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LEBANON'S PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS FOR A GREEN TRANSITION

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This discussion is the sixth and final of AUB-NCC's 2023 series of roundtables, titled "Navigating Climate Change and Environmental Activism in the MENA Region: Challenges and Opportunities".

The closing forum was organized by AUB-NCC and the World Bank on March 14th, 2024 at the OSB Maamari Auditorium in AUB.

The series is co-designed with:



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& CITIZENSHIP



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
BEIRUT
Middle East



Arab Reform Initiative

Cover page picture from [BerytechBeat Blog](#).

PROGRAM

09:00–10:10 AM

Registration and Welcome

WELCOME SPEECH

Dr Zaher Dawy, AUB Provost

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME AND SERIES RECAP

Mr Antoine Kallab, Associate Director of AUB-NCC

LEBANON COUNTRY CLIMATE DEVELOPMENT REPORT PRESENTATION

Dr Ali Ahmad, Climate Change Specialist at the World Bank

10:10–11:40 AM

PANEL 1

**HARVESTING THE POWER OF MULTIPLICITY:
HOW TO UNLOCK SUSTAINABLE CHANGE WITHIN A FRAGMENTED CONTEXT**

Ms Anna Fleischer, Director of the Beirut Office at Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung

Dr Nasser Yassin, Lebanon's Minister of the Environment

Dr Jean Christophe Carret, World Bank Country Director for Middle East

Mr Ziad Abdel Samad, Co-founder and Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development

Dr Alain Daou, Director of AUB-NCC and Founding Dean of the Faculty of Business at AUB Mediterraneo

11:40 AM–12:10 PM **Coffee Break**

12:10–1:40 PM

PANEL 2

**GAMING OUT THE DIFFERENT SCENARIOS FOR LEBANON'S GREEN TRANSITION:
A CONVERSATION BETWEEN EXPERTS**

Dr Joanna Doummar, Associate Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Earth Sciences at AUB

Dr George Mitri, Professor of Environmental Sciences and Director of the Land and Natural Resources Program at the Institute of the Environment, University of Balamand, Lebanon

Dr Ali Ahmad, Climate Change Specialist at the World Bank

Ms Lamia Moubayed, President at Institute of Finance Basil Fuleihan / Vice-chair at the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration

1:40–2:00 PM

CLOSING REMARKS

Ms Maria Mouzannar, Environmental Policy Researcher and COP28 Lebanese Youth Delegate

Mr Antoine Kallab, Associate Director of AUB-NCC

Mr Salim Rouhana, Sector Leader for Sustainable Development at the World Bank

SERIES SUMMARY

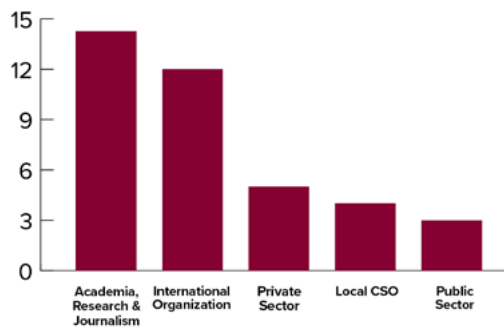
“Navigating Climate Change and Environmental Activism in the MENA Region: Challenges and Opportunities” was a collaborative six-stage roundtable series that enabled an open exchange of ideas between actors, experts, and citizens. The discussions helped identify priorities and prospects to empower climate action and environmental activism in the MENA region.

The dialogue touched on important themes related to climate change, ranging from grassroots environmental activism to international climate negotiations. For the closing event, the discussion centered around the first Lebanon Country Climate Development Report (CCDR), recently published by the World Bank.

AUB-NCC will launch its 2024 roundtable series “The New Roadmap to a Green Transition: Exploring Today’s Climate Actors” in the following weeks. The discussions will look at alternative actors whose relentless effort keep the climate agenda alive at the national level and refuse to be discouraged by Lebanon’s seemingly unnavigable institutional landscape. This platform will continue to lobby for more impactful reforms, a better approach to climate threats and sustainable development in the MENA region.

Full recap of the series with recordings and summary briefs on [this link](#).

38 PANELISTS REPRESENTING:



6 PUBLISHED BRIEFS



SERIES ATTENDEES



RESIDING IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE GLOBE



THE LEBANON CCDR

The World Bank's [Country Climate and Development Report](#) is a diagnostic tool issued for every country to prioritize impactful actions for climate mitigation and adaptation, all while achieving broader development goals. In March 2024, the World Bank launched Lebanon's CCDR report, revealing that the country is one of the least prepared globally to face climate change. This is due to the country's low adaptive capacity, severe climate shocks, weak institutions and deficient infrastructure.

