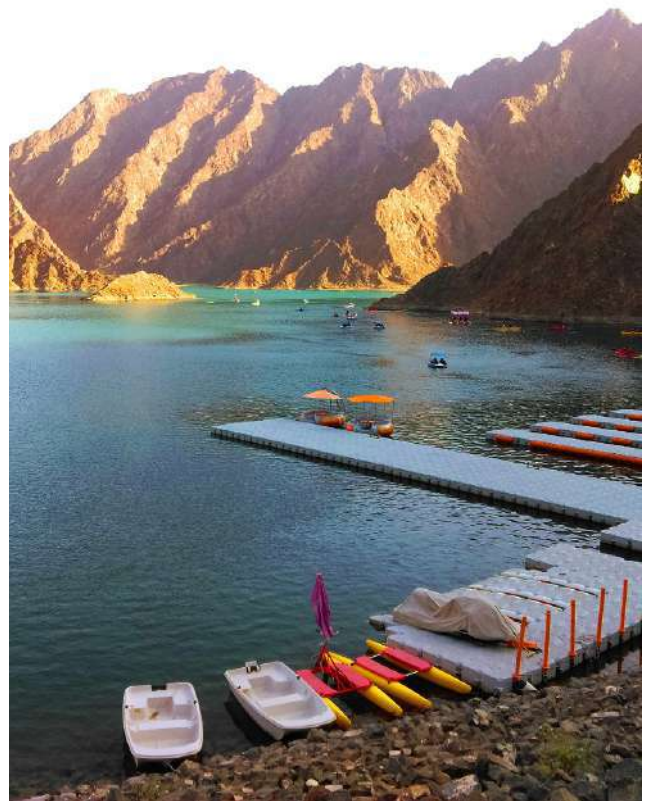
A robust legal framework protects the UAE's natural resources and biodiversity, supporting its commitment to eco-tourism, aligned with the UN's definition of nature-based travel. This emphasis on education and preservation benefits both locals and tourists.

The UAE leverages innovation and digital transformation to enhance tourism revenue and support local businesses, while also utilizing technology to reduce carbon emissions, contributing to its 2050 climate neutrality goals. This visionary approach has propelled the UAE to 18th globally in the World Economic Forum's 2024 Travel and Tourism Development Index, supporting the "UAE Tourism Strategy 2031."

The UAE's protected areas, comprising marine and wildlife reserves, cover a significant portion of its land and marine territories. These reserves are vital for biodiversity and environmental balance, further enhancing the country's eco-tourism offerings. The Ministry of Climate Change and Environment's "UAE's Natural Wonders" project further underscores this national commitment to eco-tourism development.

Various tourism authorities have launched initiatives to bolster green tourism. The Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi focuses on empowering partners with sustainable practices, including new guidelines and carbon measurement systems. Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism has introduced 50

The UAE's commitment to sustainability drives innovation and economic growth within the tourism sector



initiatives encompassing desert reserves, eco-friendly establishments, and awareness campaigns, reinforcing its commitment to a sustainable tourism model. The Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority champions eco-friendly practices and responsible resource management within its tourism sector.

UAE Council drives action in line with Circular Economy Policy 2021-2031

The Council discussed new projects and policies to enhance resource efficiency and promote sustainable practices

The UAE Circular Economy Council held its first meeting following its restructuring in 2024, chaired by Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri, Minister of Economy and Chairman of the Council. The meeting discussed several new proposals and directions for implementing the UAE Circular Economy Policy 2021-2031 to contribute to enhancing sustainability and the efficient use of resources. It also discussed the integration of national efforts to accelerate the transition towards an innovative and sustainable circular economy model.

The Council discussed a number of proposed projects to promote a circular economy in the country, noting the importance of completing work on the first set of policies and moving on to the second set. Besides, the meeting emphasized the importance of leveraging the potential of ‘Aluminium Recycling Coalition’ aimed at bringing about a gradual shift in aluminium recycling



operations in the UAE.

During the meeting, which was held at the headquarters of Landmark Group, the Council reviewed the most important milestones achieved by the UAE in its transition towards a circular economy model. Most notably, these include the integration of circular economy into Investopia Summit's agenda. The past three editions of the Summit served as an innovative investment platform highlighting global investment opportunities. Furthermore, it facilitated sustainable partnerships in the circular economy sector with a focus on manufacturing, green infrastructure and transportation sectors.

The UAE Circular Economy Council held four meetings during 2022-2023 as part of its efforts to achieve sustainable development goals and support the country's transition to a circular economy model.

After the meeting, Bin Touq witnessed the opening of the 'Landmark CircuLife' textile recycling facility, a groundbreaking initiative by the Group and a first of its kind project in the UAE and the wider region. He emphasised that this collaboration reflects the UAE's dedication to promoting green growth through strong public-private partnerships, reinforcing the country's role as a global leader in embracing circular economy principles.

The facility integrates advanced recycling technologies with fibre recovery and customer engagement initiatives. It has the capacity to process over 200,000 tons of textile waste, 90% of which would otherwise be discarded into landfills.

Sheikha Shamma bint Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan, President & CEO of UAE Independent Climate Change Accelerators (UICCA), said: "As we reach the midpoint of our 10-year strategy,

The "Landmark CircuLife" facility will process over 200,000 tons of textile waste, diverting it from landfills



this milestone offers us an opportunity to both celebrate our achievements and recalibrate our approach where needed. The progress we've made is encouraging, but the road ahead demands even greater commitment, innovation, and accountability to clear, measurable targets."

Renuka Jagtiani, Chairwoman of Landmark Group, stated: "Our journey toward adopting sustainable practices began over a decade ago with the launch of Splash's sustainable collection. Since then, we have implemented a range of initiatives at every stage of our product lifecycle and operations to reduce our environmental footprint and promote the circular economy."



9th Hatta Honey Festival celebrates Emirati beekeeping heritage

The five-day festival fostered investment opportunities and showcased a diverse range of honey products

The Hatta Honey Festival, the UAE's leading annual event dedicated to supporting Emirati beekeepers and the honey production sector, concluded on 31st December, 2024, with the participation of 51 Emirati beekeepers.

Organised by Dubai Municipality, the five-day festival aligns with the goals of the Hatta Master Development Plan, and is one of a series of initiatives that seek to enhance the area through economic and development projects, while fostering investment opportunities for the private sector.

The festival, held at the Hatta Hall, served as a vital platform for promoting the honey production sector and supporting Emirati beekeepers. It also facilitated investment and marketing opportunities by showcasing a wide array of honey products to visitors and tourists. Moreover, the event also seeks to enhance quality and health safety standards in Dubai's honey industry, foster knowledge exchange in

honey production, and spotlight innovative methods to improve honey quality.

Dr. Naseem Mohammed Rafee, Acting CEO of the Environment, Health and Safety Agency at Dubai Municipality, said, “The Hatta Honey Festival is an integral part of Dubai Municipality’s efforts to enhance the region’s attractiveness as a tourist and leisure destination.”

Dubai Municipality provided laboratory testing and support to enhance the industry’s standards



He added, “Community initiatives that support productive sectors — especially agriculture and SMEs — are a priority for Dubai Municipality. These initiatives aim to create economic opportunities that bolster productive local projects and empower national entrepreneurs, helping to develop, sustain, and elevate their local and regional ventures.

“During the festival, Dubai Municipality offered extensive laboratory testing to ensure quality and safety, reinforcing a robust food and health system that safeguards the community against

food-related risks.”

This year’s festival included an auction where visitors could purchase a variety of honey types and a competition was held to determine the best Emirati honey, with valuable prizes awarded to winners. The festival also featured diverse activities, including five booths showcasing products from home-based businesses, 10 educational workshops on honey production, and a stage for daily entertainment events featuring arts and folk groups, as well as dedicated play areas for children.

Dubai Municipality provided extensive support for national beekeepers, including immediate testing of honey samples to ensure compliance with approved standards. Tests cover total sugars, glucose, sucrose, fructose, and hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF).

Furthermore, the Dubai Smart Mobile Laboratory conducted tests for yeasts and fungi in honey products and evaluated the safety of prepared foods offered by participating establishments to ensure the quality and safety of the food provided.

Part of the Hatta Winter initiative, the festival offered residents, tourists, and visitors an opportunity to explore diverse honey varieties and experience Hatta’s unique natural beauty, rugged terrain, and pleasant winter climate.



Inaugural International Mangrove Conservation and Restoration Conference highlights future priorities

The world's first edition of the conference addressed pressing global mangrove challenges and international best practices for mangrove restoration and conservation

The world's first edition of the International Mangrove Conservation and Restoration Conference (IMCRC), led by the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD), concluded with an urgent message: safeguarding and restoring the world's mangroves is essential to addressing global environmental and socioeconomic challenges.

