



# 1<sup>st</sup> EU-GCC GREEN TRANSITION FORUM

ABU DHABI, 9 OCT 2024



## SUMMARY REPORT

THE EU-GCC COOPERATION ON GREEN TRANSITION PROJECT



Funded by  
the European Union

## Executive Summary

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The European Union organized the first EU-GCC Green Transition Forum on 9 October 2024 in Abu Dhabi, as part of the EU-GCC Cooperation for Green Transition Project. This event represents the start of a long-term collaboration to address shared environmental challenges faced by the European Union (EU) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the fields of Climate Change and Green Economy and Energy Transition. The forum will rotate annually across GCC capitals, fostering dialogue around the green transition, climate resilience, and sustainable development.

The forum had more than 300 registrations of which it convened over 160 stakeholders from government, business, academia, and civil society to promote the exchange of innovative ideas and best practices that drive forward a green economy. In alignment with the EU Joint Communication on Strategic Partnership with the Gulf, the event emphasized joint climate action, renewable energy adoption, and sustainable economic development, highlighting the EU and GCC's shared vision for a greener future.

The forum came at a significant juncture, taking place just before the first-ever EU-GCC Summit in Brussels on 16 October 2024, where leaders from both regions will further explore cooperation opportunities in renewable energy and green transition. The event featured remarks from H.E. Lucie Berger, Ambassador of the European Union to the UAE, and the UAE Undersecretary for Energy and Petroleum Affairs H.E. Sharif Al Olama, among other notable speakers. The EU Ambassador stressed the importance of partnership and the pioneering role of the UAE in sustainable development.

The EU-GCC Green Transition Forum covered a diverse range of key topics:

- **Green Hydrogen Development:** Exploring regulatory frameworks, technological advancements, and strategies for building a competitive hydrogen market between the EU and GCC. Discussions highlighted the potential of green hydrogen as a driver of the energy transition, with emphasis on the regulatory certainty and infrastructure needs for developing this market.
- **Advancements in Renewable Energy:** Participants shared experiences on the deployment of clean energy technologies, with a focus on the development of solar, wind, and nuclear energy. The dialogue underscored the importance of cross-regional partnerships in accelerating the adoption of renewable energy.
- **Adapting to Climate Change:** Discussions centered on enhancing climate resilience through nature-based solutions, ecosystem protection, and adopting circular economy principles. Panelists explored how the GCC can adapt to increasing climate risks by leveraging community resilience and fostering innovation in waste management and resource efficiency.
- **Carbon Emissions Reduction:** The forum explored successful policies and initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions, including the role of regulatory frameworks, private sector involvement, and cross-regional synergies in accelerating decarbonization efforts.
- **Building Climate Resilient Communities:** The importance of climate resilience and community-based adaptation strategies was underscored. There was a strong focus on integrating nature-based solutions into local adaptation plans and enhancing the role of public and private sectors in financing adaptation measures.

Participants also had the opportunity to be informed on successful case studies and models from both the EU and GCC regions, showcasing effective approaches to the transition to net-zero economies and building resilience to climate impacts. The forum served as a unique platform for sharing insights and fostering collaboration between the regions, while also providing a framework for actionable solutions through cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder cooperation.

The EU-GCC Green Transition Forum is a significant milestone in strengthening the broader strategic partnership between the EU and GCC, reinforcing their leadership roles in addressing climate change and promoting sustainable economic growth. It set the stage for ongoing collaborative initiatives, including knowledge sharing, policy dialogue, and joint projects focused on green transition and resilience building in both regions.

# Speakers



**H.E. Lucie Berger**  
Ambassador of the European Union to the United Arab Emirates



**H.E. Sharif Al Olama**  
Undersecretary for Energy and Petroleum Affairs in the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, UAE



**HE.Dr. Alanoud Abdulla Alhaj**  
Acting, Assistant Undersecretary of Green Development & Climate Change Sector



**Mr Binu Parthan**  
Deputy Director, Country Engagement and Partnerships (CEP), IRENA



**Mr Gordon Bennett**  
Managing Director, Utility Markets, ICE



**Ms Mariam Al Qubaisi**  
Director of International Relations, Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure - MOEI UAE



**Mr Briec Posnic**  
International Relations Officer, Directorate General for Energy Unit TF.3 – International Relations, European Commission (online)



**Mr Tarig Ahmed**  
Regional Programme Officer – Middle East and North Africa, IRENA



**Mr Christof Van Agt**  
Director Energy Dialogue, International Energy Forum (IEF)



**Dr Yasar Jarrar**  
Managing Director, Posterity Institute



**Ms Silvia Crescimbeni**  
Climate Diplomacy Focal Point MENA, European Commission, Directorate-General for Climate Action



**Ms Maria Flouda**  
Sustainability and Green Transition Expert



**Mr Gary R King**  
President ICE Futures Abu Dhabi



**Mr Benjamin Clarke**  
Global Markets Manager, chez SolarPower Europe (online)



**Dr Hosni Ghedira**  
Director of Research Engagement, Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence



**Dr Fotouh Al-Ragom**  
Research Scientist & the Energy Efficiency Technologies Program Manager, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) (online)



**Mr Sándor Szelekovszky**  
Head of Trade and other policies section at the European Delegation to the United Arab Emirates



**Mr Spyros Kouvelis**  
Team Leader, EU-GCC Cooperation on Green Transition Project



**Ms Isabelle Kamiah**  
Policy Officer, International Relations-Hydrogen, South East Asia, India, Directorate-General for Energy (DG ENER), European Commission (online)