"The CCDR is an invitation for policy makers, citizens and academic institutions to work collectively for the recovery and development of Lebanon" - Dr Ali Ahmad

This report outlines a roadmap of recovery and development for Lebanon with climate action as its foundation. It goes beyond mere crisis management and considers long-term climate actions that can synergistically improve the resilience of the most vulnerable communities and ensure the country's development.

The following sectors are prioritized, in an attempt to maximize impact through centralized action on areas generating the highest levels of emissions and waste:

ENERGY: Around 44% of household income is spent on fuel generators

WATER: Less than 50% water will be available during the dry season by 2040

SOLID WASTE: Solid waste emissions are increased by 60% as a result of mismanagement

TRANSPORT: Landslides threaten more than half of Lebanon's roads

Source: Lebanon CCDR

Initiatives tackling these four sectors are regrouped in a "Least-Cost Recovery Scenario" that builds cross-sectoral resilience to climate change. While emphasizing the need for much more serious action on behalf of all Lebanese actors, it draws a roadmap to score impactful wins that can slow-down the rapid environmental degradation and its impact on public health, the economy and social inequalities. It also relies on leveraging human capital and improving governance by harnessing the potential of the Lebanese private sector and civil society as drivers of reforms.



CCDR Presentation - Picture by Hasan Nisr

PANEL 1 - HARVESTING THE POWER OF MULTIPLICITY: HOW TO UNLOCK SUSTAINABLE CHANGE WITHIN A FRAGMENTED CONTEXT

DR NASSER YASSIN

Lebanon's Minister of the Environment

DR JEAN CHRISTOPHE CARRET

World Bank Country Director for Middle East

ZIAD ABDEL SAMAD

Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)

DR ALAIN DAOU

Director of AUB-NCC and Founding Dean of the Faculty of Business at AUB Mediterraneo

ANNA FLEISCHER

Director Beirut Office at Heinrich Böll Foundation (Moderator)

BACKGROUND

Lebanon's complex social and political landscapes dilutes the State's power and influence. The multiplicity of actors, including local and international, institutional and informal, urban and rural, impose significant challenges in aligning agendas. Moreover, the country's severe economic crisis further complicates the ability to prioritize climate and environmental reforms. Nevertheless, stakeholders can find their own incentives to invest in a green transition. Can decarbonization be leveraged as a financial stimulant at the grassroots level given the weak institutional context? Can individual actors attract climate finance investors irrespective of State-led structural reforms? Can the CCDDR's "whole-of-society" approach succeed without central coordination? Where do international actors stand vis-à-vis a decentralized green transition?

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

The first panel started with a reflection from Minister of the Environment Dr Nasser Yassin regarding the CCDDR who provided projections on the dire impacts of climate change across various sectors. He stated however that all is not lost, as many ministries and public institutions have started mainstreaming climate action in their programs, plans, and policies, marking a positive step forward. Dr Yassin also discussed the Ministry's effort in developing the first national adaptation plan and its successful launch of the green investment facility.

"The roadmap in the CCDDR scores triple wins for the environment, the economy, and the citizens in the four key sectors" - Dr Nasser Yassin

When asked about the role of academia in climate action, AUB-NCC director Dr Alain Daou highlighted the importance of producing knowledge and training upcoming generations. He indicated that Lebanon's academic institutes act as a bridge between donors and local authorities, as they are trusted entities. According to Dr Daou, the three main pillars for education should be sustainability, multi-disciplinarity, and technology, while enabling ecosystems for green entrepreneurship.

"When policy makers listen to academia, or when academics go outside the walls of academia, magic happens; It is one of the few sectors in Lebanon that are still trustworthy" - Dr Alain Daou

From an international donor perspective, World Bank Country Director Dr Jean-Christophe Carret focused on the CCDDR, the rationale behind it and the challenges faced in its making. Moreover, Dr Carret explained how and why the World

Bank amended its mandate from fighting extreme poverty to financing climate change adaptation and mitigation. Dr Carret stated that the analysis of the CCDD reveals that in Lebanon's context, working on climate is synergistic with working on development.

"While Lebanon is having an acute economic crisis, we shouldn't wait to work on climate action and development; time is of the essence" - Dr Jean-Christophe Carret

From a geopolitical perspective, Mr Ziad Abdel Samad emphasized the implications of war and the additional pressure it causes on countries vulnerable to climate change. He also reflected on global trends for green funding, stating that the majority of funds goes towards climate mitigation, while Lebanon and the global south need climate adaptation. Mr Abdel Samad added to this discussion by mentioning the informal sector in both public and private institutions, noting the lack of a regulatory framework and oversight mechanisms. Building on intersectionality, he urged the panelists and audience to work together on developing a national plan for sustainable development.