With more than 50 percent of mangroves at risk of collapse by 2050 due to human-driven pressures, the conference highlighted the critical role of these ecosystems in ensuring coastal resilience, biodiversity protection, food security, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In his closing speech, Ahmed Al Hashmi, Executive Director of the Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity Sector, said, "Over the past three days, the first International Mangrove Conservation and Restoration Conference has demonstrated the power of collaboration and innovation in addressing the critical challenges

faced by mangrove ecosystems globally.

“This milestone event, hosted in Abu Dhabi, provided a platform to bridge the gap between cutting-edge scientific research and practical, on-the-ground restoration efforts. It has reinforced the need to develop traditional approaches to mangrove restoration, instead amplifying science-based strategies, community engagement, and a holistic understanding of ecosystem connectivity.”

The conference drew on cutting-edge science, innovative technology and international collaboration to combat the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change



He added that the conference highlighted the Abu Dhabi Mangrove Initiative, a cornerstone of EAD’s efforts to position Abu Dhabi as a global leader in mangrove conservation. Launched by H.H. Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, this initiative exemplifies the integration of science, policy, and action to address climate change and enhance biodiversity.

A holistic approach to mangrove conservation

was highlighted, accentuating the need for connectivity between mangroves and adjacent ecosystems like seagrasses, coral reefs, and upstream rivers.

This integrated approach ensures that ecosystems provide both ecological and socioeconomic benefits, creating a balanced strategy for conservation and restoration.

Community involvement was identified as a cornerstone of successful mangrove conservation



efforts. Restored mangroves not only support local livelihoods but also reduce pressures on these ecosystems through community engagement and capacity building, ensuring the ability to benefit sustainably.

The conference also stressed the need for large-scale collaboration and funding to achieve impactful mangrove conservation and restoration. Efforts like the Mangrove Breakthrough initiative were spotlighted for their role in mobilising resources from governments, the private sector, and philanthropic organisations to bridge gaps and drive transformative action.

Successful examples of community-based mangrove restoration projects were shared from countries such as Indonesia, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Mexico, and the United States. These projects demonstrated scalable methods and best practices that can be applied globally.

With growing awareness of mangroves' importance, the conference highlighted the need to capitalise on this momentum by scaling impactful restoration projects, investing in credible solutions, and building resilient ecosystems that benefit all.

EAD, Nabat to revolutionise mangrove restoration

The Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) has announced a partnership with Nabat, a new climate tech venture by the Advanced Technology Research Council's VentureOne, to revolutionise mangrove restoration in Abu Dhabi by leveraging AI and autonomous robotics to enhance effectiveness, efficiency, and accuracy.

EAD will provide expert ecological guidance, ensuring the restoration projects align with Abu Dhabi's unique environmental landscape, offer insights on ecological requirements and support site selection for maximum impact.

Nabat will lead the development and deployment of advanced technologies, including AI and autonomous robotics solutions, to streamline and optimise mangrove restoration efforts.

The partnership's primary focus is to deploy advanced AI-powered robotics to make mangrove restoration efforts data-driven and more efficient. These technologies will drive impactful change and set an example of how technology can mitigate environmental challenges, encouraging further investments in sustainability-focused innovations.



Emarat, Lootah Biofuels sign MoU to enhance cooperation in renewable energy

UAE NEWS

The Emarat Petroleum Company (Emarat) and Lootah Biofuels have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation to develop renewable energy sources and enhance sustainability.

The MoU aims to establish a framework for cooperation between the two parties to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants associated with traditional fossil fuels and to improve air quality and environmental sustainability in line with the goals of the National Biofuels Policy and the UAE Net Zero 2050 strategy.

The MoU, signed by Ali Khalifa Al Shamsi, Chief Executive Office of Emarat Petroleum Company - Emarat, and Yousif Saeed Lootah, Founder and CEO of Lootah Biofuels, focuses on strengthening cooperation in order to expand the collection network of used cooking oils through the retail stations network of Emarat, including biodiesel in their offering, exploring manufacturing of

sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), and providing biodiesel to vessels in certain ports.

The two parties will study and develop a mechanism for collecting used cooking oils through the retail stations network of Emarat for Lootah biofuels. The parties will develop a mechanism that identifies the collection equipment, process, customer relationship, financial reconciliation and any other items required to solidify the process.

Emarat will also be looking actively to include biodiesel produced by Lootah Biofuels in their offering in the retail stations. The two parties will cooperate to develop feasibility studies and investment mechanisms to build a plant to manufacture sustainable aviation fuel to serve the aviation sector in the UAE and the region. Additionally, both parties will collaborate on selling biodiesel to vessels in certain ports to support the maritime transport sector.

Abu Dhabi saves 364 million plastic bags since 2022 ban

In the first nine months of 2024, consumption of single-use plastic bags has decreased by 121.5 million

The Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) has announced that 364 million single-use plastic bags have been saved since the ban on single-use plastic bags came into effect on 1st June 2022, as part of the emirate's Single-Use Plastic Policy.

This is the equivalent of 2,400 tonnes of plastic, or 547,000 tonnes of Green House Gases (GHGs), equating to 130,000 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles being driven for one year.

In 2023, EAD launched the 'Incentive-based Bottle Return Scheme' initiative, in collaboration with key partners, to recover and recycle single-use plastic bottles.

To date, more than 130 million bottles have been collected from around 150 Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs), smart bins, as well as door-to-door collections. The total amount of recyclable plastic collected is 2,000 tonnes - enough to fill up to 80 truckloads. Till November 2024, 67



million bottles were returned for recycling.

Similarly, on 1st June 2024, EAD imposed a ban on some Styrofoam products. The Agency reported a 97 percent compliance rate has been achieved among retailers. These proactive measures by the emirate are a prelude to the Federal ban on targeted Styrofoam and plastic products which will become effective in 2026.

Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, Secretary-General of EAD, said, "When we launched the Abu Dhabi Single-Use Plastic Policy in 2020, which was



followed by the ban on single-use plastic bags in 2022, we were the first in the region to do so, setting very ambitious targets to meet our commitments to protect the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change."

She added, "We knew that a consumer change in behaviour was the key to us being able to reduce

The total amount of recyclable plastic reached 2,000 tons, enough to fill up to 80 truckloads

the reliance on single-use plastics and nurture a culture of reuse and recycling. The Abu Dhabi community has proven to be more than collaborative and proactive, and as a result, we have recorded, during the past two years alone, a significant reduction of 364 million plastic bags. For context, this represents a 95 percent reduction in the total number of plastic bags distributed at the emirate's cash counters.

"Prior to the policy's implementation, shoppers used three bags per shopping trip, but now only use 0.4 bags. This has also led to a 2,000 percent increase in the number of reusable bags in just one year, increasing from 603 bags in 2022 to 26,075 bags in 2023 at one of the emirate's main outlets. We also recorded the recovery of 130 million plastic bottles, and an increase in the number of companies concerned with recycling plastics in the emirate."

She also added that the number of companies manufacturing single-use plastic products in Abu Dhabi decreased from 110 in 2022 to 88 in 2023 and 57 new recycling companies working in the emirate's waste sector set up operations.

EAD predicts that the enforcement of the ban will have saved over 400 million single-use plastic bags by 2024 end. From January to September last year, consumption decreased by 121.5 million bags. By the end of 2024, the Agency anticipates it will have collected 90 million single-use plastic bottles.

MBZUAI: Leading the charge for a greener, AI-powered future

Partnering with industry leaders, MBZUAI develops cutting-edge AI tools to combat climate change's most pressing challenges

Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) has identified several ways in which AI could help to improve sustainability and mitigate some of the worst effects of climate change, as well as how AI itself could be made more efficient.

AI is power hungry and driving unprecedented demand for power, and data centres are struggling to keep up, MBZUAI noted, adding that it is working on numerous initiatives and research projects to address this, focusing on areas such as hardware and software design.

MBZUAI has also developed its own energy-efficient operating system, AIOS, to reduce energy consumption, carbon footprint and the cost of creating and deploying AI models and applications.

488 million hectares (Mha) of tree cover have been lost between 2001 and 2023, a 12 percent



decline since 2000. AI can help monitor land by using computer vision and recognition to quickly and accurately assess and report on how land is being used.

MBZUAI's GeoChat+ is a tool to enhance sustainability, development, and planning with generative AI. Billed as the first grounded large vision language model (LVLM), this tool supports numerous tasks such as quantity surveying, checking the size and details of buildings and complexes, and assessing property damage from disasters or other events.

In the energy sector, AI optimizes operations, increases efficiency, and promotes sustainability. This is particularly important as more diverse



energy sources enter the grid, including rooftop solar and an increasing array of utility-scale renewables.