**Ms Patricia Wild**  
Associate Programme Officer, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)



**Mr Hammad Masood**  
Executive Director Business Development, Green Hydrogen ACWA Power



**Mr Wa'el Almazzeidi**  
Co-founder & CEO, Avance Labs



**Ms Hager Abunahwa**  
Green Hydrogen Project Engineer, MASDAR



**Mr Tanzeed Alam**  
Managing Director, Earth Matters



**Dr Amal Aldaej**  
Senior Advisor, International Affairs NCVC, KSA (online)



**H.H Princess Mashael Alshalan**  
Co-Founder, Aeon Strategy & Aeon Collective, KSA (online)



**Dr Diana Francis**  
Assistant Professor, Earth Sciences, ENGEOs Lab Head, Khalifa University, UAE



**Ms Marina Antonopoulou**  
Chief Conservation Officer, Emirates Nature-WWF



**Mr Nadim Abillama**  
Energy Analyst and Programme Officer - MENA at International Energy Agency (IEA) (online)

# Agenda

09:30 – 10:00

Registration &amp; Welcome Refreshments

10:00 - 10:30

## Welcome & Opening Remarks

- **H.E. Lucie Berger**, Ambassador of the European Union to the United Arab Emirates
- **H.E. Sharif Al Olama**, Undersecretary for Energy and Petroleum Affairs in the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, UAE
- **HE.Dr. Alanoud Abdulla Alhaj**, Acting ,Assistant Undersecretary of Green Development & Climate Change Sector
- **Mr Binu Parthan**, Deputy Director, Country Engagement and Partnerships (CEP), IRENA
- **Mr Gordon Bennett**, Managing Director, Utility Markets, ICE (recorded video)

10:30 - 11:10

## SESSION I

### Transitioning Towards a Net-Zero Economy

An introductory intervention on “**EU’s climate commitments and global transition policy, ahead of COP29**” by **Ms Silvia Crescimbeni**, Climate Diplomacy Focal Point MENA, European Commission, Directorate-General for Climate Action (online).

#### A: Panel Discussion: Accelerating Net-Zero Commitments: Policy and Industry Synergies

This panel will explore the critical policies and actions essential for achieving net-zero targets in the GCC. Highlighting the forthcoming study results on regional commitments, the discussion will delve into the roles of renewable energy, carbon capture, and other sustainable practices. Panelists from the EU, the COP28 Secretariat, International Organisations such as IRENA, local policymakers, and industry leaders will examine how policy frameworks can effectively support industry initiatives, fostering a robust pathway to net-zero.

*Speakers:*

- **Mr Briec Posnic**, International Relations Officer, Directorate General for Energy Unit TF.3 – International relations, European Commission (online)
- **Mr Tarig Ahmed**, Regional Programme Officer – Middle East and North Africa, IRENA
- **Ms Salama Alawadhi**, Director of National Value Added Department, Ministry of Industry & Advanced Technology, UAE
- **Mr Christof Van Agt**, Director Energy Dialogue, International Energy Forum
- **Dr Yasar Jarrar**, Managing Director, Posterity Institute

*Moderator:*

**Ms Mariam Al Qubaisi**, Director of International Relations, Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure - MOEI UAE

11:10 - 11:50

#### B: Panel Discussion: Bridging Theory and Practice: Real-World Solutions for Carbon Neutrality

Moving from strategic planning to tangible action, this panel will focus on the practical application of technologies and solutions that facilitate the transition to a carbon-neutral economy. It will cover advancements and case studies in renewables, carbon capture and storage, and the development of carbon markets. The session aims to share lessons learned and successes from both the EU and GCC, providing a platform for knowledge exchange and collaborative innovation.

*Speakers:*

- **Mr Gary R King**, President, ICE Futures Abu Dhabi
- **Mr Benjamin Clarke**, Global Markets Manager chez SolarPower Europe (online)
- **Dr Hosni Ghedira**, Director of Research Engagement, Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence
- **Dr Fotouh Al-Ragom**, Research Scientist & the Energy Efficiency Technologies Program Manager, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) (online)
- **Mr Sándor Szelekovszky**, Head of Trade and other policies section at the European Delegation to the United Arab Emirates

*Moderator:*

**Ms Maria Flouda**, Sustainability and Green Transition Expert

11:50 - 12:20

Coffee Break

# Agenda

12:20- 13:10

## SESSION II

### Forming the Future of Hydrogen: Regulation, Technology, and Market Development

This panel addresses the comprehensive development of the hydrogen economy in the GCC. It will discuss the regulatory frameworks, technological advancements, and economic strategies needed to establish a thriving market for renewable hydrogen. With experts from regulatory bodies, industry leaders, and policymakers, the session will outline a collaborative roadmap for integrating hydrogen into the regional energy mix, highlighting ongoing projects and future opportunities.

*Speakers:*

- **Ms Isabelle Kamlah**, Policy Officer, International Relations-Hydrogen, South East Asia, India, Directorate-General for Energy (DG ENER), European Commission (online)
- **Ms Patricia Wild**, Associate Programme Officer, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)
- **Mr Hammad Masood**, Executive Director Business Development, Green Hydrogen ACWA Power
- **Mr Wa'el Almazeedi**, Co-founder & CEO, Avance Labs
- **Ms Hager Abunahwa**, Green Hydrogen Project Engineer, MASDAR

*Moderator:*

**Mr Spyros Kouvelis**, Team Leader, EU-GCC Cooperation on Green Transition Project

13:10- 13:20

### UAE Alliance for Climate Action (UACA): Collaborating to accelerate decarbonization in the UAE

**Mr Niketan Velani**, from Emirates Nature-WWF, will introduce UACA, exploring the critical strategies, partnerships, and innovations needed to drive the UAE toward its ambitious net-zero goals.

13:20 - 14:00

## SESSION III

### Adapting to Change: Strategies for Climate Resilience and Circular Economy

The panel session will focus on adaptation strategies and discuss how the GCC can enhance its climate resilience through nature-based solutions, ecosystem protection, and the adoption of circular economy principles. Experts from the EU and GCC will discuss innovative approaches to environmental conservation, waste management, and resource efficiency, aiming to build resilient communities and economies in the face of climate challenges.

