

'Excellence in Implementation': The UAE Model in Reaching the Global Agenda 2030

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The implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require major efforts from all countries around the world. Achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will require action at national and global levels. At the national level, countries are expected to align their development strategies and governance frameworks in support of the SDGs. Globally, partnerships among different sectors and countries will be needed to make sure that 'no-one is left behind'. In all this it will be fundamental to encourage the participation of stakeholders at various levels from a variety of backgrounds in decision-making and in direct action to support the SDGs. The UAE has launched a number of initiatives with this aim in mind.

Integrating the SDGs into Development Strategies Locally and Internationally

Since the early discussions on shaping the global agenda for the post-Millennium Development Goals era, the UAE has played, through His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, a significant role in developing the 17 SDGs. These goals, agreed by all UN Member States in 2015, are a universal agenda for a better and more sustainable future for everyone on the planet.

The world faces many challenges in its path to achieve the SDGs, notably climate change (SDG 13), ensuring access to clean water and electricity (SDGs 6 and 7), access to quality education and good health (SDGs 3 and 4) and establishing partnerships to achieve the global agenda by 2030 (SDG 17).

Prior to the launch of the SDGs, in 2014, the UAE launched its National Agenda 2021 and set an aim to become the best

country in the world by its centennial celebration in 2071. The priorities of the UAE National Agenda are fully in line with the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The agenda includes having a world-class healthcare system, ensuring sustainable environmental performance and infrastructure, offering quality education in a knowledge-based innovative, competitive economy, as well as a safe, just and strong society that preserves its identity.

What makes the SDGs distinct from other development-related goals is that they are intended to be universal – today, no country can achieve socio-economic prosperity by working within its borders only. Instead, all countries need to work together to realise a sustainable future for the whole world. Partnerships and collaboration among different stakeholders play an important role in achieving these goals. Hence, the UAE has worked to build a regionally and globally-leading model with various types of partnerships for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

To reinforce these priorities, the UAE has placed world peace and prosperity as main pillars of its foreign aid policy. According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) statistics, the UAE is the largest donor as a share of its gross national income (GNI), with aid worth AED19.3 billion in 2017 and projects in more than 147 countries around the world. This foreign assistance is contributing to achieving several SDGs, including SDGs on eradication of poverty (SDG 1), good health and well-being (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), and partnerships (SDG 17).

Creating Mechanisms for Domestic Implementation and Multistakeholder Engagement

To ensure realising these global goals at the domestic level, in 2017 the UAE Cabinet issued a decree to establish a National Committee on Sustainable Development Goals. Chaired by Her Excellency Reem bint Ebrahim Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation, the committee includes 17 federal government agencies and ministries, including the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and the Future, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Prevention, among others. The committee's mandate includes aligning the UAE's

national priorities with the UN SDGs, serving as a government focal point for the SDGs, tracking progress and managing engagement with local and international stakeholders, as well as collecting official statistics, monitoring SDG indicators and submitting relevant progress reports.

Given the important role of the private sector in the national economy, in 2018, the National Committee on SDGs launched the Private Sector Advisory Council on SDGs to serve as a platform for dialogue and engagement between the private sector and the government regarding the 2030 Agenda. The council includes leading private companies from various sectors. Its main tasks are to provide strategic advice to improve and develop policy instruments that support the SDGs, identify best engagement approaches and practical solutions in areas of common interest and help align private sector corporate strategies with the SDGs.

The youth are the largest segment of the world's population – 1.8 billion people. Recognising their vital contribution to society, especially in the future, the National Committee on SDGs also launched the UAE Youth Advisory Council on SDGs in 2018. The council is a youth platform with global aspirations that are in line with the 2030 Agenda and the UN youth strategy, launched earlier in 2018. The Youth Advisory Council for the SDGs reflects and builds on the UAE's efforts in the areas of empowering young people, improving their capabilities and harnessing their creative ideas to address future challenges. The council includes equal gender representation from different nationalities and backgrounds.

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Supporting the Global Governance of the SDGs: The Global Councils

The UAE launched the Global Councils on SDGs during the World Government Summit 2018 in Dubai as an initiative aimed at supporting international cooperation around the SDGs – not only in the UAE but also among different countries and sectors across the world, in all fields. The Global Councils form a unique global network of policymakers from government, international organisations, academia and the private sector. Members of the councils share best practices and solutions for achieving the 17 SDGs at both the local and global levels. Each council consists of a chair and a maximum of 15 members from a diverse range of countries and backgrounds. Members of each council hold regular virtual meetings throughout the year to discuss and establish new partnerships and initiatives. The Global Councils are chaired by Her Excellency Reem bint Ebrahim Al Hashimy.

During the two years duration period of the councils, each Global Council develops a work plan for a project related to their respective SDG. Since the launch of the initiative in 2018, a total of 10 Global Councils have been formed, with each one chaired by a high-profile global leader, including Their Excellencies former New Zealand Prime Minister and former Administrator of the UN Development Programme Helen Clark, World Bank Group Senior Vice President Dr Mahmoud Mohieldin, former Director-General of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Adnan Amin and Dr Thani Al Zeyoudi, UAE Minister of Climate Change and Environment.

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These efforts reinforce the UAE's leading role in implementing the SDGs domestically and globally. Among the important initiatives already pursued by the Global Councils is work by the Council on SDG 16 (on peace, justice and strong institutions), which focuses on empowering young people and their institutions across the globe and encouraging youth to discuss and share innovative ideas for achieving global peace. In addition, the Council on SDG 3 (on good health and well-being) is working on a platform aimed at providing universal healthcare for citizens who cannot afford it around the world.

The UAE has played a pivotal role in shaping the 2030 Agenda that sets the 17 SDGs. These efforts have placed the UAE at the forefront of countries that have joined the global endeavour to accomplish world prosperity and well-being through sustainability. At the local level, the UAE National Agenda 2021 and UAE Centennial 2071 embody the core components of national development plans. For the UAE, realisation of the 2030 Agenda is only a beginning, as the country considers these goals as part of its national development outcomes in the coming years. However, this global agenda can only be attained through partnerships among various sectors and through collaboration among stakeholders within our country and from around the world who will need to come together to convey a message of hope and trust in our ability to achieve a better future and bring about peace and prosperity for everyone.