

Recommendations for the Stockholm+50 Conference, June 2-3, 2022, and the COP-process beyond, from a round table discussion on April 7, hosted by the Swedish Dialogue Institute

On April 7, the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa hosted an interactive round table discussion on the theme of ***“Creating inclusive processes to address Climate Change and Environmental Issues in the MENA region”***. The gathering brought together over 60 people from across the MENA region, from Morocco to Iraq, representing governments, civil society, academia, the private sector, donors, and international organizations. Participants made a number of recommendations that will be fed into the Stockholm+50 meeting and the COP-process beyond, with a view to contribute to greater inclusivity in climate change discussions, particularly in the MENA region.

Background

The Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa has a mandate to contribute to dialogue and work with regional issues, including sustainable development. The themes raised by the Stockholm+50 conference are particularly relevant for the MENA region, which already suffers severe consequences of climate change, through for instance, extreme weather events such as floods and droughts and extended periods of high temperatures that threaten human health. Moreover, the region will be at the center of the climate discussion in the coming year and beyond, through the hosting of both COP27 (Egypt), and COP28 (UAE).

As part of preparations for Stockholm+50, the Institute on April 7 hosted a round table discussion, aiming to:

1. Promote regional and intergenerational dialogue on climate change and environmental issues in the MENA region and between the region and Europe, by providing a safe and constructive space for sharing information, experiences and ideas regarding the challenges and opportunities in these fields;
2. Strengthen connectivity amongst professionals and organisations across the region, by bringing together climate actors who would perhaps not otherwise meet, thus contributing to ongoing climate change discussions;
3. Contribute to raising awareness of and interest in the “building of a green and fair future for all of us”, as outlined by Stockholm+50;
4. Develop relevant policy recommendations and input from MENA to Stockholm+50 and the COP-process.

Recommendations

1. Improving inclusivity and committing to real change

- a. Push for the inclusion of more women and youth at policy, negotiating and decision-making tables, including at higher levels (not only as part of technical support teams).
- b. Draw on the growing resource base of competent female and young professionals in different fields.
- c. Use round tables, seminars, webinars, work shops, and other interactive fora to engage more youth and women and to share useful practices and recommendations.
- d. Seek opportunities for greater inter-generational and inter-sectoral exchange wherever possible, so as to break silos and improve the prospects of collaboration between change agents.
- e. Ensure the involvement of people with disabilities in relevant discussions.
- f. “Walk the walk, not only talk the talk” – go beyond policy documents stressing inclusion of youth and women, and make sure it is not just “ticking a box” but a true commitment to an inclusive approach.

2. Prioritizing education and adapting language and messaging

- a. Ensure that school curricula address climate change and its impacts, and explain the opportunities available for individuals and societies to help limit climate change.
- b. Frame climate change more clearly to emphasise the impact on the local economy, farming or food production systems, water availability, fish stocks etc, so as to underline its relevance for a larger group of the population.
- c. Make climate information available in local languages, and especially Arabic.
- d. Communicate issues related to climate change in an accessible type of language, free of jargon and overly academic terms.
- e. Develop visual and graphic tools, including maps and imagery, that appeal to the MENA region, especially youth, rather than just relying on messaging from the global north (eg. images of polar bears on icebergs).

3. Using decentralization to manage climate risks

- a. Engage local government both in policy and implementation discussions, given their important role in adaptation activities to build resilience close to vulnerable populations.
- b. Include local government in consultations, to draw on their knowledge and perspectives.

4. Engaging the private sector

- a. Make the private sector a key partner in the transition to a carbon neutral, resource-efficient economy, and therefore involve it wherever relevant.
- b. Involve SMEs in climate change work, so as to harness their innovation and local roots to reach a broader segment of the population.
- c. Ensure that private sector regulation is appropriate and effective – neither too bureaucratic and/or stifling of new innovative practices and greater efficiency, nor too permissive of monopolistic, rent-seeking or otherwise harmful behaviour.

5. Including academia more effectively

- a. Find ways to leverage the knowledge and experience of academic institutions, researchers, and think tanks to a greater extent in the preparations and discussions leading up to large events, conferences, and negotiations.
- b. Adapt research approaches and R&D to local circumstances.

6. Giving a voice to Indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities

- a. Support indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities, especially in rural areas, who are often the most affected by climate change and environmental degradation, to make their voices heard.
- b. Provide resources such as funding but also capacity building and skills development to enable participation in meaningful consultations.
- c. Engage and support local communities that are often already working on and developing relevant projects on the ground.

7. Developing more robust and relevant climate change data

- a. Gather more data and evidence on climate change and environmental degradation in the global south, given the huge data gaps between the global south and north on climate change parameters and related indices.
- b. Collect and analyse more detailed and disaggregated climate change data, including gender-disaggregated data (data collected and tabulated separately by gender), which allows for the measurement of male-female differences on a variety of social and economic dimensions related to climate change and environmental challenges. Disaggregated and gender-differentiated information is a pre-requisite for effective, appropriate, and evidence-based analysis and policy proposals.

8. Strengthening advocacy and changing the narrative

- a. Highlight positive and inspiring “success stories” of inclusive participation, i.e. use story telling in advocacy work both to “open eyes” and to inspire change. Role models (male and female) can play a crucial role in a change process.

- b. Work on changing the narrative, to make sure that women and youth are not merely portrayed as “vulnerable groups”, but as actors, whose knowledge, experiences, perspectives, and ideas would benefit climate change discussions.
- c. Identify and support male, female, and youth champions – change agents who can help drive real, meaningful, and sustained transformation to more inclusive practices and processes.

9. Maximizing the impact of international organizations and donors

- a. Develop joint programming on climate change by all relevant UN agencies, bringing onboard NGOs, youth, and women.
- b. Help governments and CSOs prioritize the most impactful policies and programmes.

10. Strengthening national and regional coordination and institutions

- a. Broaden national climate change discussion beyond Ministries of Environment, so as to include other key government ministries and agencies, including Ministries of Finance, Energy, Water and Agriculture
- b. Expand and deepen regional and cross-regional cooperation between countries facing similar challenges, including transboundary water collaboration.

Background about the Swedish Dialogue Institute

[The Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa](#) is a public agency that serves as a platform for contacts and dialogue between Sweden/Europe and the Middle East and North Africa. The Dialogue Institute seeks to address issues that are important for political, economic, and social development, or for relations between the countries, or that help increase mutual understanding in the areas of culture and religion. The Dialogue Institute was previously based in Alexandria, Egypt, but is since the autumn of 2021 based in Amman, Jordan. More information about the Institute’s activities can be found in a recently published [Highlight report 2021](#).