A team at MBZUAI is working on AI solutions for smart energy grids by applying a technique called federated learning to train a machine-learning model, enabling it to understand and spot

From smart grids to sustainable agriculture, MBZUAI's AI initiatives are transforming key sectors

patterns in the energy-usage habits of millions of users without compromising data privacy. This enables energy providers to increase the efficiency and reliability of energy distribution massively.

For agriculture and food security, AI technologies can be used to increase crop yields, enhance food security and optimize resources used in agriculture.

MBZUAI also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Silal which supports the National Strategy for Food Security 2051, aimed towards developing a comprehensive national system to enable sustainable food production using modern technologies and enhance local production.

As climate change leads to increasingly intense heat in many parts of the world, city planners and municipalities are seeking ways to reduce temperatures. MBZUAI, in partnership with IBM, is working on AI-enabled solutions to detect urban heat islands - areas within cities and metropolitan areas that experience significantly higher temperatures than surrounding rural or natural environments.

By detecting and analyzing these areas, the solution will help city planners, municipalities, and residents mitigate the worst effects of heat islands, making cities more livable amid unpredictable weather patterns.

World Soil Day 2024 underlines vital importance of accurate soil data and information for food security

“Caring for Soils: Measure, Monitor, Manage” was the theme of unique celebrations hosted in Thailand and Saudi Arabia

To mark World Soil Day (WSD) 2024 on 5th December, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) highlighted the crucial need for accurate soil data and information to understand soil characteristics and support informed decision-making on sustainable soil management to ensure food security.

“You cannot manage what you cannot measure,” said FAO Director-General QU Dongyu in his opening video address for the official celebration held in Pak Chong, Thailand – marking the first time the event was hosted outside of FAO headquarters. “Globally, 1.6 billion hectares of land are degraded due to human activity, with over 60 percent of this damage occurring on valuable cropland and pastureland. To reverse this trend, we need sustainable soil management based on accurate soil data and information for informed decision-making.”



The event in Thailand was connected via video link with a session of the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Saudi Arabia, where WSD was celebrated as part of Agrifood Systems Day. The session in Riyadh saw the launch of the Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Soil Management in the Near East and North Africa (NENA).

Measurements and interpretation

Soil data provides raw measurements of the physical, chemical, and biological properties of soil, while soil information offers interpreted and synthesized data for practical applications and policymaking.

Accurate soil data and information can enable sustainable soil management and effective carbon sequestration, with soils capturing up to 2 gigatons of CO₂ annually. Providing more data and information on soils among other site-specific information enables farmers to use fertilizers more effectively, potentially improving crop nutrient efficiency—particularly nitrogen—by 30 percent worldwide.

Healthy soils are essential for food security, nutrition, climate action, biodiversity and livelihoods. Yet, every year the world loses billions of tonnes of topsoil due to erosion alone, posing a major threat to soil health. Salinization, pollution, compaction and the climate crisis also threaten soils.

Working together with partners through key initiatives, FAO promotes new soil technologies such as soil sensors, digital mapping, and big data, to bring critical soil insights directly to farmers, scientists, and policymakers.

Soil science prizes

The ceremony in Thailand also included the awarding of the Glinka World Soil Prize and the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award 2024.

Soil data provides raw measurements while soil information offers interpreted and synthesized data for practical applications and policymaking



The Glinka prize was awarded to the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand, specifically to the Land Development Department (LDD) for its global leadership in integrating science, policy, and community-driven initiatives to enhance soil health.

The King Bhumibol WSD Award was awarded to the Ministry of Agriculture of Iran for organizing the best WSD celebrations in 2023 under the theme: “Soil and Water, a Source of Life.”

Mangroves as climate allies highlighted in new Abu Dhabi photography exhibition

Region's first international mangrove photography exhibition at Manarat Al Saadiyat showcases the beauty and importance of mangrove ecosystems worldwide

Abu Dhabi opened the first international exhibition of mangrove photography in the region, running until the end of February 2025 at Manarat Al Saadiyat as part of the Abu Dhabi Mangrove Initiative (ADMI). The exhibition is a partnership between the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD), Manarat Al Saadiyat under the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi (DCT), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and the Mangrove Action Project (MAP).

The exhibition highlights the natural beauty of mangrove forests around the world and sheds light on their environmental importance and essential role in combating climate change and protecting biodiversity. It features more than 40 international photographers including selected images from the 2023 and 2024 Mangrove Photography Awards and provides a global platform for photographers to showcase the



beauty of mangrove ecosystems and their global challenges.

The exhibition includes 120 images that focus on two main themes. The first theme, "Mangroves: Our Ally in the Face of Climate Change," takes visitors on a journey through a selection of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and Protected Areas around the world, especially in Abu Dhabi, to highlight the role of mangroves as a key ally in combating climate change. The second theme, "Discover the World of Mangroves," showcases the best winning images from the Mangrove Photography Awards organised by MAP.

The event is an exceptional opportunity for nature and photography enthusiasts to discover the beauty of mangrove trees and provide the public with a unique educational experience aimed at raising awareness of the importance of mangrove forests and their role in protecting coasts, supporting local communities, and providing natural solutions to environmental challenges resulting from climate change.

Mangrove forests are unique and distinct coastal ecosystems that grow in areas where land meets seawater in tropical and subtropical regions and can withstand high levels of salinity as well as changing and harsh environmental conditions.

10,000 trees for 'Regreening our Mosques' initiative

His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Presidential Court, has donated 10,000 trees in support of the "Regreening our Mosques" initiative.

The initiative, launched by the General Authority of Islamic Affairs, Endowments and Zakat (GAIAEZ), in collaboration with the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, coincided with the UAE's 53rd Eid Al Etihad. The initiative aims

The exhibition offers a unique educational experience and celebrates the beauty of these vital ecosystems



to plant trees in mosques' courtyards nationwide, promote environmental sustainability in alignment with the UAE's vision of balancing development and environmental protection.

Dr. Omar Habtoor Al Darei, Chairman of the General Authority of Islamic Affairs, Endowments and Zakat, attended the launching ceremony of the initiative in Abu Dhabi, along with Saeed Al Bahri Salem Al Ameri, Director-General of Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA), and other officials.

They participated in planting trees in the courtyard of a mosque to mark the initiative's commencement.



Chicago: Leading the way in sustainability

The City of Chicago is a leader of innovative environmental initiatives, and sustainability is a key focus of Chicago's policies

Chicago has long been a leader in implementing innovative environmental initiatives, with sustainability at the forefront of its policies. The city's efforts encompass a wide range of programs and strategies aimed at enhancing energy efficiency, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting environmental justice.

In 2022, Chicago introduced a comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CAP) with ambitious goals to reduce carbon emissions, advance equity, and improve community health and resilience. The plan aims for a 62% reduction in the city's greenhouse gas emissions by 2040.

Green Transportation

Bike lanes, hybrid taxis, electric vehicle charging stations and mass transit are just a taste of Chicago's sustainable transportation options.

The Chicago Transit Authority operates one of the largest public transit systems in the U.S.



The Chicago Transit Authority operates one of the largest public transit systems in the U.S., including buses and the “L” train network. They are committed to reducing emissions by transitioning to electric buses, with plans to fully electrify its bus fleet by 2040 and have expanded service and route efficiency to encourage more residents to choose public transit over cars.

To promote cycling as a sustainable alternative, Chicago has heavily invested in bike-friendly infrastructure. The Divvy bike-sharing program, which offers both traditional and e-bikes, has expanded to more neighborhoods and provides discounted memberships for low-income residents. The city has also developed over 400 miles of bike lanes, many of which are protected

to ensure cyclist safety. Bicycle parking facilities, such as racks and secure storage at transit hubs, make it easier for residents to integrate cycling into their daily commutes. Through initiatives like Vision Zero Chicago, the city is also working to eliminate traffic fatalities and further encourage biking.

Electric vehicle (EV) adoption is another critical pillar of Chicago's transportation strategy. The city has installed public EV charging stations across neighborhoods and incentivized private businesses and residents to adopt EV infrastructure.

Green Spaces

Chicago not only features exemplary mass public transit networks but excels at maintaining green spaces in the city as well. The greater Chicago area consists of over 12,000 total acres of parkland which includes land managed by the state and county - there are over 8,800 acres of green space owned by the Chicago Park District.

A goal of the city's recently released 2025-2030 Strategic Plan is to make Chicago a greener city. There are many ways in which the Chicago Park District is already moving in that direction.

The Chicago Park District oversees thousands of acres of parkland, hundreds of indoor and outdoor facilities, and many large public venues and events. In addition to maintaining their current inventory, the Park District is mindfully expanding to provide equitable park access and aims to be environmentally conscious in their operations and construction practices.

