



## VIRTUAL PLATFORM

### 1<sup>st</sup> Panel Discussion

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022

## GREENING THE CONCRETE JUNGLES

Towards Urban Afforestation and Vertical Farming



## Upcoming Trainings

### Online Training for Sustainability Reporting



Date: 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2022

### Online Stakeholder Engagement Workshop



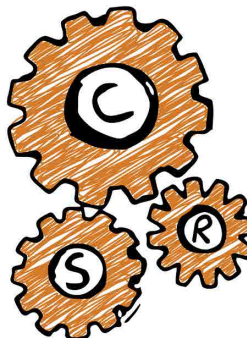
Date: 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022



الشبكة العربية للمسؤولية  
الاجتماعية للمؤسسات  
Arabia CSR Network®

### Online Certified Training on Fundamentals of CSR & Sustainability

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022



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## Note from the President & CEO Habiba Al Mar'ashi

Hello Arabia CSR Network members,

We are two months into the year, and I am glad to see the buzz of life and activity as we effectively deal with the current and hopefully the last wave of COVID-19.

Work is bustling as usual at the Arabia CSR Network. The first quarter is marked by a number of key events that set the flow for some of our main campaigns – the primary being the Arabia CSR Awards.

To kick-start this year's Awards programme, we will organise a Clinic on 7<sup>th</sup> April for all the interested and potential applicants. This Clinic is a comprehensive workshop that covers the key aspects of the Award, what the judges are looking for, and what organisations can do to improve their sustainability performance, not just to win an award, but to create a positive impact for their business and their stakeholders.

The Arabia CSR Awards is the premier sustainability award for the Arab region. The mechanism that we apply to identify sustainability champions is extremely rigorous and provides a very credible platform to recognise true leaders that are going beyond the basics to improve the lives of their customers, their communities, their employees, and the environment.

We encourage all companies – private and public – in the Arab Region to consider applying for the Arabia CSR Awards. It's not just about the winning; it's about the process of improvement that we guarantee will improve how you practice CSR and sustainability. This year's awards – the 15<sup>th</sup> round to date - will have fifteen categories to choose from. More details on <https://arabiacsnetwork.com/awards/>.

Another award that I highly commend is the Sharjah Excellence Award. With a vision to promote sustainable economic growth in Sharjah by recognising achievements in businesses, this Award is applicable for Large, Small and Medium organisations in the GCC Countries Private Sector. It follows the Excellence Model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), and aims to promote a culture of quality, excellence and innovation in all institutions in the business sector. I was delighted to be one of the jury members of this award.

Recently, the Sharjah Excellence Award held its awarding ceremony. To find out more about who the winners were of this award, please read it on page 4.

In February, we supported our sister organisation, the Emirates Environmental Group to conduct the 1st panel discussion of the year. The topic of the event was "Greening the Concrete Jungles: Towards Urban Afforestation and Vertical Farming". Even though cities occupy only 3% of the Earth's surface, they currently consume 78% of the total energy used in the world. They are also responsible for 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, urban spaces are an important starting point to make changes with a positive impact not only on their populations but also in the fight against global warming. It was extremely important to understand the issue of urban afforestation and vertical farming in our efforts to address climate change.

The panel discussion invited speakers such as Mr. Henrique Pereira - Chief Executive Officer at Taka Solutions; Dr. Moohammed Wasim Yahia - Assistant Professor at the Architecture Engineering Department of the University of Sharjah; and Ms. Olivia Nielsen - Associate Principal at Miyamoto International.

The speakers answered very interesting and important questions such as the feasibility to implement urban afforestation in the current urban scenario, the impact of vertical farms to prevent encroachment into animal habitats, and the challenges and opportunities in the UAE to establish vertical farms.

Also in February, I attended the public briefing of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Financing for Development on the Global Economic Context. Organised by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the session focused on how the global economic recovery is set to decelerate amid continued COVID-19 flare-ups and diminished policy support. According to current forecasts, half of the world's economies will exceed pre-pandemic levels of output by at least 7% in 2023.

The UNDESA session highlighted the importance of practicing sustainability at the corporate and government level. Therefore, if you would like to play your part in creating a better world, please get in touch with us. We would love to use our experience and expertise to help you be more sustainable.

I was also very pleased to attend on 26<sup>th</sup> February a Working Breakfast on the topic of "Sustainability Strategies of the Private Sector" organised by the Embassy of Switzerland to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. You can read more about it on page 4.