In summary, all panelists underlined that inaction in the face of these multiple crises will only lead to more dire complications. Despite the acute economic crisis and political instability, there is no reason to postpone investing in climate adaptation and development. They ended by a call for coordination and cooperation as it is crucial to maximize the impact of any effort.



Panel 1 - Picture by Hasan Nisr

PANEL 2 - GAMING OUT THE DIFFERENT SCENARIOS FOR LEBANON'S GREEN TRANSITION: A CONVERSATION BETWEEN EXPERTS

DR GEORGE MITRI

Professor of Environmental Sciences and Director of the Land and Natural Resources Program at the Institute of the Environment, University of Balamand, Lebanon

DR ALI AHMAD

Climate Change Specialist at the World Bank

LAMIA MOUBAYED

President at Institute of Finance Basil Fuleihan / Vice-chair at the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration

DR JOANNA DOUMMAR

Associate Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Earth Sciences at AUB (Moderator)

BACKGROUND

Lebanon's instability, coupled with the weak political will for reforms, stands in the way of decisive actions towards climate resilience capacity building. Meanwhile, climate and risk projections for the country present a dire perspective. Rising temperatures, decreasing snowfall and rain, unsustainable levels of CO2 emissions and the lack of preparedness are already impacting Lebanon's society, economy and ecosystems, with the most vulnerable bearing the bulk effect. While the CCDR put forward two scenarios until 2040, are there more levers that can be used to initiate impactful reforms? What are the sectoral implications for these different scenarios? How will environmental degradation reshape our livelihood?

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

Following the introduction of all panelists, Dr Ali Ahmad expanded on the rationale behind the CCDR and the prioritization of the four sectors. As the macro-fiscal constraints in Lebanon deteriorated basic service provision, Dr Ahmad stated that development across sectors is closely linked to climate action. He also underscored the role of the private sector in financing this development.

"The biggest impediment to the implementation of the CCDR is the weak institutional capacity of the public sector to act" - Dr Ali Ahmad

From an ecological perspective, Dr George Mitri highlighted the importance of forests, their intersection with climate change and the increasing environmental and socio-economic pressures this sector is facing. Moreover, he explained how Lebanon's low adaptive capacity to climate change threatens the survival of forests, plants and wildlife, rendering them more vulnerable to disturbances.

Lastly, Ms. Lamia Moubayed stated that access to financing and establishing markets for sustainable solutions are key interventions. Coming from the public sector herself, she emphasized that competent governmental institutions are indispensable as they are the enablers, regulators and facilitators of Lebanon's green transition.

"Public procurement is a strategic area: it defines how the government spends, how much it spends and where it spends its money" - Lamia Moubayed

As a summary, all panelists agreed that despite the limited institutional capacity and talent exodus of the public sector, there are still heroes within governmental institutions who are working under intense conditions. Coupled with additional pressures linked to climate change, there is an urgent need to work on multi-disciplinarity across all sectors to ensure Lebanon's quick, efficient and sustainable green transition.



Panel 2 - Picture by Hasan Nisr

CLOSING REMARKS: THE ROLE OF THE YOUTH IN THE GREEN TRANSITION

MARIA MOUZANNAR

Environmental Policy Researcher and COP 28 Lebanese Youth Delegate

SALIM ROUHANA

Sector Leader for Sustainable Development at the World Bank

ANTOINE KALLAB

Associate Director of AUB-NCC

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

Ms Mouzannar highlighted that youth look at climate action from an ownership perspective as they are the generation that will suffer most from the repercussions of climate change. Throughout her presentation, she indicated that youth tend to be more invested and more willing to adopt radical changes. She added that youth retain a body of knowledge, have fresh perspectives, and innovative ideas to address climate change.

However, she also pointed to numerous challenges specific to youth such as marginalization, unemployment and migration. She then called for a climate action roadmap that integrates education, opportunities, funding avenues, data sharing, communication, inclusion and partnerships.

To conclude the event, Mr Antoine Kallab and Mr Salim Rouhana joined the conversation as discussants.

Mr Rouhana stated that beyond natural resources, Lebanon's best asset is its human capital. He spoke about the ongoing loss of young, intelligent, educated Lebanese individuals who have the biggest potential to change the status-quo. He also stressed that the current educational model is lacking, noting that climate change should not be studied in a vacuum, but rather be integrated across disciplines, such as engineering, urban planning, and health sciences among others.