The Chicago Park District manages a wide variety of green spaces across the city, from floral



gardens and conservatories to natural areas and beaches. These locations provide a multitude of ecological and human health benefits. Our efforts to support a dynamic urban natural environment that is resilient in the face of climate change include:

- Planting and maintaining trees
- Establishing and managing natural areas
- Redeveloping brownfields to address environmental injustice
- Restoring ecological integrity and functioning
- Offering a variety of natural spaces
- Maintaining healthy and beautiful landscapes

Sustainable Development Policy

The Chicago Sustainable Development Policy (SDP) is administered by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to promote sustainable building methods and materials involving City-assisted construction and

rehabilitation projects citywide. The SDP helps Chicago achieve wide-ranging climate and resiliency goals through a menu of options that reflect best practices.

Created in 2004 and revised in 2017 and 2024, the SDP is a point-based system that assigns values to strategies and building certifications for projects receiving City funding and zoning approvals. The SDP promotes sustainable construction design elements that increase energy efficiency, decrease greenhouse gas emissions, improve public health, manage stormwater, promote more efficient transportation, divert waste, promote workforce development, and protect wildlife.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certifies buildings that demonstrate excellence in the following categories: sustainable sites, location and transportation, water

The Chicago Park District oversees thousands of acres of parkland, hundreds of indoor and outdoor facilities, and many large public venues and events



efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, and innovation in design.

Energy Star is another high energy efficiency standard for buildings and appliances within buildings, particularly high-efficiency electric appliances (such as electric HVAC units). Chicago excels at producing highly efficient buildings, and the electrification of buildings in order to enhance energy efficiency.

With regard to LEED and Energy Star buildings, Chicago has the highest percentage (at over 65%) of LEED-certified/ Energy Star-certified office buildings among the top 30 real estate markets in the United States.

Waste Management

The City of Chicago has developed ambitious recycling programs throughout the city. By reducing Chicago's waste and implementing various recycling programs, the city of Chicago is making an effort to conserve resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste management, lower Chicago's carbon footprint, and reduce space in areas surrounding Chicago currently needed as landfills.

The Blue Cart Recycling program provides bi-weekly recycling services to single-family homes and multi-unit buildings. Blue Cart Recycling includes almost every type of household waste and had diverted over a half-ton of waste from landfills in the first 10 months of 2018 alone.

Another key sustainability initiative that is helping Chicago save money and resources is the city's wastewater management program. New wastewater treatments are assisting in the recovery of essential energy, solids, and water. These resources are then recycled and transformed into assets that can generate revenue for the city, and protect the environment.



UNEP's 2024 Champions of the Earth recognizes six bold environmental leaders

The 2024 laureates include Indigenous leaders, scientists, and a sustainable agriculture initiative

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has announced recipients of the 2024 Champions of the Earth, honoured for their outstanding leadership, brave actions and sustainable solutions to tackle land degradation, drought and desertification. 2024's laureates include a minister of Indigenous Peoples, an environmental defender, a sustainable agriculture initiative, an Indigenous rights advocate, a scientist focused on afforestation and a pioneering ecologist.

The annual Champions of the Earth award, the UN's highest environmental honour, recognizes trailblazers at the forefront of efforts to protect people and planet. Since 2005, the award has recognized 122 laureates for outstanding and inspirational environmental leadership.

"Almost 40 per cent of the world's land is already degraded, desertification is on the rise and devastating droughts are becoming more



regular. The good news is that solutions already exist today, and around the world, extraordinary individuals and organizations are demonstrating that it is possible to defend and heal our planet," said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP.

"The efforts of the 2024 Champions of the Earth stand tall as a reminder that the fight to protect our land, our rivers and our oceans is a fight we can win. With the right policies, scientific breakthroughs, system reforms, activism, as well as the vital leadership and wisdom of Indigenous Peoples, we can restore our ecosystems."

UNEP's 2024 Champions of the Earth are:

Sonia Guajajara, Brazil's Minister of Indigenous Peoples, honoured in the Policy Leadership category, has been advocating for Indigenous rights for more than two decades. Guajajara became Brazil's first Minister of Indigenous Peoples and the country's first female Indigenous minister in 2023. Under her leadership, 13 territories have been recognized as Indigenous land to ward off deforestation, illegal logging, and drug traffickers.

Amy Bowers Cordalis, an Indigenous rights advocate honoured in the Inspiration and Action category, is using her legal expertise and passion for restoration to secure a better future for the Yurok tribe and the Klamath River in the United States. Cordalis' work to restore the river ecosystem and encourage the adoption of sustainable fishing practices demonstrate how bold environmental action can bring significant positive change, while upholding Indigenous Peoples' rights and livelihoods.

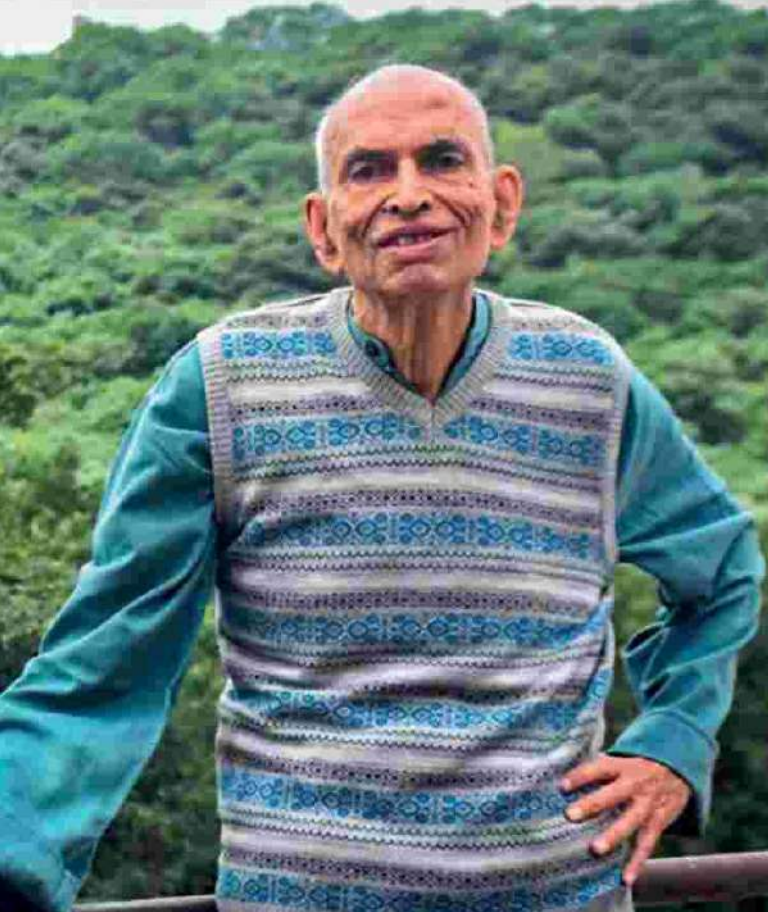
Gabriel Paun, a Romanian environmental defender honoured in the Inspiration and Action category, is the founder of NGO Agent Green, which has been helping save thousands of hectares of precious biodiversity in the Carpathians since 2009 by exposing the destruction and illegal logging of Europe's last

The awards recognize outstanding contributions to protecting and restoring ecosystems globally



old growth forest. Paun has received death threats and been physically attacked for his work in documenting deforestation in an area that is vital for the ecosystem and supports unique biodiversity such as lynx and wolves.

Lu Qi, a Chinese scientist honoured in the Science and Innovation category, has worked in science and policy sectors for three decades helping



China reverse degradation and shrink its deserts. As Chief Scientist of the Chinese Academy of Forestry and founding President of the Institute of Great Green Wall, Lu has played a key role in implementing the world's largest afforestation project, establishing expert research networks and partnerships, and boosting multilateral cooperation to stem desertification, land degradation and drought.

Madhav Gadgil, an Indian ecologist honoured in the Lifetime Achievement category, has spent decades protecting people and the planet through research and community engagement. From landmark environmental impact assessments of state and national policies to grassroots environmental engagement, Gadgil's work has greatly influenced public opinion and official policies on the protection of natural resources. He is renowned for his seminal work in the ecologically fragile Western Ghats region of India, which is a unique global biodiversity hotspot.

SEKEM, a sustainable agriculture initiative honoured in the Entrepreneurial Vision category, is helping farmers in Egypt transition to more sustainable agriculture. Its promotion of

biodynamic agriculture plus afforestation and reforestation work has transformed large swathes of desert into thriving agricultural businesses, advancing sustainable development across the country.

An estimated 3.2 billion people worldwide are impacted by desertification. By 2050, more than three-quarters of the world's population is expected to be affected by droughts.

In March 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring 2021-2030 the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. UNEP's #GenerationRestoration campaign aims to support accelerated progress on these commitments by rallying support for the 2030 Agenda to carry out vital ecosystem restoration work to protect 30 per cent of nature on land and sea and rehabilitate 30 per cent of planetary degradation.