*Speakers:*

- **Dr Amal Aldaej**, Senior Advisor, International Affairs NCVG, KSA (online)
- **H.H Princess Masha'el Alshalan**, Co-Founder: Aeon Strategy & Aeon Collective, KSA (online)
- **Dr Diana Francis**, Assistant Professor, Earth Sciences, ENGEOS Lab Head, Khalifa University, UAE
- **Ms Marina Antonopoulou**, Chief Conservation Officer, Emirates Nature-WWF
- **Mr Nadim Abillama**, Energy Analyst and Programme Officer - MENA at International Energy Agency (IEA) (online)

*Moderator:*

**Mr Tanzeed Alam**, Managing Director, Earth Matters

14:00 - 14:10

**Closing Remarks: Mr Spyros Kouvelis, Team Leader, EU-GCC Cooperation on Green Transition Project**

14:10 - 15:00

Lunch & Networking

## Opening Remarks



### Opening remarks by HE Lucie Berger, Ambassador of the European Union to the United Arab Emirates

HE Lucie Berger welcomed participants to the first EU-GCC Green Transition Forum, held in Abu Dhabi, marking the beginning of an annual event that will rotate through GCC capitals. She highlighted the forum's significance in fostering an ongoing dialogue between the EU and GCC on green transition, aligning with the EU Joint Communication on a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf, emphasising collaboration's importance in tackling climate change and seizing green transition opportunities.

The timing of the forum was noted as crucial, coinciding with the upcoming EU-GCC Summit in Brussels on October 16, where strategic cooperation on green energy and investment will be discussed. The forum was positioned as a platform to connect stakeholders from both regions, promoting the exchange of innovative ideas and collaboration on sustainable development projects.

Ambassador Berger outlined the agenda, which included discussions on renewable energy deployment, carbon reduction strategies, renewable hydrogen, resource management, and building climate-resilient economies. She also acknowledged the EU-GCC Cooperation for Green Transition Project for organizing the forum and announced the upcoming EU-GCC Finance and Investment for Green Transition Forum in Abu Dhabi in late November. The speech concluded by welcoming all dignitaries and participants, commending their commitment to a sustainable future.



## Opening Remarks



### Opening remarks by H.E. Sharif Al Olama, Undersecretary for Energy and Petroleum Affairs in the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, UAE

H.E. Sharif Al Olama opened the EU-GCC Green Transition Forum by highlighting the UAE's commitment to addressing climate change and transitioning to a sustainable, low-carbon economy. He emphasized the UAE's strategic focus on the green transition under the leadership of President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, positioning the UAE as the first country in the MENA region to commit to net zero by 2050.

The UAE has invested \$45 billion in clean energy and plans to invest an additional \$54 billion over the next six years. Notable initiatives include hosting the world's largest solar power plants and achieving a target of generating 52% of electricity from clean energy by 2030. The UAE also aims to be a major producer and exporter of low-emission hydrogen, driven by its National Hydrogen Strategy.

H.E. Al Olama underscored the importance of international cooperation, particularly with the EU, in integrating renewable energy and decarbonizing industries. He called for collaboration on policies like the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) to minimize disruptions to supply chains. He also highlighted the UAE's focus on energy efficiency, citing the success of its Demand Side Management program, and emphasized the importance of tripling renewable energy and doubling energy efficiency in alignment with COP28 pledges.

In conclusion, he encouraged the alignment of policies, strengthened industry cooperation, and tangible outcomes for sustainable development. He expressed gratitude to the EU partners and participants, hoping the discussions would lead to new partnerships and actionable outcomes for a sustainable net-zero future.



## Opening Remarks



### Opening remarks by HE. Dr. Alanoud Abdulla Alhaj, Acting, Assistant Undersecretary of Green Development & Climate Change Sector

H.E. Dr. Alanoud Abdulla Alhaj emphasized the shared commitment of the EU and GCC countries toward building a sustainable future and highlighted the importance of collective action, collaboration, and innovation in addressing environmental challenges. She outlined the UAE's Net Zero by 2050 strategy, emphasizing its practical and comprehensive approach to transforming all sectors of the economy.

Dr. Alhaj stressed the need for international cooperation, noting that climate challenges demand a shared response. She praised the EU-GCC Cooperation for Green Transition Project as a promising platform for knowledge exchange, technology transfer, and joint ventures in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable development. She underscored the UAE's commitment to scaling up renewable energy deployment, sharing best practices, and enhancing energy efficiency.

In conclusion, Dr. Alhaj urged participants to engage in meaningful dialogue, forge partnerships, and take concrete actions to accelerate the green transition for the benefit of the EU, GCC, and future generations.





## Opening Remarks



### Opening remarks by Mr Binu Parthan, Deputy Director, Country Engagement and Partnerships (CEP), IRENA

Mr. Binu Parthan highlighted the growing collaboration between the GCC and the EU in addressing green energy transition and achieving net zero. He emphasized the rising frequency of extreme weather events globally and the importance of adapting to the challenges of climate change, including water and food security in the region.

Mr. Parthan underscored the significance of the COP28 UAE consensus, which set targets for tripling renewable energy and doubling energy efficiency. He noted IRENA's role as the custodian agency for these goals and its commitment to scaling up renewable energy deployment. He also announced the upcoming release of a tracking report on the progress of countries in achieving these targets.

To achieve the ambitious renewable energy goals, Mr. Parthan stressed the need for scaling up investments, improving infrastructure, and focusing on skills development. He reiterated IRENA's commitment to supporting member states in the region, providing expertise and resources to advance the green energy agenda in the GCC and beyond. He concluded by calling for urgent action to deploy renewable energy at scale, emphasizing the limited time available to meet the 2030 targets.