From his end, Mr Antoine Kallab pointed out that individuals under 21 are unable to vote, yet they are the ones who bear the cost of inaction. He spoke about the inherent moral responsibility of voters and decision-makers to think beyond their lifetime and build a habitable world for its future generation. He added that many public institutions are still functioning due to dedicated employees doing their jobs despite the lack of resources, and that recovery requires better youth engagement with the public sector.



Closing Remarks - Picture by Leila Rossa Mouawad

KEY TAKEAWAYS

UNPACKING THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT ACTORS

There is a need for a whole-of-society approach, where the roles and responsibilities of different actors are clearly defined and assigned. The nuance of each actor's strengths and limitations must be acknowledged while directing efforts towards strengthening all actors.

This requires engaging communities in natural resource management to increase their resilience to climate change. The public sector's role would be to facilitate, moderate, coordinate and support communities in their resilience. Other actors need to recognize the role of the public sector as an enabler, mediator, interlocutor and facilitator to access funding.

RETHINKING NATIONAL STRATEGY

A comprehensive national strategy needs to be designed to integrate climate action into broader development goals. Given the intertwined nature of environmental, social, and economic challenges, these cannot be addressed as independent but as interlinked sectors. That said, a regulating body must be strongly present to coordinate the work of all actors. As the priorities of different sectors might not always align, consultative processes are needed so that all sectoral plans feed into this national strategy.

However, multiple reforms are required first from the public sector as a prerequisite for recovery in a fragmented context. This entails enforcing legislation that integrates green procurement standards, facilitating green financing, and ensuring accountability through monitoring and evaluation. Notably, all these reforms are anchored in the political will to ensure that all actors are committed to meeting development goals. Therefore, the main limitation lies in the lack of trust amongst citizens and international donors in the Lebanese public sector.

JOINING EFFORTS AMIDST CRISES

Collaborative and coordinated actions are needed to move forward in an impactful way. The scale of the crisis and its complexity require all actors to work together. Realistically, what the government is currently doing is not enough, however, support for reforms should not dwindle. Additionally, it is crucial to focus on and learn from any victory in achieving a green transition, no matter how small.

Achieving collaborative coordinated action is fostered through rich dialogue. Citizen and stakeholder engagement in discussion is crucial for co-designing solutions and negotiating different interests. When there are platforms for this engaging discussion to be held, roles can be assigned for meaningful coordinated action.

RECOMMENDATIONS & WAY FORWARD

The event discussed what it takes for Lebanon to unlock change within a fragmented context. The first panel's broad approach was complemented with a more technical aspect in the second panel. As such, both discussions shared key takeaways related to the need for collective action alongside a comprehensive understanding of what role each sector can play in this transformation.

LEVERAGING ACADEMIA TO RESTORE TRUST

To coordinate a society-wide approach, there must be an aligning of priorities moving forward. This can occur through promoting science and evidence-based policies. In such cases, collaborations between scientists, academics, and decision-makers could create the trust needed to move the needle forward.

Basing decisions on trusted sources is imperative in Lebanon's context, due to the poor rapport between the government and its people. Addressing institutional and economic challenges by using a scientific approach is therefore necessary to tackle climate change. Moving forward, the role of academia should not be overlooked in political decision making.

LEAVING NO YOUTH BEHIND

Involving youth in strategies towards a green transition is pivotal as they can develop impactful change within themselves and their own communities, rippling out to impacts on wider society. This power is partly due to the dynamic nature of youth, allowing them to pave creative pathways that contribute to solving crises.

Youth mobilization and engagement in decision-making processes can occur by ensuring that they have platforms to express their opinions and can access opportunities to develop their skills. Additionally, youth should be encouraged to bring forward their innovative solutions. This requires enabling ecosystems for entrepreneurship to create avenues for more sustainable change.

MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE ACTION ACROSS THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Climate action must be mainstreamed in all ministries, not just ones that deal with the environment in their mandate. Whether through their strategies, plans or policies, public institutions should integrate actions for climate adaptation and mitigation. At this point, climate change cannot be looked at only from an environmental lens, given its cross-sectoral implications affecting the most vulnerable people.

On another end, public spending should be aligned with sustainability and climate goals. This requires the adoption of green procurement principles in the public sector. This can push all governmental institutions towards sustainable purchasing decisions.

FOCUSING AND MANAGING GREEN FUNDS

More funding needs to be directed towards climate adaptation rather than mitigation given Lebanon's low adaptive capacity. This financing should be aligned with the nation's long-term recovery plan, which includes development and climate goals.

To manage this shift towards a green agenda, direct investments require coordination, oversight and regulation. Imperative to this are monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that assess the impact generated and ensure accountability in the green transition. Tools that can be used include conducting detailed assessments, tracking progress, and measuring specific Key Performance Indicators.

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Discussions:**



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