Globally, countries have pledged to restore 1 billion hectares of land by 2030, while current trends suggest 1.5 billion hectares would need to be restored to meet the 2030 land degradation neutrality goals.



33 Camel Trekkers complete epic 680km journey across UAE desert

UAE NEWS

In a bold celebration of the UAE's timeless heritage, the 11th edition of the Camel Trek, organized by the Hamdan Bin Mohammed Heritage Center (HHC), marked its grand finale at the Heritage Village in Global Village, Dubai. After 13 days and over 680 kilometers traversing the UAE's breathtaking desert landscapes, the trek concluded on December 21, 2024.

This year's trek, which began on December 9 in the Rub' al Khali desert, has been a remarkable celebration of tradition and culture, featuring 33 participants from 17 nationalities. Passing key locations such as Tel Marib, South Shah, the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary "Bab Bin Mudhahiya," Al-Du'aisiya, and North Al-Qaw'a, the caravan then progressed towards Khaznah, Ajban, and Saih Al-Silm, demonstrating a blend of resilience, teamwork, and cultural appreciation.

Abdullah Hamdan Bin Dalmouk, CEO of HHC, applauded the participants' perseverance in navigating the challenges posed by harsh weather

and rugged terrain. He said: "This journey was a real test of teamwork. This year's trek simulated historical journeys, with participants preparing their meals and adapting to conditions similar to those faced by our ancestors."

He added: "Through this journey, we aim to reconnect with our history, preserving our national identity and introducing future generations to the essence of desert life—a key part of our ancestors' lives."

Reflecting on the experience, Emirati citizen Khaled Yahya Al-Balushi said: "This experience allows me to honor my forefathers' journeys and represent the UAE's traditions in the best light."

Dutch horse trainer Harmke Westervelt echoed these sentiments, saying: "This journey was challenging yet deeply rewarding. As a horse trainer, I found bonding with my camel a unique and transformative experience, highlighting the incredible traits of these remarkable creatures."



Expanse of drylands must be a 'wake-up call' warns Saudi Arabia's UNCCD COP16 Presidency

A new UNCCD report reveals expanding drylands now impact over 2.3 billion people globally

The Science Technology and Innovation Day at COP16 in Riyadh saw delegates seek to harness the restorative potential of innovation in combatting land degradation, desertification and drought. An action-packed agenda included an array of discussions and events, with subject-matters ranging from the use of increased satellite coverage for monitoring land degradation, to the role of start-ups in accelerating land restoration and drought resilience.

Sustainability Innovation Week brought together start-ups, innovators, scientists and entrepreneurs to accelerate the global adoption of sustainable technology. The week saw the launch of the International Water Research Center, a partnership initiative between Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA), and the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, KAUST, to redefine approaches to water sustainability.

A research and innovation partnership between

Saudi Arabia's National Livestock and Fisheries Development Programme, KAUST and Estifamah was also announced to accelerate research on enhancing soil quality. A further four innovation projects were announced, as part of a research program worth over USD25 million between MEWA, KAUST and Saudi Arabia's National Center for Palms and Dates. It aims to drive innovation in the date and palm industry, securing long-term agricultural and economic sustainability.



A number of high-level dialogues also took place throughout the eighth day of COP16 in Riyadh. A high-level interactive dialogue on healing land through science and Earth intelligence, focused on scaling up science and data to restore land. In opening remarks, Dr. Munir M. Eldesouki, Assistant Minister at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, and the Acting President of King Abdulaziz City

for Science and Technology, said: "We stand at a critical crossroads, facing profound environmental challenges globally, but equipped with unprecedented opportunities for change. Science and technology are not merely instruments, they are our foremost allies in securing a sustainable future."

Meanwhile, an open UNCCD dialogue session heard from civil society organizations on how to translate science and data into policy and action, enhancing partnerships between key environmental stakeholders, including policymakers, scientists and impacted communities.

On December 9, the UNCCD released a report on the expansion of drylands around the world. Including hyper-arid, arid and semi-arid lands, the study found over three-quarters of all land on Earth experienced a drier climate in the three decades leading up to 2020, when compared to the previous 30 years. It also found the number of people living in drylands has more than doubled to 2.3 billion in 2020, compared to 1.2 billion 30 years earlier.

"The expanse of drylands is a worrying global trend, this report by the UNCCD must serve as a wake-up call for the international community to deliver robust and lasting action on land degradation, desertification, and drought," said Dr. Osama Faqeaha, Deputy Minister for Environment, Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, and Advisor to the UNCCD COP16 Presidency.

"Innovation is a huge enabler and can help drive efficiencies that reduce the strain on essential resources, from cutting water and energy consumption to preserving food security. It is essential to increase access to science, technology and innovation around the world," added Dr Faqeaha.

'Nature-based Solutions can generate up to 32 million new jobs by 2030, but investments in skills needed'

A new report urges increased investment in nature-based solutions, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and the Arab States

Investing in nature-based solutions (NbS) could create up to 32 million new jobs by 2030. This is according to a new report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

Launched at the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the 'Decent Work in Nature-based Solutions 2024' report calls for increased and more targeted investments to the countries with most potential for use of NbS.

Currently, over 60 million people work globally in activities categorized as NbS, which are actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems.

Through targeted investments, NbS employment



could increase by up to 32 million jobs globally. The greatest gains would be in Africa, Latin America and the Arab States, where the number of people working in NbS could go from the current level of 2.5 million to over 13 million by 2030. The share of global NbS employment in these regions would increase from around 5 per cent currently to over 40 per cent.

While employment estimates currently focus on NbS for environmental challenges like climate mitigation and biodiversity loss as well as land degradation, there is untapped potential for more “green-grey” infrastructure which integrates both the built and nature-based infrastructure (NbI). In low-and middle-income countries where NbS work is more labour-intensive, there is large scope for creating employment opportunities for vulnerable populations.

“With trillions of dollars of infrastructure investment in the pipeline for the coming decades, nature-based infrastructure offers an excellent opportunity to channel a significant amount into nature and drive decent work creation and more climate resilient infrastructure”, said Mirey Atallah, Chief of UNEP’s Climate Adaptation Branch.

The report highlights that, while the overall benefits of the green transition are positive, specific groups may face adverse effects on their employment and livelihoods. As the demand for NbS grows, mobilizing additional resources and implementing just transition measures will be essential to ensure broad support for these initiatives.

Skills gaps in both technical and core competencies pose barriers, with most existing NbS jobs classified as medium-skilled roles. As NbS grows, higher-skilled roles are projected to rise, emphasizing the need for targeted skills development to scale projects and enhance job

The report highlights the need for skills development and just transition measures to support the expanding sector



quality across sectors.

“When planned and implemented using a robust environmental, social, and economic framework following the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions, NbS offer an essential tool in the implementation of the climate and biodiversity policy frameworks. This makes NbS an effective means to address the interlinked



climate and biodiversity crises while delivering important benefits for human well-being and livelihoods, including good jobs” said Stewart Maginnis, Deputy Director-General of IUCN.

Key recommendations from the report include strengthening policy frameworks, investing in skills development and enhancing worker productivity.

The report further recommends promoting worker rights and inclusiveness in the NbS jobs, and strengthening research and data collection.

Japan to cut 60% of emissions by 2035

The Japanese government has won an approval for a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent by fiscal 2035 from fiscal 2013 levels,

but rejected calls for it to pursue a more ambitious target. At a joint meeting of the Environment Ministry and the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry, officials and experts also agreed to a longer-term target of a 73 percent reduction by fiscal 2040.

The targets, criticised by some expert participants of the meeting as insufficient to meet global climate goals, are in their final stages of preparation and are set to be submitted to the United Nations by February 2025.

The government outlined sector-specific emissions reduction goals for fiscal 2040 compared to the levels in fiscal 2013, including cuts of 74 to 83 percent in the business sector, 64 to 82 percent in transportation, and 71 to 81 percent in households, according to Kyodo News.



EWEC secures four new sites for developing renewable energy projects

UAE NEWS

Emirates Water and Electricity Company (EWEC) has announced that it has obtained approval to allocate four new sites covering an area of approximately 75 square kilometres to be turned into world-leading solar photovoltaic (PV) and wind energy developments.

Spanning four sites within Abu Dhabi, the land will feature three new solar PV plants located in Al Faya, Al Khazna, and Al Zarraf, and one new wind farm in Sila.

The landmark projects are set to deliver 4.5 gigawatts (GW) (AC) of additional solar PV capacity and up to 140 megawatts of new wind capacity to Abu Dhabi.

The solar PV projects will support EWEC's delivery of 10GW of installed solar PV capacity by 2030 and 18GW by 2035, contributing to collective efforts to achieve the Abu Dhabi Department of Energy's (DoE) Clean Energy Strategic Target 2035 for Electricity Production

in Abu Dhabi and UAE Net Zero by 2050 Strategic Initiative.