## Opening Remarks



### Opening remarks by Mr Gordon Bennett, Managing Director, Utility Markets, ICE (recorded video)

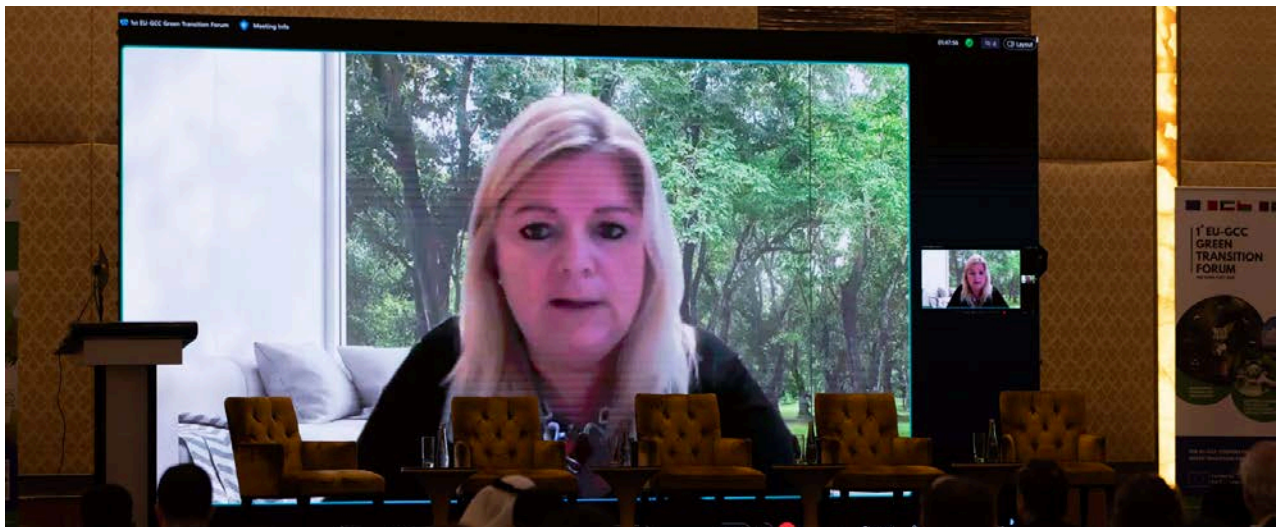
Mr. Gordon Bennett extended a warm welcome to all participants at the inaugural EU-GCC Green Transition Forum, emphasizing the significance of this collaboration between the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council in advancing the global green energy transition. He highlighted ICE's role as the owner of the New York Stock Exchange and a leading global exchange for energy and environmental markets, focusing on producing transparent pricing to help facilitate the movement of energy resources sustainably.

He underscored the EU's leadership in establishing the world's most liquid carbon market, which serves as a foundation for adopting carbon pricing globally. This approach allows energy molecules and electrons to move more sustainably, creating a practical pathway to achieving net-zero emissions. Mr. Bennett also praised the Gulf region's historical role as a key global energy hub that has powered economies and driven prosperity for decades. Moving forward, the Gulf's focus on clean energy, green hydrogen, and carbon capture technologies positions it as a crucial player in the green transition.

He concluded by expressing ICE's honour to partner with the EU and GCC on this important endeavour. He emphasized that the joint leadership of these two regions will be essential to ensuring the future of global energy is sustainable and prosperous, benefiting generations to come.



## SESSION I: Transitioning Towards a Net-Zero Economy



**An introductory intervention on “EU’s climate commitments and global transition policy, ahead of COP29” by Ms Silvia Crescimbeni, Climate Diplomacy Focal Point MENA, European Commission, Directorate-General for Climate Action (online).**

- **Opening Statement:** Expressed joy in seeing the progress of the project and emphasized the urgency of the climate crisis.
- **Climate Challenges:** Highlighted recent record-breaking temperature events, extreme weather, and the challenges of desertification and climate impact.
- **EU and Gulf Collaboration:** Acknowledged the alignment of EU's Green Deal and the Gulf's Vision 2030 to combat climate change while boosting sustainable growth and competitiveness.
- **EU's Climate Commitments:**
  - Legally binding Net Zero targets by 2050, intermediate emission reduction target of at least 55% by 2030 (already achieved 32.5% by 2022).
  - Policy frameworks such as the European Green Deal aim for a systemic shift towards a climate-neutral economy.
- **Carbon Pricing & EU ETS:**
  - EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) has cut emissions by 47% since 2005 while growing the economy by 23%.
  - ETS raised over €200 billion, reinvested into green technologies and decarbonization.
- **Scaling Investments:** Scaling up investments in clean technologies, renewable energy, carbon capture, green hydrogen, and green infrastructure.
- **International Collaboration:** Emphasized the importance of international collaboration, as EU only contributes 7% of global emissions, with 93% from outside EU boundaries.
- **COP29 Focus:**
  - Maintain political momentum, implement pledges, and set new collective climate finance goals.
  - Advocate for adaptation, resilience building, and support for vulnerable populations, along with upgrading NDCs.
  - Promote renewable energy and energy efficiency solutions at a global level.
- **Bilateral Cooperation with Gulf Countries:** Encouraged building closer cooperation with Gulf countries, recognizing opportunities in green initiatives and renewable energy.
- **Call to Action:** Urged collective response to climate change to create resilience, well-being, and jobs for all.
- **Conclusion:** Expressed hope for collaboration and wished participants a successful event.

## SESSION I: Transitioning Towards a Net-Zero Economy

### Panel Discussion: Accelerating Net-Zero Commitments: Policy and Industry Synergies



#### Overview:

- Moderated by **Ms Mariam Al Qubaisi**, the panel explored key policies and actions critical for achieving net-zero targets, with an emphasis on the roles of renewable energy, carbon capture, and sustainable practices.
- The session highlighted forthcoming study results on regional net-zero commitments and opportunities for policy and industry collaboration.