I hope you enjoy reading about these events and activities in more details in the inside pages of this newsletter. I invite you to join us and let us continue working together to build effective partnerships for a sustainable future.





## ACSRN News

### Public briefing of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development on the Global Economic Context

ACSRN Founder, President & CEO attended on **9<sup>th</sup> February** the public briefing of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development on the Global Economic Context organised by UNDESA. The Director, Financing for Sustainable Development Office, UNDESA opened the session with a welcome note and a brief update on the 2022 financing for Sustainable Development Report. It was then followed by presentations and moderated discussions on the global economic context from the: 1) Division Chief, World Economic Studies Division, IMF; 2) Lead Economist, Development Prospects Group, World Bank, and; 3) Chief of Branch, Global Economic Monitoring, Economic Analysis and Policy Division, UNDESA. The session was moderated by Chief of Branch, Policy Analysis & Development, Financing for Sustainable Development Office, UNDESA.

The global recovery is set to decelerate amid continued COVID-19 flare-ups and diminished policy support. According to current forecasts, half of the world's economies will exceed pre-pandemic levels of output by at least 7% in 2023. In East Asia and South Asia, average gross domestic product (GDP) in 2023 is projected to be 18.4% above its 2019 level, compared to only 3.4% in Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite a robust recovery, East Asia and South Asia's GDP in 2023 is projected to remain 1.7% below the levels forecast prior to the pandemic. Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean are projected to see gaps of 5.5 and 4.2% respectively, compared to pre-pandemic projections. These persistent output gaps will exacerbate poverty and inequality and undermine sustainable development. (World Economic Situation and Prospects, 2022)

The outlook is clouded by various downside risks, including new virus variants, unanchored inflation expectations, and financial stress. If some countries eventually require debt restructuring, the recovery will be more difficult to achieve than in the past. Climate change may increase commodity price instability. Social tensions may heighten as a result of the increase in inequality caused by the pandemic. These challenges underscore the need to foster widespread vaccination, enhance debt sustainability, tackle climate change and inequality, and diversify economic activity.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Panel Discussion

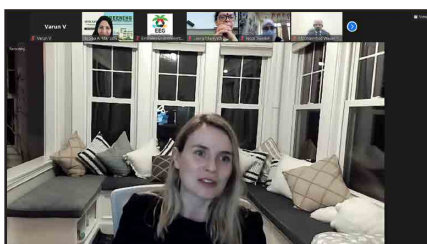
Over time, while we built many unimaginable constructs to live, travel and survive safely and comfortably; but in our negligence and perhaps arrogance ignore the aspects of the natural environment that allows us to evolve and adapt. It might seem quaint to live in this concrete jungle that we call home, but it is not the best path towards the future. To ascertain questions like how feasible is it to implement urban afforestation to the current urban scenario? Are climate controlled vertical farms a solution to food security in areas where crops are difficult to cultivate? What kinds of barriers currently prevail in terms of making the country food secure and sustainable? ACSRN along with EEG hosted the 1st panel discussion of the year 2022 on **22<sup>nd</sup> February** under the title **"Greening the Concrete Jungles: Towards Urban Afforestation and Vertical Farming"**.

The speakers in the panel discussion emphasised that urban afforestation and vertical farms can be considered as a link between existing green urban areas, counter-fragmentation, enhancing environmental cohesion, to cope with the changing climate, gradual environmental degradation and the associated loss of agricultural land. The speakers stressed that urban afforestation and vertical farms not only constitute a base for food production, they can also create a valuable new ecological, social and economic hub in contemporary cities that have been transformed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The distinguished panellists on this Panel Discussion were:

- **Ms. Olivia Nielsen** - Associate Principal at Miyamoto International – highlighted some affordable solutions for a green urban future.
- **Dr. Moammed Wasim Yahia** - Assistant professor at Architecture Engineering Department, Faculty of Engineering, and University of Sharjah – shared in-depth advantages of urban afforestation
- **Mr. Henrique Pereira** - Chief Executive Officer, Taka Solutions – explained the audience with the correlation between urban afforestation and energy consumption.

The Panel Discussion effectively contributed to several Sustainable Development Goals: 3 – Good Health and Well Being, 6: Clean Water and Sanitation 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities, 13 – Climate Action 14 – Life Below Water & 15 – Life on Land and 17 - Partnership for Goals. The panel was a prime example of the aims to achieve the goals by 2030.





