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ARABIA CSR & SUSTAINABILITY
FORUM
12th Cycle
Sustainable Prosperity
Reorienting for a Balanced Future
9-10 OCTOBER 2024

Under the Patronage of

H.H. Engineer, Sheikh Salem Bin Sultan Bin Saqr Al-Qasimi
Chairman of the Ras Al Khaimah Civil Aviation Department

ARABIA CSR & SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS
17th CYCLE | 10th OCTOBER 2024

Upcoming Trainings & Workshops

ARABIA CSR NETWORK

CSR STRATEGY AND LEADERSHIP
14th - 16th OCTOBER 2024

ARABIA CSR NETWORK

Certified Training on Fundamentals of CSR & Sustainability
Date: 4th & 5th November 2024

ARABIA CSR NETWORK

CSR Advanced Certified Training Course
12th - 14th November 2024

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Note from the Founder, President & CEO

Dear Members,
well-wishers and
friends

As we are just days away from the Arabia CSR & Sustainability Forum and Awards, I wish to take a moment to reaffirm our deep commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability. These principles are not merely add-ons to our business strategy; they are the very essence of who we are as an organisation.

September has been a whirlwind of activity as we prepare for this pivotal event. I am proud to share that all logistics and speakers are now in place, and I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has played a role in this journey.

In today's world, businesses are increasingly recognised as key players in tackling some of the most pressing challenges we face; climate change, social inequality, and resource depletion, to name a few. Sustainability is no longer an option; it is a necessity.

The choices we make today will shape the world for future generations. Our responsibility extends beyond profit margins; we must ensure our operations positively impact both the environment and the communities we serve.

Throughout our journey, we have made significant strides in implementing sustainable practices across our organisation and the wider community. From reducing waste and optimising resources to fostering diverse and inclusive workplaces, we strive to set a strong example. Yet, we recognise that there is always more to be done.

In addition to preparing for the Forum and Awards, our team has been actively engaged in various initiatives during the month of September, reflecting our commitment to sustainability and community impact. On **4th September**, we attended the 14th National Dialogue for Climate Ambition, focused on harnessing digital innovation for sustainability solutions. This event brought together thought leaders to explore how technology can address climate challenges.

The following day, I served as a panellist at the Saint-Gobain Event on Circular Economy. Here, we discussed the importance of circularity in reducing waste and promoting sustainable resource management. On **9th September**, ACSRN participated in the National Adaptation Plan - Stakeholder Consultations for the Gender and Social Safeguards Report. This consultation was vital in integrating gender considerations into climate adaptation strategies.

I was deeply moved by community leaders who shared their challenges in adapting to climate change. Their resilience emphasised the need for inclusive policies that empower all segments of society in our sustainability efforts.

Later, on **11th September**, I contributed as a panellist at the Cundall Event on Transformative Climate Actions for a Resilient UAE. This event provided a platform for discussing actionable strategies to enhance the UAE's resilience to climate impacts.

On **17th September**, I attended the Inaugural Dubai Holding Women + Fin-Erth Climate Dinner, an inspiring gathering aimed at fostering collaboration among female leaders in climate action. The discussions were invigorating, with women sharing their experiences and initiatives aimed at combating climate change.

Throughout the month, I have also engaged in media interviews to promote Arabia CSR Network and raise awareness about our work related to the ACSRN Forum and Awards. These conversations have allowed us to share our vision for a sustainable future and inspire others to join us in our mission. Each interaction has reinforced the importance of collaboration in driving meaningful change. You can read more about our engagements in the inside pages of this Newsletter.

The Arabia CSR Forum and Awards present a vital opportunity for us to learn from one another, share best practices, and forge partnerships that amplify our impact. This is our moment to inspire change-not just within our organisations but across different industries and across borders.

Transparency in CSR is crucial; we must hold ourselves accountable to our stakeholders and communicate our progress openly. This commitment fosters trust, collaboration, and a culture of shared responsibility.

As we move forward, let's remember that our efforts in CSR and sustainability are interconnected. Addressing environmental issues, promoting social equity, and driving economic growth must go hand in hand. Together, we can create a framework that meets today's needs while safeguarding the future.