#### Panelist Contributions:

- **Mr Briec Posnic, European Commission:**
  - Emphasized the role of government in setting the direction and providing incentives for the energy transition.
  - Described the four pillars of the EU's climate strategy: market design conducive to clean energy, incentives for energy transition investments, carbon pricing (EU ETS), and strong regulatory targets.
- **Mr Tarig Ahmed, IRENA:**
  - Highlighted IRENA's role in providing data, analysis, and frameworks for achieving net-zero.
  - Mentioned upcoming initiatives to assist countries in tripling renewables and aligning with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
- **Mr Christof Van Agt, International Energy Forum (IEF):**
  - Stressed the importance of energy security and collaboration.
  - Focused on advancing carbon management solutions (CCUS) and emphasized the need for cooperative efforts across regions.
- **Dr. Yasar Jarrar, Posterity Institute:**
  - Emphasized three gaps in achieving sustainability: public-private collaboration, economic-environmental balance, and intergenerational cooperation.
  - Called for more realistic, micro-level solutions and the need for a team approach to the green transition.

#### Key Discussion Points:

- **Carbon Tax vs. Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS):**
  - Mixed views on whether the UAE should adopt carbon taxes or an ETS. Emphasized the need for cooperative approaches to carbon pricing rather than punitive measures.

- **Financing Green Technologies:**

- IRENA: Highlighted that 80% of newly installed capacity globally is now renewable, with significant cost reductions.
- IEF: Urged a more inclusive approach to financing technologies and highlighted the need for cooperation between financial markets and policy frameworks.

- **Call for Collaboration:**

- The panel stressed the importance of collaboration, deploying renewable energy at scale, and fostering open energy markets.
- Discussed the importance of micro-level technologies, commercialization, and local solutions tailored to regional needs.

- **Audience Questions:**

- Focused on green financing and opportunities for banks in green assets.
- Panelists stressed the need for realistic financial engineering approaches to support the transition.

**Closing Remarks & Calls to Action:**

- Dr. Yasar Jarrar: Urged governments to invest in commercialization of green technologies and create funds to support startups and VCs for green innovation.
- Mr Christof Van Agt: Emphasized focusing on open energy markets and avoiding over-regulation that could hinder green transition progress.
- Mr Tarig Ahmed, IRENA: Highlighted that the GCC countries have ambitious plans for net zero and the resources to achieve them.
- Mr Briec Posnic, European Commission: Reiterated that the EU is ready to partner with GCC countries to achieve green transition goals and support local initiatives.



## SESSION I: Transitioning Towards a Net-Zero Economy

### Panel Discussion: Bridging Theory and Practice – Real-World Solutions for Carbon Neutrality



#### Overview:

- Moderated by **Ms Maria Flouda**, the panel discussed practical applications of technologies for the carbon-neutral transition, focusing on advancements in renewables, carbon capture, and carbon markets.
- The session shared lessons learned and successes from both the EU and GCC, highlighting opportunities for collaboration.

#### Panelist Contributions:

- **Mr Gary R. King, ICE Futures Abu Dhabi:**
  - ICE is the largest exchange for trading energy products and environmental markets.
  - Highlighted efforts to develop a carbon trading hub in the UAE, with Abu Dhabi as a central base.
- **Mr Benjamin Clarke, SolarPower Europe:**
  - Discussed the positive impact of solar energy in Europe, with solar and wind generating 30% of the EU's electricity in 2024.
  - Highlighted the rapid growth in solar jobs and economic benefits from energy savings.
  - Emphasized the need for robust investments and streamlined permitting processes to reach the 2030 renewable targets.
- **Dr. Hosni Ghedira, Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence:**
  - Discussed AI initiatives for climate research, energy transition, decarbonization, and mitigating climate change.
  - Highlighted the use of AI in data fusion to monitor carbon footprints, urban planning, and sustainability initiatives.
- **Dr. Fotouh Al-Ragom, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR):**
  - Shared Kuwait's efforts in energy efficiency, renewable energy projects, and policy planning for energy transition.
  - Discussed Kuwait's target of achieving net zero by 2060 and the role of national institutions in promoting energy transition.
- **Mr Sándor Szelekovszky, European Delegation to the UAE:**
  - Emphasized the importance of accelerating the green transition and reducing energy dependency.
  - Highlighted the EU's use of emissions trading and sustainable financing as tools for supporting the energy transition.
  - Suggested opportunities for EU-GCC collaboration on workforce upskilling, reskilling, and joint investments in green projects.

### Key Discussion Points:

- **Carbon Markets & Trading:**
  - Carbon markets are critical for setting the price of carbon and incentivizing emission reductions.
  - Developing a carbon trading hub in the GCC can help align with global environmental markets.
- **Green Technologies & Investments:**
  - The importance of accelerating investment in clean energy technologies and grid infrastructure.
  - Opportunities for collaboration in scaling up renewable energy deployment and advancing projects like green hydrogen and carbon capture.
- **AI & Data Analytics:**
  - AI is playing a crucial role in data-driven climate solutions, such as tracking emissions and enhancing efficiency in production processes.
- **Regional Collaboration:**
  - Emphasized regional cooperation, capacity building, and the involvement of academia in facilitating the energy transition.
  - Partnerships between the EU and GCC are key to implementing sustainable projects and reducing the regional gap in green technology development.

### Closing Remarks & Calls to Action:

- Mr Sándor Szelekovszky: Stressed the need for continued political commitment, targeting energy efficiency, and supporting socially vulnerable sectors.
- Dr. Hosni Ghedira: Highlighted the role of academia and technology transfer in reducing regional gaps.
- Mr Gary R. King: Encouraged developing the UAE as a carbon hub and enhancing regional collaboration.
- Dr. Fotouh Al-Ragom: Emphasized r&d and behavior change in fostering energy transition and called for more EU involvement in regional projects.
- Mr Benjamin Clarke: Focused on scaling renewables, improving permitting processes, expanding grid infrastructure, and setting a global target for storage capacity.
- Ms Maria Flouda: Highlighted the importance of partnerships and collaboration, encouraging continued dialogue facilitated by the EU-GCC Green Transition Project to create real impact.