Othman Al Ali, CEO of EWEC, said, "This land will facilitate the accelerated commissioning and development of world-leading renewable projects as we actively contribute to the realisation of the country's sustainability objectives by supplying 60 percent of Abu Dhabi's power demand from renewable and clean energy sources."

These four sites were identified and secured through EWEC's close collaboration with key partners, united by the shared goals of decarbonising the UAE's energy production and combatting climate change.



Word Scramble

TLAPSN NCAOES IDWEFILL
 ESSTOFR ELYCREC AMEVSGNI
 STLACIP IBYCELC

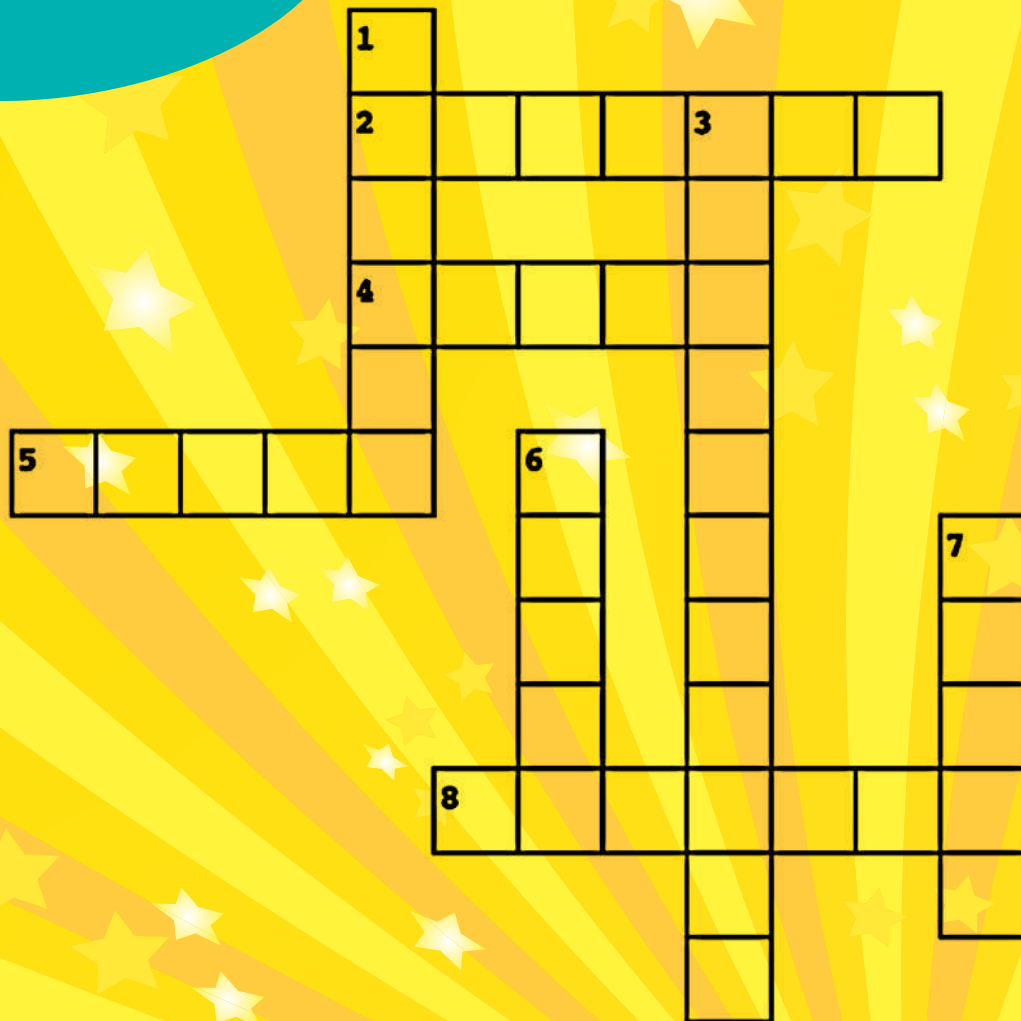
ANSWERS: 1) RECYCLE, 2) PLASTIC, 3) OCEANS, 4) FORESTS, 5) WILDLIFE, 6) PLANTS, 7) VEGANISM, 8) BICYCLE

Word Search

M	S	D	O	O	L	F	E	O	O	A	U	S	S
S	M	E	T	S	Y	S	L	G	N	S	N	G	G
O	C	L	I	M	A	T	E	B	O	O	B	O	O
O	O	D	O	D	E	F	G	L	O	B	A	L	S
L	D	S	D	S	D	L	E	G	A	M	O	L	U
I	D	N	S	L	O	M	W	D	I	A	T	B	S
S	O	F	F	E	S	O	O	F	O	O	D	O	T
A	B	M	I	L	B	N	D	R	N	A	N	O	A
U	W	L	S	E	O	E	D	A	S	M	C	C	I
R	G	O	W	A	O	R	Y	E	Y	F	L	A	N
D	F	R	W	O	E	S	A	T	L	M	Y	O	M
E	O	M	O	P	O	L	L	E	N	W	O	A	I
I	T	O	S	W	N	S	S	E	E	B	O	T	S
N	L	E	L	L	U	O	E	L	R	G	O	M	L

- SYSTEMS
- GROW
- POLLEN
- FLOODS
- FOOD
- BEEES
- CLIMATE
- FLORA
- SUSTAIN
- GLOBAL

Crossword Puzzle



Across

2. Use again after processing
4. Relating to or concerned with a city or densely populated area
5. All of the living human inhabitants of the earth
8. Natural environment

Down

1. Surface of the earth
3. The theory that an increasing consumption of goods is economically beneficial
6. All the animal life in a particular region or period
7. All the plant and animal life of a particular region
6. Study of plant

ANSWERS: 1 GROUND, 2 RECYCLE, 3 CONSUMERISM, 4 URBAN, 5 WORLD, 6 FAUNA, 7 BIOTA, 8 HABITAT

★ WORD OF THE DAY:

DESERTIFICATION

As global temperatures rise and the human population expands, more of the planet is vulnerable to desertification, the permanent degradation of land that was once arable.

While interpretations of the term desertification vary, the concern centers on human-caused land degradation in areas with low or variable rainfall known as drylands: arid, semi-arid, and sub-humid lands. These drylands account for more than 40 percent of the world's terrestrial surface area.

While land degradation has occurred throughout history, the pace has accelerated, reaching 30 to 35 times the historical rate, according to the United Nations. Lots of things can cause desertification:

Drought—Lack of rain can kill plants. Without plants to hold it down, good soil may blow away.

Overgrazing—Animals keep eating vegetation in one spot without giving it time to grow back.

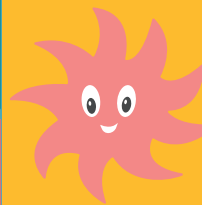
Deforestation—People cut down forests without replanting them.

Rapid population growth—More people suddenly live in one spot. They use up resources like wood and water.

Fire—Plants' roots help keep soil in place. If fire burns vegetation, soil can erode.

Human activities in particular, often play a major role in desertification. The biological environment of a nondesert region may be degraded by removing vegetation (which can lead to unnaturally high erosion), excessive cultivation, and the exhaustion of surface-water or groundwater supplies for irrigation, industry, or domestic use.

More than 75 percent of Earth's land area is already degraded, according to the European Commission's World Atlas of Desertification, and more than 90 percent could become degraded by 2050. It also found that a total area half of the size of the European Union is degraded annually, with Africa and Asia being the most affected.



SAVE THE EAGLES DAY - JAN 10

Worldwide, there are over 60 species of eagles, two of which are native to North America: the golden eagle and the bald eagle. Native to North America, bald eagles were on the endangered species list for several decades but, thankfully, they were saved from extinction and removed from the list in 2007.

While bald eagles and golden eagles are the most well-known in Canada and the US, there are 60 different species of eagles that live all over the globe, many of them in Eurasia or Africa. These birds of prey have large wingspans and spend a lot of their time looking relaxed as they glide effortlessly throughout the air.

Even though National Save the Eagles Day was originally established around a specific set of eagles, it has now gained traction and the

Celebration has spread!

Fun Facts about Eagles

- Unlike most species, the female bald eagle is slightly larger than her male partner.
- Sadly, most eagle related deaths are caused by humans, including impact with man-made structures, gunshot and poisoning.
- While hawks have a strong cry, eagles actually sound a bit silly. Because of this, most films and television shows replace the actual sound of eagles with that of hawks.
- Eagles can dive up to 100 miles per hour when hunting and they fly at about 30 miles per hour when traveling casually.

JAN
31

INTERNATIONAL ZEBRA DAY

International Zebra Day is an awareness day dedicated to a creature that has charmed and captivated people for centuries. Seen as symbols of beauty and elegance, these incredible animals nonetheless face numerous threats to their existence - poaching, habitat loss and disruptions to their migration routes, to name a few.