## Sharjah Excellence Award

The winners of the 'Sharjah Excellence Award' for enterprises from the public and private sectors and strategic partners were honoured on **23<sup>rd</sup> March** by the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) which ACSRN Founder, President & CEO was one of the jury members for the prestigious award.

The Sharjah Excellence Award programme consists of nine awards, 1. Sharjah Gulf Excellence Award; 2. Sharjah Gulf Localization Award; 3. Sharjah Excellence Award; 4. Sharjah Small & Medium Enterprises Award; 5. Sharjah Entrepreneurs Award; 6. Sharjah Green Award; 7. Sharjah Social Responsibility Award; 8. Sharjah Best Security Standards Award; 9. Sharjah Entrepreneurs with Disability Award.

During the ceremony, SCCI Chairman and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Sharjah Excellence Award said that "Sharjah Excellence Award has played a key role in improving the performance of business enterprises to support the goals and aspirations of local and federal government entities when it comes to enhancing the position of the UAE as a major destination for investment and growth in the region.

"The SCCI Chairman added: "The Chamber will continue to develop the award categories and launch similar initiatives to create a competitive environment conducive to enhancing productivity, creativity, and innovation. This comes in line with the directives of the Sharjah government to spread the best practices of total quality and excellence, as well as the award vision for the benefit of Sharjah's economy, by promoting sustainable economic growth and recognition of achievements in business."

Sharjah Excellence Award is instituted by the SCCI to create the investment climate, enhance its competitive capabilities and help it benefit from the values of quality, leadership, and innovation. It aims to achieve sustainable economic growth, support emerging investments, and honour distinguished businesses in all sectors.

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## Working Breakfast - "Sustainable Strategies of the Private Sector"

On the kind invitation of H.E Massimo Baggi, The Ambassador of Switzerland to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, ACSRN's Founder, President & CEO, Mrs. Habiba Al Marashi attended a working breakfast on Saturday, **26<sup>th</sup> February 2022**.

The discussion was organised by Embassy of Switzerland, on the occasion of the visit of H.E. Patricia Danzi, Director General of the Swiss Development Corporation and H.E. Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The topic of the discussion was "Sustainable Strategies of the Private Sector". The attendees explored how countries can sustain and conserve nature in their COVID-19 recovery strategies to build back fairer, greener and with nature. Attendees also highlighted how public-private dialogue is critical to the process of economic and social transformation in the region.

### Member News

## "Investopia" signs MoU with Accenture Middle East

"Investopia" summit signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Accenture Middle East to benefit from the company's expertise in the field of advanced technology, as part of its preparations for the upcoming summit. The summit, set to be held on March 28, 2022 alongside Expo 2020 Dubai, is one of the major strategic initiatives under the 'Projects of the 50' announced by the UAE Government last year.

The agreement was signed by H.E. Abdullah Ahmad Al Saleh, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy, and in the presence of H.E. Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri, Minister of Economy; and Alexis Lecanuet, Accenture's Regional Managing Director in the Middle East.

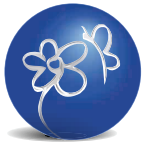
Under the terms of the MoU, Accenture will serve as a knowledge partner for the Investopia summit, whereby the Ministry and the company will collaborate to facilitate knowledge and experience exchange in the fields of artificial intelligence (AI) and Blockchain, Fintech, Metaverse and quantum computing through the Summit's platform.

During the MoU signing ceremony, H.E. Bin Touq noted that the integration of efforts between the public and private sector has been a constant area of focus in supporting the UAE's transition into an economy based on knowledge and innovation.

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## DEWA Organises Future Next Series During the Innovation Week 2022

Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) organised the 'Future Next' virtual series during its Innovation Week, from **22 to 25 February 2022**. The series hosted experts from DEWA and outside of DEWA to speak about various innovation-related topics. This is part of DEWA's efforts to promote a culture of innovation among employees and members of society and support its vision to become a globally leading sustainable innovative corporation.

Speakers at the Future Next series included Waleed Bin Salman, Executive Vice President of Business Development and Excellence at DEWA, and speakers from the Data Hub Integrated Solutions (Moro), InfraX, and Digital X, subsidiaries of Digital DEWA. The series also hosted speakers from outside DEWA including experts from Dell; Avaya; and Software AG, among others.

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## FEATURE ARTICLE

### Climate Change is a Global Challenge that Requires a Global Perspective

By Jay Hakes

The race to solve climate change is a race to develop new affordable technologies that allow us to move away from fossil fuels.

