



## UNDP at the Middle East and North Africa Climate Week (MENA CW) *28-31 March 2022 – Dubai, UAE*



### Overview

- **First-ever Regional Climate Week in the Middle East and North Africa**, hosted by the UAE, and co-organised by UNFCCC, UNDP, UNEP and World Bank in collaboration with regional partners.
- The hybrid MENA CW included a **high-level day** followed by core sessions focused on **three thematic tracks**: 1) National actions and economy-wide approaches (led by the World Bank); 2) Integrated approaches for climate-resilient development (led by UNDP); and 3) Seizing transformational opportunities (led by UNEP).
- The MENA CW was attended by approximately **4,000 participants with over 500 speakers from 147 countries in the region and around the world**, including government representatives, international organisations, financial institutions, civil society, youth activists and other actors involved in climate action in the region.

- There were **168 events held during the 4-day event**, including 7 ministerial events, 18 track events, 46 affiliated events, 79 side events and 18 Action Hub events.
- In total, over **30 high-level dignitaries attended**, including Ministers of Environment, Climate Change, Innovation, Technology, etc., COP26 and COP27 High-Level Champions, and many others. The **recordings of the high-level day** (opening and Ministerial thematic sessions) and the closing can be found [here](#).
- The **recordings of the track sessions** can be found [here](#) (starting from Day 2 in the programme).
- The **official closing press release** can be found [here](#) and **photos** from the high-level day of MENA CW can be found [here](#).

## UNDP Engagement at MENA CW

- UNDP served as a **core global partner of the MENA CW** alongside the UNFCCC, World Bank and UNEP.
- Day 1 of the MENA CW kicked off with **high-level sessions** for each of the thematic tracks including Track 2 on “Tradition meets Modernity: Integrated Approaches for Building Climate Resilience in the Region”, with a keynote speech by Dr. Khalida Bouzar, UN Assistant Secretary General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, followed by interactive panel discussions with a number of Ministers from the region. This was followed by the high-level opening ceremony with UNFCCC and UAE officials and a closed-door high-level Ministerial Roundtable in which Dr. Bouzar provided remarks on behalf of UNDP.
- The following 3 days of the MENA CW focused on **thematic sessions**. UNDP was proud to **collaborate with 11 partners to organize 6 sessions under Track 2**, including UN Habitat, Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), UNDRR, ESCWA, WHO/CEHA, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), IFAD, FAO, UNCDF and Union for Mediterranean (UfM). These sessions included:
  - Session 1: Linking Cities and Nature through Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Resilience (UN Habitat and ICLEI)
  - Session 2: Resilient recovery from the COVID-19 (ESCWA, UNDRR and WHO/CEHA)
  - Session 3: Climate action and food security in fragile settings (FAO, IWMI and IFAD)
  - Session 4: Fostering peace through sustainable water (UNDP, SIWI and IFAD)
  - Session 5: Resilient communities and local action through youth leadership (UNDP Small Grants Programme)
  - Session 6: Scaling up climate risk management and innovative financing for adaptation (UNCDF and UfM). Please find further information on the various sessions, including speakers, attached.
- UNDP also (co-)organized **5 affiliated and side events** to discuss climate change challenges, opportunities and solutions in the region and to identify opportunities to

maximize programming results through enhanced collaboration with partners. The events included: 1) event with IRENA on catalyzing the energy transition; 2) event with UNFCCC and ILO on climate policy and just transition; 3) event with UNFCCC on private sector engagement in capacity-building; 4) event with SDG Climate Project on climate change and water; and 5) event with RCREEE on energy transition. Recordings online [here](#).