Zebras are mostly found on the African continent, in the semi-desert areas of Kenya and Ethiopia, and the hilly areas of Namibia, Angola, and South Africa. Presently, three types of zebra can be found in the wild, Grevy's zebra, the plains zebra, and the mountain zebra. The Grevy's zebra is considered endangered on the Red List of Threatened Species. Their population has gone down by about 54% over the past three decades, according to the African Wildlife Foundation.

International Zebra Day was founded by a consortium of conservation organizations such as the Smithsonian's National Zoo and the Conservation Biology Institute. International Zebra Day aims to help raise awareness about the living conditions of zebras and how their numbers can be protected from further decline.

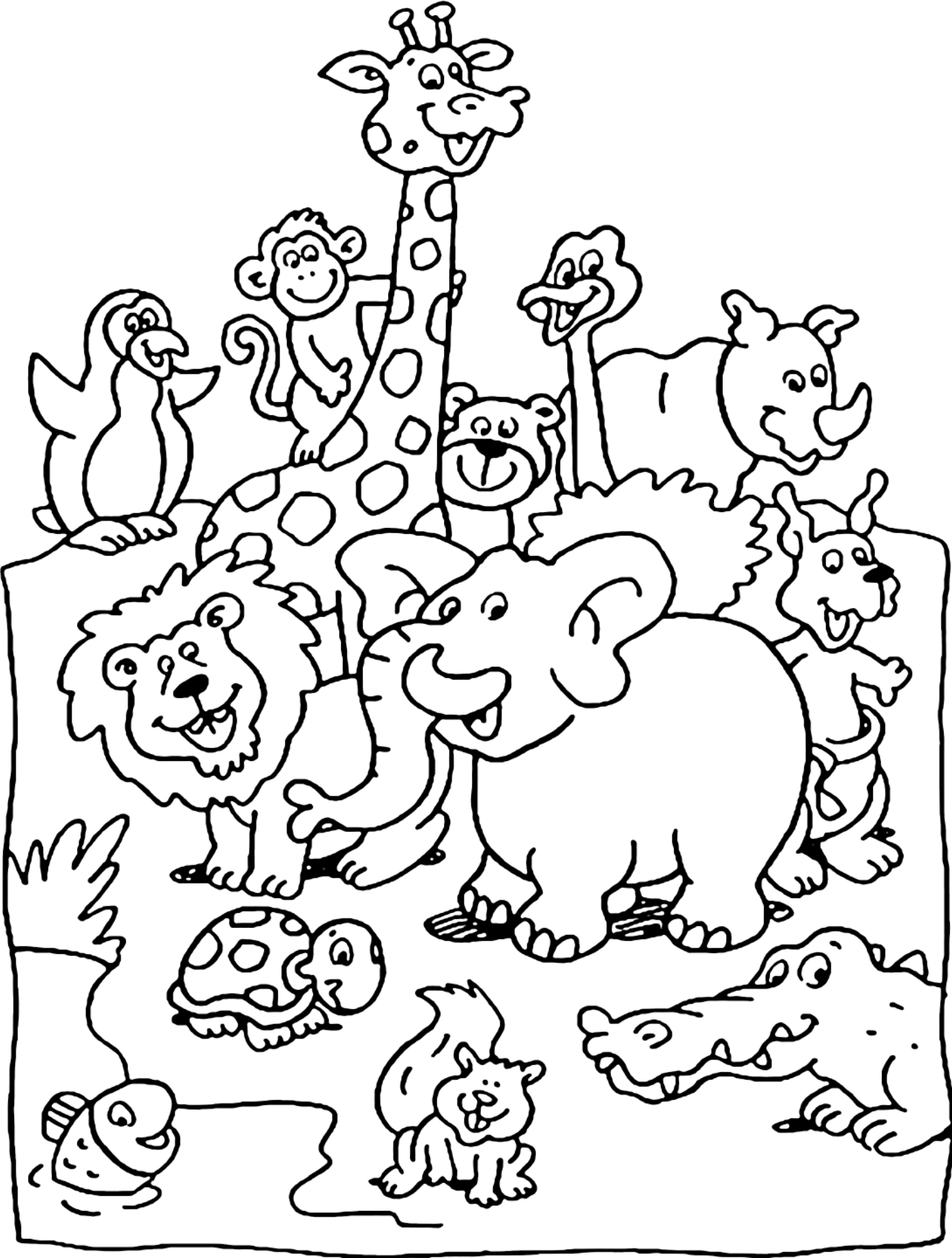


WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Things to Do...

- Switch off all lights! _____
- Don't leave the tap running! _____
- Carry a water bottle! _____
- Use reusable straws _____
- Grow a plant at home! _____

COLOUR ME!





Landmark World Drought Atlas reveals systemic nature of hazard risks, urges action

REPORT

As record-breaking droughts are becoming a new normal around the globe, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) launched the most comprehensive global publication on drought risks and solutions as an urgent wake-up call for world leaders and citizens.

The World Drought Atlas depicts the systemic nature of drought risks for both specialist and non-specialist audiences. Through dozens of maps, infographics, and case studies, it illustrates how drought risks are interconnected across sectors like energy, agriculture, river transport, and international trade and how they can trigger cascading effects, fueling inequalities and conflicts and threatening public health.

The report is co-produced with Cima Research Foundation (Italy), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (The Netherlands), and the UN University Institute for Environment and Human Security (Germany).

Droughts are one of the world's most costly and deadly hazards and are on track to affect 3 in 4 people globally by 2050. However, many countries and sectors are still failing to prepare for them through the right actions, policies, investments, and incentives.

The Atlas underscores the need for national drought plans and international cooperation to keep communities, economies, and ecosystems afloat in the face of harsher events.

Drought impacts are typically less visible, and attract less attention, than sudden events like floods and earthquakes. That is particularly true for the effects on ecosystems, which tend to be neglected in national drought plans despite their crippling impacts on economies and communities.

However, fast-onset droughts, known as flash droughts, more intense droughts—and more readily apparent impacts—are also becoming commonplace.

New initiative aims to cut emissions in fashion, construction industries in eight countries

Fashion and construction are among the top three sectors contributing to pollution, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, land degradation, water pollution and biodiversity loss

Cambodia, Costa Rica, India, Ecuador, Mongolia, Pakistan, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago have joined forces to launch a USD45-million, six-year initiative aimed at reducing hazardous chemicals in the fashion and construction industries. The initiative is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

This ambitious program, led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), seeks to transform supply chains by promoting sustainable materials, resource-efficient production, and improved post-use collection. The initiative also leverages an additional \$295 million from other sources to maximize impact.

The fashion and construction sectors are among the world's most chemical-intensive industry



sectors. The building and construction sector is the largest end-market for chemicals, and producing 1 kg of textiles requires 0.58 kg of various chemicals on average. Both sectors connect producers, retailers, and consumers from across the world and are characterised by complex, fragmented, global supply chains with globally significant impacts.

While much of the focus in these industries has historically centred on climate change and biodiversity, the transformation of fashion and construction supply chains requires a more holistic approach that also tackles pollution, the third prong of the triple planetary crisis.

The ambitious six-year programme will drive improvements in policy, innovation, stakeholder engagement, and access to finance across all stages of the supply chain. It will empower women, youth, and local communities by integrating indigenous knowledge, revitalizing local economies, and identifying sustainable materials and practices.

The programme will also strengthen South-South cooperation, regional collaboration and reduce the risk of burden-shifting and transform fashion and construction from sources of environmental harm into drivers of positive change. These efforts will aim to prevent the release of 6 million tonnes of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and 18,750 tonnes of hazardous chemicals into our ecosystems. Releases of persistent organic pollutants into the air will be minimized, protecting air quality, while 825,000 hectares of land and ecosystems will be restored, revitalizing natural habitats. By 2031, these efforts are expected to benefit 2 million people globally.

Cambodia's Minister of Environment said, "Cambodia's move away from LDC status provides an opportunity to enhance its industrial sectors and ensure a more sustainable economic future. By participating in the programme, Cambodia will

The USD340 million initiative will transform resource-intensive processes and materials with sustainable alternatives and fostering circular, collaborative value chains



not only safeguard the environment and public health but also strengthen its position in the global market, attract foreign investment, and create new economic opportunities for its citizens."

Ronny Rodríguez Chaves, Costa Rica's Vice Minister of Energy, said, "Using low carbon cement and building with innovative and biobased



materials like mycelium and wood are opportunities that are ripe for widescale adoption, if the enabling environment is there. As a nation committed to sustainability, we are proud to lead efforts to transform the construction sector. By focusing on access to finance and incentives, this programme will help Costa Rica become a global leader in sustainable construction”.