In closing, I want to emphasise that each of us has the power to make a positive difference. Our collective actions can drive meaningful changes in our communities and beyond. Let us embrace these responsibilities with passion and commitment. Thank you for your unwavering dedication to our mission and your commitment to a sustainable future.

I look forward to seeing you at the 12th cycle of the Arabia CSR & Sustainability Forum and the 17th cycle of the Arabia CSR Awards on **9th & 10th October**.

Let's make these two events milestones in our collective journey towards a better world.

ACSRN News

Speaking at Saint-Gobain Event

On **5th September**, the ACSRN Founder, President & CEO participated as a panellist at Saint-Gobain's prominent event, "Leading by Example: Circular Economy in the Built Environment." The focus was on how the construction industry can adopt circular economy principles to enhance sustainability in urban development.



She shared valuable insights on how improving resource efficiency, reusing materials, and minimising waste can significantly impact the built environment. Highlighting research that identifies the construction sector as a major contributor to environmental harm, she called for decisive action to rethink the design, construction, and decommissioning of buildings. The President & CEO advocated for a shift from the traditional linear economic model-where raw materials are extracted, used, and discarded-toward a more regenerative and sustainable framework.

She stressed the importance of collaboration among stakeholders to combine innovative technologies and policies, creating a circular ecosystem. This approach, she noted, would help lessen the environmental impact of the built environment and provide long-term economic advantages. She commended Saint-Gobain for their proactive efforts in advancing sustainable building materials and fostering discussions on climate resilience.

The ACSRN President & CEO encouraged developers, policymakers, and environmental organisations to take leadership roles in promoting a regenerative economy, asserting that "sustainability must be at the heart of all future urban planning". The session concluded with a shared agreement on the urgent need to accelerate the transition to a circular economy in the built environment, highlighting the critical role of leadership in this endeavour.

Transformative Climate Actions for a Resilient UAE

On 11th September, Cundall organised and hosted a significant event at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dubai Marina, titled "Transformative Climate Actions for a Resilient UAE." This gathering brought together thought leaders, industry experts and key stakeholders to advance climate resilience in the UAE.

The ACSRN President & CEO, a well-known advocate for sustainability, participated as a panellist, emphasising the essential role of transformative climate actions in creating a resilient future for the UAE. Discussions focused on innovative approaches and practical strategies to address climate challenges and enhance resilience across various sectors.

The event included engaging dialogues on several key themes such as:

1. **Climate Adaptation Strategies**
2. **Sustainable Practices**
3. **Collaborative Efforts**

The President & CEO's insights significantly enriched the discussions, underscoring the need for collective action and innovative thinking to tackle climate challenges and foster a resilient UAE.

ACSRN is eager to continue these essential conversations and help implement the strategies discussed to contribute to a sustainable future.

The Net Zero Dream – Making It a Reality

On **12th September**, the Mace Group hosted an important event titled "**The Net Zero Dream – Making it a Reality**" at Anantara Downtown Dubai Hotel. This gathering provided a platform for sharing insights and innovations necessary to achieve the ambitious net-zero targets critical for addressing climate change.

A key highlight was the presentation by the ACSRN President & CEO, who joined as a panellist. Her address was central to the event, offering valuable insights on the steps required to transition to a net-zero future.

She emphasised the need to integrate sustainability into all areas of development and operations, outlining practical strategies for reducing carbon emissions while advocating for a holistic approach that involves all sectors and stakeholders.

The event addressed a variety of vital topics, beginning with innovative methods for reaching net-zero emissions. Discussions revolved around advancements in renewable energy technologies, energy efficiency measures and carbon capture solutions.

Additionally, the role of effective policy-making and strategic planning in guiding organisations toward net-zero goals was explored, along with insights on developing comprehensive sustainability strategies aligned with national and global climate targets.

Another major theme was the importance of collaborative efforts. The discussions highlighted the criticality of partnerships among governments, businesses, academia and communities in advancing climate action.

It was evident that achieving net-zero emissions requires a collective commitment and collaborative efforts to overcome the challenges ahead.

The President & CEO's address reinforced the message that bold actions and strong partnerships are essential for making the net-zero dream a reality.

Dubai Holding Women + Fin-Erth Dinner

On 17th September, ACSRN President & CEO joined the inaugural Dubai Holding Women + Fin-Erth Climate Dinner which was held at the elegant Al Nafoorah restaurant in the Jumeirah Al Qasr Hotel - Dubai. The event gathered a distinguished group of female leaders from across the UAE, all dedicated to advancing climate solutions and supporting the UAE's Net Zero 2050 agenda.