## Session II: Forming the Future of Hydrogen – Regulation, Technology, and Market Development



### Overview:

- Moderated by **Mr Spyros Kouvelis**, the panel addressed the development of the hydrogen economy in the GCC, focusing on regulatory frameworks, technological advancements, and economic strategies.
- Key topics included creating a transparent hydrogen market, regulatory challenges, infrastructure requirements, and building a collaborative roadmap for integrating hydrogen into the regional energy mix.

### Panelist Contributions:

- **Ms Isabelle Kamlah, European Commission:**
  - Emphasized the importance of establishing a transparent rules-based hydrogen market.
  - Provided an overview of the EU's hydrogen framework, including targets for renewable hydrogen consumption and regulations for green hydrogen production.
  - Highlighted the importance of collaboration between the EU and GCC to develop the hydrogen economy.
- **Ms Patricia Wild, IRENA:**
  - Discussed the need for regulatory frameworks and the challenges in scaling up green hydrogen production.
  - Highlighted the potential for green hydrogen in the GCC due to renewable energy resources and financial capabilities.
  - Mentioned the need for market incentives, such as carbon pricing and hydrogen quotas, to stimulate local demand.
- **Mr Hammad Masood, ACWA Power:**
  - Highlighted the challenges of scaling green hydrogen, including high costs, infrastructure issues, and lack of clear regulatory frameworks.
  - Urged the importance of clear regulation and long-term off-take commitments to make hydrogen projects bankable.
  - Called for a more pragmatic and simplified regulatory approach to accelerate development.
- **Mr Wa'el Almazeedi, Avance Labs:**
  - Described the four main risks preventing hydrogen projects from reaching Final Investment Decision (FID): regulation, technology, supply demand, and infrastructure.
  - Discussed European initiatives to mitigate these risks, such as the European Hydrogen Bank and H2 Global.
  - Emphasized the need for subsidies, proactive participation in regulatory decisions, and a coordinated approach involving all stakeholders.



- **Ms Hager Abunahwa, MASDAR:**

- Discussed MASDAR's commitment to producing one million tons of green hydrogen annually by 2030.
- Highlighted collaborations with global companies for decarbonizing sectors like steel, shipping, and aviation.
- Mentioned ongoing partnerships to establish a dedicated liquid green hydrogen supply chain for aviation and expand electrolyzer capacity.

### Key Discussion Points:

- **Regulatory Frameworks:**

- A comprehensive regulatory framework is needed for the hydrogen economy to thrive.
- The EU has taken significant steps to develop a robust hydrogen framework but highlighted that regulatory processes take time.

- **Challenges in Scaling Hydrogen:**

- High production costs, lack of clear regulatory guidance, and limited demand signals are key barriers to scaling green hydrogen.
- The need for clear, consistent regulations and government subsidies was emphasized to make hydrogen projects more viable.

- **Local vs. Export Markets:**

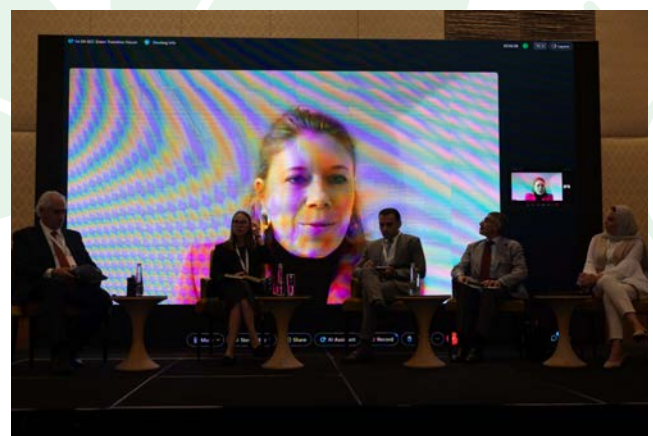
- Patricia Wild (IRENA) highlighted the importance of focusing on local demand to jumpstart the hydrogen economy.
- Domestic use of green hydrogen can help achieve climate targets while establishing a stable foundation for future exports.

- **Subsidies and Financing:**

- Various initiatives were mentioned, such as the European Hydrogen Bank and H2 Global, aimed at de-risking hydrogen projects through subsidies.
- The importance of international cooperation and government support in bridging the financial gap was emphasized.

### Closing Remarks & Calls to Action:

- Ms Isabelle Kamlah: Highlighted the importance of unlocking finance through international collaboration and continuing regulatory advancements.
- Mr Hammad Masood: Urged simplifying regulations to attract off-takers and reduce uncertainty in the market.
- Mr Wa'el Almazeedi: Stressed the need for serious commitment to decarbonization, proactive engagement in EU decision-making, and subsidies for projects.
- Ms Patricia Wild: Suggested focusing on stimulating domestic demand to build a strong foundation for hydrogen deployment.
- Mr Spyros Kouvelis: Emphasized the need for collaboration among stakeholders to expedite hydrogen market development and announced future discussions at national levels, highlighting the EU-GCC Green Transition Project as a platform to support these efforts.



# UAE Alliance for Climate Action (UACA): Collaborating to Accelerate Decarbonization in the UAE



## Overview:

- Speaker: Mr. Niketan Velani, Emirates Nature-WWF
- Focus: UACA aims to activate climate action among non-state actors in the UAE, supporting decarbonization aligned with the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C target.

## Key Strategies:

- Preparing Organizations for Decarbonization:
  - Setting Science-Based Targets: Align with the Science-Based Targets Initiative (SBTi) to prepare members for credible decarbonization.
  - Capacity Development & Tools: Provide digital platforms for measuring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions.
  - Peer-to-Peer Learning: Encourage collaboration among sustainability professionals to share experiences and best practices.
- Enhancing the Policy Environment:
  - Unified Voice for Policy Advocacy: Promote collective engagement with federal entities to influence policy decisions for decarbonization.
  - Road to Zero Initiative: Focus on increasing the uptake of commercial zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs) in the UAE to reduce upstream and downstream transport emissions.