## Key Messages from Track 2 on Integrated Approaches for Climate Resilient Development

1. Integrated and holistic approaches to crisis recovery, disaster risk reduction and development planning are critical for the region.
  - a. **Mainstreaming climate change considerations into crisis recovery, health systems, disaster preparedness and development planning** can increase resilience, reduce vulnerabilities and contribute to job creation and economic prosperity.
  - b. **The current operating paradigm needs to change in order to bridge the humanitarian, peace and development nexus** in the region when defining adaptation interventions. Strategies to span across humanitarian and development nexus are needed. To date, cross-sectoral cooperation for multi-dimensional risks is **reactive and crisis-driven**.
  - c. **Local solutions must be at the heart of climate-resilient planning and implementation** thus strengthening community buy in, ensuring solutions appropriate to fragile and crisis settings, and avoiding missed links between security and adaptation. **Vulnerability can be better addressed if we have an understanding of the livelihoods and socioeconomic impact of climate change and fragility.** Innovation and data tools need to also shine light on the human face and livelihoods and potential negative effects of climate action (winners/losers).
  - d. **COP27 and COP28 will be in the MENA region (Egypt and UAE respectively) and look to have a very strong focus on climate security.** It is important to underscore that food security and water security are in fact climate security. Building climate resilience and strengthening adaptation efforts will be a key priority for the region and key element of green recovery.
  - e. Food security goes beyond food production and must be looked at from an integrated food systems and holistic approach. There are **emerging risks between conflict, disasters, climate and displacement which increase socio-economic stresses.** Innovation and technology play a role in early action but we must also look to nature as innovative too.

- f. **Nature-based solutions (NBS) play a critical role in meeting climate targets and addressing climate challenges.** NBS in cities and urban areas can not only help restore natural ecosystems but also help establish green infrastructure, build resilience to adverse climate impacts and reduce associated costs, and contribute positively to human health and well-being. They also provide environmental, social, economic and cultural benefits and support local communities.

2. **Scaling up innovative climate finance and quantifying and addressing climate risk comprehensively is key for accelerating resilience and adaptation efforts.**

- a. **Lack of access to adequate climate finance and robust data**, that enables effective climate risk understanding and planning, is a significant impediment to effective adaptation at the local level in the region.
- b. There is **urgency for action and the need to operate at scale to unlock innovative climate finance models that de-risk investment**, especially for the private sector. Models that de-risk private investment and build scalability into their design is an approach that should be replicated to unlock adequate finance.
- c. **There is significant appetite for innovative and blended finance approaches to climate finance delivery.** Grants that build in capacity building and performance assessments not only reward good results but also address capacity gaps to ensure that adaptation improves over time, enabling sustainable and, importantly, scalable outcomes.
- d. **Climate financing needs to consider how to build conflict-sensitive analysis into funding schemes** and how to better monitor and evaluate interventions in fragile contexts is key. Climate finance has to grapple more with the broader socio-economic and political context. **Financing for adaptation to strengthen food and water security with a livelihoods component is of particular importance.**
- e. **Humanitarian settings and post-conflict and post-crisis economies, as well as small and medium scale projects, should not be overlooked.** Although these contexts bring their own additional risk, such risks need to be understood and reduced to enable more actors to enter the green finance space, ensuring that local priorities and adaptation needs are met.
- f. The severity of current challenges (e.g. health emergencies, a high debt burden and conflict) render it more difficult for governments to allocate resources for climate action. There is a **need for balanced climate finance to finance green recovery efforts**, which prioritizes the region's adaptation needs and does not further increase the region's debt burden.

3. **Partnerships, including with the private sector, and meaningful participation of youth, women and other marginalized and vulnerable groups is critical in climate-resilience planning and implementation.**
  - a. It is **critical to engage youth as key agents of change, creative entrepreneurs and innovators.** Young people are scaling up efforts and skills to accelerate innovative action, often through voluntary means, and seed funding for greater impact must follow.
  - b. **More capacity building, skills development and knowledge-sharing is needed for effective youth engagement** in taking part and influencing the climate agenda in the region. **Engaging youth, women and marginalized groups in planning and early stages of initiatives can better guarantee enhanced engagement and local ownership of initiatives.**
  - c. Human health, healthcare systems, disasters, and climate change are closely interlinked. To address these interconnected challenges and scale up efforts, **cooperation and partnerships need to be strengthened** at the international and national level, across sectors, and inclusive of all stakeholders.

*For further information on UNDP participation in the MENA CW, please contact Alana Craigen at [alana.craigen@undp.org](mailto:alana.craigen@undp.org) and Yulia Isaeva at [yulia.isaeva@undp.org](mailto:yulia.isaeva@undp.org).*