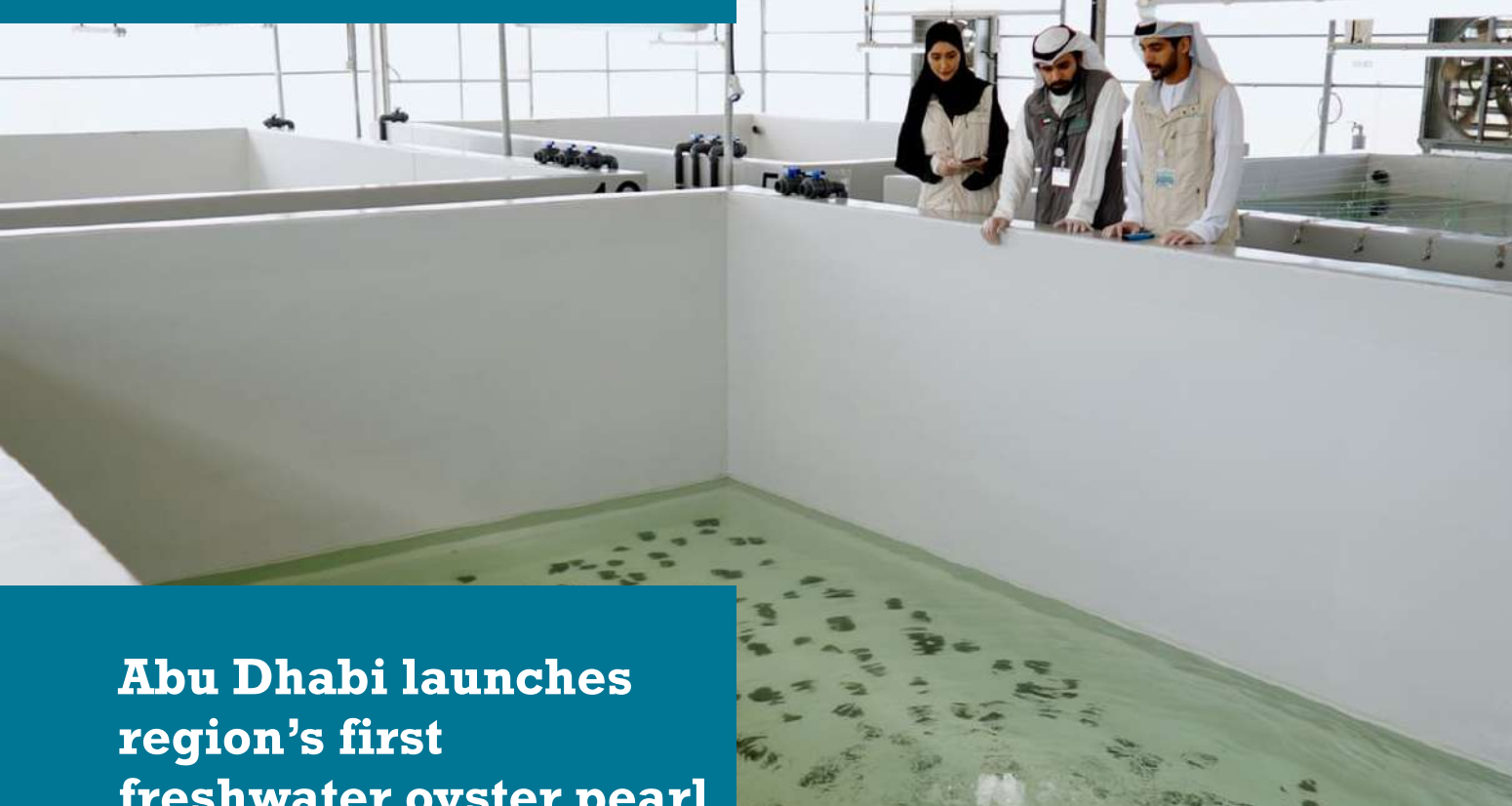
“This game-changing initiative exemplifies the GEF’s unique ability to bring countries and sectors together to chart a healthier, safer — and no less profitable — path,” said GEF CEO and Chairperson, Carlos Manuel Rodriguez.

“We are proud to support bold leadership in the fashion and construction industries in pursuit of supply chains with fewer dangerous chemicals and lower carbon footprints. The needs here reflect how connected the world’s environmental challenges are, and how the GEF’s integrated

approach to addressing pollution, climate change, and nature loss can be transformative — with fast, tangible results at the needed scale.”

The programme aims to transform every stage of the two supply chains, for example, redesigning carnival fashion in Trinidad and Tobago, establishing artisanal brick kilns in Ecuador, piloting of green building certification and fashion eco-labelling schemes in Cambodia or transforming banana pseudo stem waste into economically viable and socially beneficial fibre in Pakistan.

To ensure alignment with existing initiatives and partners, a global Programme Advisory Group will be established. This group will provide strategic guidance, with senior representatives from government, industry, civil society and experts offering advice and sharing knowledge to accelerate the transition toward sustainable supply chains.



Abu Dhabi launches region's first freshwater oyster pearl aquaculture project

UAE NEWS

In line with the framework of the Abu Dhabi Sustainable Aquaculture Policy, the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) has announced the execution of the region's first freshwater pearl oyster aquaculture project in Al Faya. An extension of the Abu Dhabi Pearls Centre in Mirfa, established in 2007 to culture local pearl oysters, this project is dedicated to culturing new oyster types in the emirate.

The new project includes an indoor, 10-unit aquaculture facility capable of producing 10,000 oysters per year, a quarantine section, as well as research and administrative facilities. To date, the project has produced approximately 8,500 freshwater oysters.

Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, Secretary General of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, said, "The Abu Dhabi Pearls Centre is the first facility in the Middle East to culture freshwater oyster pearls. It will support studies and research in sustainable oyster farming and strengthen the

emirate's position as a leader in building national capacities in this area."

Al Dhaheri pointed out that EAD's success in culturing local pearl oysters has equipped it with the necessary knowledge and expertise to produce high-quality pearls in sustainable ways.

She added, "This has enabled us to expand the scope of the centre's aquaculture operations to include new types of pearl-producing oysters, such as freshwater oysters, with an annual production capacity of up to 10,000 oysters by the end of 2024."

"Sustainability principles were taken into account when designing the new project, re-using water discharged from the farming units for irrigation purposes," she elaborated.

The project cultures Chinese and Indian oyster species, with each oyster producing between 15 and 20 pearls of various shapes, sizes and colours.



Dr. Eisa M. Abdellatif
Chief Technical Advisor
Zayed International Foundation
for the Environment

‘Divorce’ rates among songbirds highlight climate change threat

66

GREEN FLASH

A recent article published in *EcoWatch* by Cristen Hemingway Jaynes, reveals a disturbing link between climate change and the “divorce” rates of Seychelles warblers (*Acrocephalus sechellensis*), highlighting the broader implications of climate change for animal reproduction and conservation. The article highlights the long-term research, conducted on Cousin Island, which demonstrates how rainfall fluctuations during breeding seasons significantly impact the social bonds of these typically monogamous birds.

I could not let this article pass by as the alarming biological impact of climate change on birds is revealed in this eye-opening article. The article sheds light on how rainfall not only affects the availability of freshwater but disrupts the distribution of ecosystems and biodiversity in different regions of Mother Earth as well.

The 16-year study, led by researchers at Australia’s Macquarie University, adds to the growing body of evidence showing how environmental factors, particularly those linked to climate change, can directly influence the social dynamics and reproductive strategies of wildlife.

Seychelles warblers, known for their lifelong pair bonds, are experiencing increased relationship instability due to the indirect effects of rainfall on their ecological environment. Researchers explain

that rainfall influences food availability, nest conditions, and overall habitat health, impacting the birds’ ability to successfully reproduce. Both low and high rainfall years present challenges. Low rainfall disrupts insect development, a crucial food source for the warblers, while heavy rainfall can destroy nests and create harsh weather conditions, affecting both adult and offspring health. These environmental stressors appear to influence the birds’ perception of their partners, leading to higher divorce rates during extreme rainfall years.

Habitat destruction, driven by climate change, alters food abundance and shelter availability, forcing animals to adapt in sometimes unexpected ways. The study emphasizes the need for proactive conservation strategies, including habitat management and the creation of suitable refuges during challenging climatic periods.

Furthermore, it underscores the urgency of addressing climate change through concrete financial commitments, adherence to deadlines, and empowering communities to embrace sustainable living practices. The fate of the Seychelles warbler serves as a stark reminder of the interconnectedness of ecosystems and the importance of mitigating the effects of climate change on biodiversity.



Zayed International Prize for the Environment

Together for a green century

THE FUTURE OF OUR WORLD
IS IN OUR HANDS.

ACT NOW!