## Progress Highlights:

- Membership Growth: UACA has grown from 5 to over 50 members in less than two years, highlighting increased local ambition for climate action.
- Workshops and Platforms:
  - Over 10 workshops and webinars conducted.
  - Two digital platforms launched for emissions measurement and public accountability.

## Road to Zero Initiative:

- Focus: Accelerate the adoption of ZEVs in commercial fleets, contributing to reducing the UAE’s total emissions from transport.
- Commitments:
  - Short-term: Launch ZEV pilot programs by the end of the year.
  - Medium- to Long-term: Achieve 30% decarbonization of the UAE road transport fleet by 2030 and 100% by 2040.
- Challenges Addressed: Reducing costs of electric vehicles, enabling pilot projects to scale, and ensuring operational certainty.

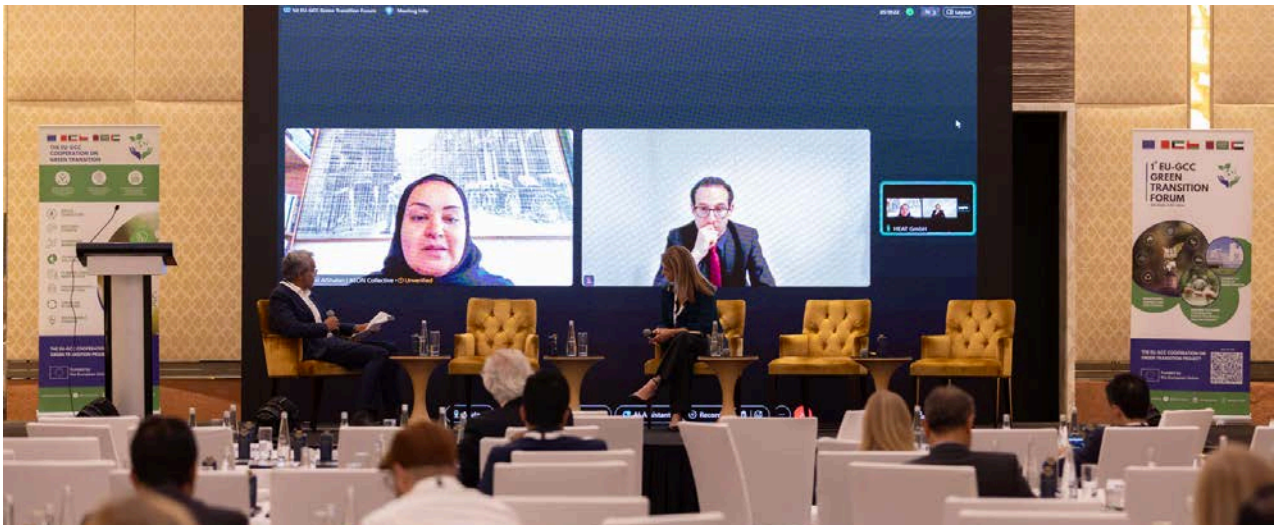
## Survey and Report:

- Objective: Provide a landscape analysis of decarbonization efforts among non-state actors in the UAE.
- Goal: Identify key challenges, accelerate progress, and quantify the status of decarbonization across scopes 1, 2, and 3 emissions.

## Impact and Recognition:

- UACA was mentioned in the UAE’s third update to its second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and the long-term climate strategy, highlighting its role in supporting the bottom-up approach to achieving net-zero goals.

## Session III: Adapting to Change: Strategies for Climate Resilience and Circular Economy



### Overview:

- Moderated by **Mr Tanzeed Alam**, the panel highlighted the importance of adaptation strategies for enhancing climate resilience in the GCC, emphasizing the role of nature-based solutions, ecosystem protection, and circular economy principles.
- Discussed the urgency of addressing the impacts of climate change in the region, focusing on the need for smarter, swifter, and systemic action for climate adaptation.

### Panelist Contributions:

- **Dr. Diana Francis, Khalifa University:**
  - Provided insights on climate change risks in the GCC region, including faster-than-average warming, increased extreme weather events, and sea level rise.
  - Stressed the importance of adaptation due to the long-lasting effects of greenhouse gases, even if mitigation efforts succeed.
- **H.H. Princess Mashael Alshalan, Aeon Strategy & Aeon Collective:**
  - Shared key findings from a study on climate change in Saudi Arabia, noting the diverse climate challenges faced, such as extreme heatwaves and water scarcity.
  - Emphasized the importance of coalition-building and integrating climate resilience measures into Saudi Arabia's vision for diversification.
- **Dr. Amal Aldaej, Senior Advisor, International Affairs NCVC:**
  - Discussed the role of the Saudi Green Initiative in climate adaptation, focusing on the goals of growing 10 billion trees and rehabilitating degraded land to reduce sandstorms and improve quality of life.
- **Ms Marina Antonopoulou, Emirates Nature-WWF:**
  - Highlighted the cost-effectiveness of nature-based solutions for climate resilience, such as coastal and watershed restoration.
  - Emphasized the need to scale up nature-positive investments through inclusive partnerships.
- **Mr Nadim Abillama, International Energy Agency (IEA):**
  - Explained the IEA's work on climate resilience from an energy perspective, focusing on the impact of climate change on energy production and consumption.
  - Highlighted the importance of supply diversification and enhanced policy integration to support energy security.

### Key Discussion Points:

- **Climate Risks in the GCC:**
  - Increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, accelerated warming, and sea level rise are critical challenges facing the region.
  - Adaptation strategies are necessary to protect human health, coastal infrastructure, and ecosystems.
- **Nature-Based Solutions and Climate Adaptation:**
  - Coastal ecosystems (e.g., mangroves) and watersheds can provide effective protection against climate risks.
  - Nature-based solutions can be up to 50% more cost-effective than hard engineering solutions.
- **Saudi Green Initiative:**
  - Efforts to grow 10 billion trees and rehabilitate land in Saudi Arabia were presented as important nature-based approaches to enhancing climate resilience.
- **Community and Policy Integration:**
  - The panel discussed the importance of integrating adaptation measures into development plans at the national and hyper-local levels to enhance community resilience.
  - The role of community-driven resilience and the need for hyper-local adaptation plans were highlighted as crucial steps for effective climate action.