The evening marked a significant follow-up to Dubai Holding's role as a Principal Pathway Sponsor at COP28, with their ongoing support for the UAE's climate objectives being a key theme. The dinner aimed to build on the momentum generated by the conference and kick-start a larger initiative to foster a global community of women committed to impactful climate action.

About 80 prominent women from various sectors within the climate ecosystem attended the dinner. The evening began with a welcome reception which allowed attendees to network and engage in preliminary discussions. This was followed by a seated dinner, where guided conversations focused on innovative solutions for a sustainable future.

The event served as a platform for sharing insights, exploring collaboration opportunities, and strengthening connections among influential figures dedicated to environmental sustainability. The Climate Dinner was a great success, paving the way for continued collaboration and action.

ACSRN President & CEO in the Spotlight

ACSRN President & CEO has been actively engaged in media interviews over the past weeks, showcasing her leadership and the vital work of both ACSRN & EEG.



On 18th September, she appeared on Al Dhafrah TV, where she discussed her role in promoting sustainability initiatives. The interview highlighted ACSRN's strategic approach to environmental and social responsibility programmes, showcasing the organisation's commitment to making a meaningful impact in these vital areas.

And on 19th September, she was featured in another interview with MBC. This interview provided a platform for her to delve deeper into the transformative work being done within both organisations. She emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing global challenges and shared her vision for the upcoming 12th cycle of the Arabia CSR and Sustainability Forum.

The 12th cycle of the Arabia CSR & Sustainability Forum is a key event on ACSRN calendar, and she emphasised its significance. The forum represents a milestone in the ongoing efforts to foster corporate social responsibility and sustainability, bringing together leaders, innovators and stakeholders to drive impactful discussions and solutions.

The platform provided by these interviews help highlight the leadership role and the strategic goals for both entities and also sets the stage for continued engagement and action in the realm of sustainability.

We are excited about the momentum building towards the Arabia CSR & Sustainability Forum and look forward to the positive outcomes that it will bring.

Mainstreaming & Implementing Dubai's Climate Action Plan

On 26th September, the Executive Council of Dubai (TEC) in collaboration with the C40 Climate Change Group hosted an important workshop titled "Towards Mainstreaming and Implementing Dubai's Climate Action Planning" at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in the Dubai International Financial Centre.

This event, gathered key stakeholders from government, the private sector, and various organisations including the ACSRN President & CEO, to discuss and promote collaboration and share valuable insights on climate change initiatives in Dubai.

The workshop highlighted Dubai's ambitious Carbon Abatement Plan (CAP), introduced at COP 28, which aims for a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and sets the goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. These objectives align with the UAE's declaration of 2023 as the 'Year of Sustainability.' Participants stressed the importance of these initiatives, especially considering the increasing climate challenges faced by the region.

A significant focus of the discussions was the recent extreme flooding in Dubai, which underscored the urgent need for effective climate adaptation strategies. Attendees noted that addressing climate change risks is essential for environmental health as well as for the social and economic stability of the MENA region.

The establishment of the Dubai Environment and Climate Change Authority earlier this year was recognised as a vital step in consolidating the city's efforts toward climate mitigation and adaptation.

As a member of the C40 Cities network since 2015, Dubai is part of a global coalition of nearly 100 cities committed to employing science-based and community-focused approaches to tackle the climate crisis.

The workshop fostered meaningful discussions among stakeholders, paving the way for collaborative initiatives to accelerate the implementation of Dubai's climate objectives. Overall, the event represented a significant step in reinforcing the city's commitment to sustainability and proactive climate action.

EmiratesGBC Q3 2024 Board Meeting

On **30th September**, ACSRN President and CEO attended the Q3 Board Meeting of the Emirates Green Building Council (EmiratesGBC) to discuss progress, initiatives, and future strategies. Conducted virtually, the meeting aimed to further the Council's mission of promoting sustainable building practices throughout the UAE. Notably, the ACSRN President & CEO participated as a Co-founder, Vice Chair & Treasurer of the board, offering valuable insights and perspectives during the discussions.