Like the struggle to contain the worldwide spread of a lethal virus, the task of slowing the inadvertent but substantial alteration of our climate faces higher hurdles because any long-term solution to the problem requires cooperation between nations in vastly different situations. But there is an upside to the international dimension of the climate puzzle. The contributions of diverse countries worldwide working toward solutions offer greater chances for success than if each one was going it alone.

The race to solve climate change is, at its core, a race to develop new affordable technologies that allow us to move briskly away from traditional fossil fuels. It is better to have many countries working on advancing technology than just one. The history of making photovoltaic cells illustrates the value of multiple countries working to increase efficiencies and lower costs. When technical knowledge is transferred to other countries, that's a good form of leakage. Patents and tariffs slow down technology transfer, but scientific information finds it easy to cross national borders.

We can cut global emissions by slashing the demand for fossil fuels. Most reductions in consumption will not pop up somewhere else in the world. Thus, with declining use, we avoid the leakage problem and achieve enduring results in protecting the earth's natural environment. For example, the United States has already made some progress in reducing oil demand with mandates for more fuel-efficient vehicles. Other countries have done likewise, with high gasoline taxes and other policy levers. But, unfortunately, these efforts, so far, have been too sporadic and too riddled with loopholes to effectively combat global climate change.



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## Best Practices 2020 From The Archives

### Two Seasons Hotel Dubai

#### Arabia CSR Awards 1<sup>st</sup> Runner Up - Hospitality Sector Category

### Profile

The Two Seasons Hotel is a 4-star luxury hotel based in Dubai - UAE. Situated on the main Sheikh Zayed Road, which runs from Dubai to Abu Dhabi, the hotel is close to the Palm Jumeirah beach as well as a number of business facilities, malls and restaurants in the city. Two Seasons serves families, business travellers, holiday makers and long-stay guests.

The Hotel offers a range of more than 1,000 suites and apartments spread over 41 floors. It has a range of facilities for its guests. These include: gourmet dining options, cafes and bars (alcohol-free), sports and leisure facilities, swimming, a kid's club, free parking for its guests and theme nights for entertainment.



### Summary

The Two Seasons Hotel was awarded the 1<sup>st</sup> runner-up position at the 2020 Arabia CSR Awards for the hospitality sector. This accolade can mainly be attributed to the Hotel's environmental and sustainability programme which has been part of Two Seasons' culture as well as its brand value and commitment. The Hotel offers a practical approach of 'Green Living' to its guests without compromising the first-class and comfortable living facilities that it offers. With this approach, all employees and guests at the Two Seasons Hotel are encouraged to be involved in the Hotel's sustainability programmes and initiatives. The Two Seasons Hotel's focus on environmental sustainability is a feature that sets it apart from many others in the hospitality sector.

The Two Seasons Hotel has a robust Sustainable Management Plan that is developed in line with the United Arab Emirates' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (UNSDG). This Plan takes into account the Hotels' various environmental, social, health & safety and economic aspects and ensures that it considers the expectations and requirements of all its key stakeholders, i.e. colleagues, customers, business partners, owners, suppliers, guests and visitors.

The Sustainability Management of the operations has allowed the Hotel to focus on issues that really matter and take an approach where it keeps learning, growing and adopting new policies and practices to be a better and more responsible business every year. This is one of the reasons why Two Seasons has regularly been recognised through various accolades and certifications such as the Green Globe Award, Emirates Environmental Group Recycling Awards for the recycling of aluminum cans, plastics and glass and the Arabia CSR Award.

### Lessons Learnt

Two Seasons sustainability strategy has a very open approach where it continually adopts new and innovative practices in key areas such as environmental, health & safety, food safety, waste management, employee training & development, energy, utilities and carbon footprint. On the environmental front, which is its top-priority sustainability pillar, the Hotel is actively involved in conserving resources, reducing pollution, conserving biodiversity and managing the environmental footprint of its operations, procurement practices, as well as its community initiatives.

At the social and community level, Two Seasons ensures that it is actively involved in various corporate social responsibility actions that promote community development, fair trade, support local entrepreneurs. It also ensures it has stringent policies and practices in place that promote equitable hiring, employee protection and health & safety for its staff, visitors and guests.

The Hotel actively engages its guests and visitors in its various sustainability initiatives through an annual calendar with weekly and monthly activities. The idea is to develop a culture of sustainability within the Hotel that enables everyone involved – guests as well as staff – to learn more about sustainable and mind-ful living.