### Audience Questions:

- Urgency of Action and Solutions:
  - Questions centered around the need for actionable, solution-driven initiatives instead of continuing discussions without implementation.
  - Panelists emphasized the need for coordinated actions between government, private sector, and communities to make real progress.

### Closing Remarks & Calls to Action:

- Dr. Diana Francis: Highlighted the importance of immediate adaptation measures due to the delayed impacts of greenhouse gases.
- H.H. Princess Mashael Alshalan: Called for more coalition building, both globally and locally, and for integrating adaptation and resilience into Saudi Arabia's climate and development plans.
- Dr. Amal Aldaej: Stressed the importance of achieving the Saudi Green Initiative's goals to support climate adaptation and improve quality of life.
- Ms Marina Antonopoulou: Encouraged the scaling up of nature-based solutions through partnerships, highlighting the need to see nature as an integral part of development and climate resilience strategies.
- Mr Nadim Abillama: Emphasized the importance of policy integration and collaboration to address climate resilience challenges effectively in the energy sector.



## Closing Remarks: Mr Spyros Kouvelis, Team Leader, EU-GCC Cooperation on Green Transition Project



Mr Spyros Kouvelis thanked the participants for staying beyond the scheduled time and highlighted the importance of the discussions that took place. He encouraged everyone to stay tuned to the project's social media channels for follow-up information and future updates.

### Key Points:

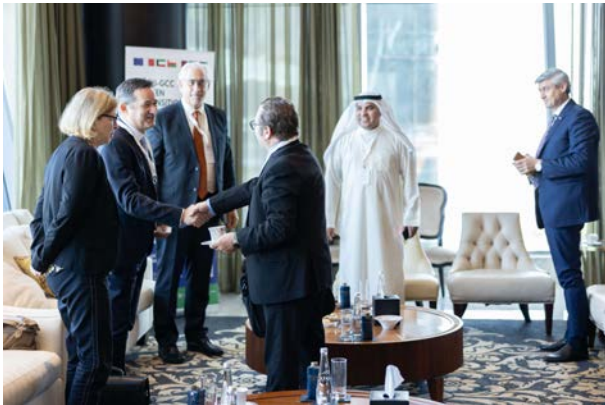
- The EU-GCC Green Transition Project focuses on three main pillars:
  - **Mitigation:** Reducing emissions through relevant technologies.
  - **Green Hydrogen:** Promoting renewable hydrogen in the region.
  - **Adaptation and Climate Awareness:** Increasing resilience and building climate diplomacy.
- The project will continue its activities until 2026, working at both national and regional levels across all GCC countries in collaboration with regional institutions like IRENA and the GCC Secretariat.
- Upcoming events include a Finance and Investment for Green Transition Event on November 26 in Abu Dhabi. This event will connect solutions with funding opportunities.
- The project also undertakes reviews and studies to keep stakeholders informed on the progress and developments in the green transition, such as:
  - A study on green hydrogen for the region.
  - A study on countries' commitments following COP28 and their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) ahead of COP30 in 2026.

Mr Kouvelis emphasized the importance of collaboration among different stakeholders, including the European Commission, EU Delegations, national authorities in GCC countries, businesses, finance and investment sectors, technology providers, developers, and civil society.

He extended his gratitude to the entire project team for their contributions and support, as well as the European Union, participating companies like Masdar and ACWA Power, IRENA, and other institutions involved. He also thanked the technicians, photographers, and participants for their engagement in the event.

# Media Coverage & Impressions

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## About the project

# THE EU-GCC COOPERATION ON GREEN TRANSITION PROJECT



Launched in August 2023, this project funded by the European Union marks a significant milestone in the long partnership between the European Union (EU) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). By addressing critical global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development, the project builds upon the EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement Document signed in 1989. The Joint Action Programme for 2022-2027 endorsed in February 2022 outlines the strategic framework for cooperation, emphasizing the need to join forces in addressing climate change and make progress on green transition. This project reflects the shared commitment to leveraging EU expertise to deepen cooperation and engagement, promote green policies and technologies, and create a conducive business environment for collaboration among energy-related and green tech companies in the Gulf.

### KEY OBJECTIVES

The project aims to strengthen political and technical relationships at regional and bilateral levels by:

- Deepening engagement towards green transition and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Promoting the uptake of green transition policies and technologies by the GCC countries.
- Facilitating a conducive business environment between EU and GCC green tech companies in the Gulf region.

### IMPACT

- Enhanced knowledge exchange on climate action and green transition.
- Raised awareness on climate change, sustainable practices and circular economy.
- Strengthened network for collaboration in green solutions and energy transition.
- Proactive EU Climate Diplomacy in the region.

### STAKEHOLDERS

- State and non-state institutions, business community, & environmental NGOs.
- Researchers, academia, youth groups, & media outlets.
- EU and GCC businesses, particularly SMEs.
- EU Member States present in the GCC.

### FOCUS AREAS



#### GREEN TRANSITION

Promote transformative change for green transition policies & practices within the GCC.



#### NET ZERO CARBON

Implement solutions for reducing carbon emissions in industrial & public sectors.



#### HYDROGEN MARKET

Support the development of a renewable hydrogen market in the Gulf region.



#### CLEAN-TECH SOLUTIONS

Foster innovations in renewable energy technologies & clean-tech industries.



#### CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Strengthen resilience & adaptive capacities to climate-related hazards.



#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Launch initiatives to preserve biodiversity & natural habitats, including marine protection.



#### CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Encourage the adoption of sustainable waste management & resource efficiency.



#### SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

Engage financial institutions in channelling investment & finance in support of green transition.



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