The agenda was extensive, addressing several key topics vital to the Council's objectives. Board members received updates on the 2024-2025 strategy, which details the Council's long-term goals and major initiatives aimed at enhancing sustainability in the built environment. This conversation included insights into market trends and stakeholder expectations, ensuring that the strategy remains applicable and effective. Updates on the sustainability lounge were also discussed, with the aim of better engaging the community and promoting sustainable practices. Financial overviews were presented, offering a clear understanding of the Council's fiscal health and sustainability.

Membership status was another important area of discussion. Board members reviewed current membership figures and strategies for attracting new members, highlighting the need to expand the Council's network of supporters and advocates for green building practices. The introduction of new employees was acknowledged, as their fresh perspectives and expertise further bolster the Council's ability to meet its goals. The meeting concluded with a strong commitment to enhancing collaboration among industry stakeholders. The collective determination shown during the meeting set a positive tone for the Council's future initiatives, ensuring that it continues to lead the green building movement in the UAE.

Member News

Accenture Invests in EMTECH

Accenture announced that it has invested in EMTECH, a global financial technology company that provides software-as-a-service platforms to help central banks streamline, connect and modernise their processes and operations. This investment, made through Accenture Ventures, will support EMTECH in its efforts to transform central banks' financial and technology infrastructure and make it easier for central banks to regulate and supervise fintechs in an increasingly digital economy.



Like Accenture, EMTECH works with financial institutions to solve pressing challenges, such as testing new banking applications, meeting regulatory criteria, accelerating payments and settlement times, and driving financial inclusion for the unbanked and other parts of society that have been excluded. Accenture will integrate EMTECH products for digital cash, regulatory sandboxes, and compliance into the company's core banking transformation services.

The investment in EMTECH comes as the number of fintechs steadily increase, the regulatory landscape becomes more complex, and many central banks look to update their payment systems to facilitate faster payments and explore developing a central bank digital currency (CBDC).

This investment reflects Accenture's ongoing commitment to providing historically underrepresented entrepreneurs with funding, mentorship, and connections to Accenture clients and ecosystem partners. This support will help drive new advancement and economic opportunities for underrepresented business owners and leaders.

Trainings & Workshops

CSR Strategy and Leadership Training

The CSR Strategy and Leadership Training, taking place from **14th - 16th October**, is a focused programme aimed at empowering participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead effective corporate social responsibility and sustainability initiatives. Over three days, attendees will engage in interactive sessions that cover key concepts, best practices, and innovative strategies in CSR. This training provides a unique opportunity to connect with industry leaders and peers, fostering collaboration and the exchange of ideas. Participants will leave equipped to drive meaningful change within their organisations and enhance their impact on society.

Fundamentals of CSR & Sustainability

The Fundamentals of CSR & Sustainability course will be held on **4th & 5th November**. This two-day programme is designed to provide participants with a solid understanding of the core principles and practices of corporate social responsibility and sustainability. Attendees will explore key concepts, frameworks, and strategies that are essential for implementing effective CSR initiatives. The course also emphasises the importance of integrating sustainability into business operations to drive positive social and environmental impact. Join us for this informative training to enhance your knowledge and skills in CSR and sustainability.

CSR Advanced Training

The CSR Advanced Training programme is scheduled for **12th - 14th November**. This three-day intensive course is designed for professionals looking to deepen their understanding of corporate social responsibility and enhance their strategic sustainability capabilities. Participants will engage in advanced discussions on topics such as impact measurement, stakeholder engagement, and sustainable business practices. Through interactive workshops and case studies, attendees will gain practical insights and tools to elevate their CSR and sustainability initiatives. Join us for this opportunity to advance your expertise and make a greater impact in your organisation.

For more information and to register, please reach out to us at trainings@arabiacsnetwork.com. Don't miss out on these valuable opportunities to enhance your sustainability practices and strengthen your CSR practices!



Feature Article



Forming international ESG practices with a purpose-driven mindset

Written by Hassan Amin Jarrar

ESG goes far beyond the umbrella term of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), holding organisations accountable beyond the traditional performance metrics of financial returns.

In the wake of the pandemic, organisations around the world were placed under far more scrutiny, and forced to rethink their existing strategies. They had to revisit how they operated, both internally, in terms of the corporate culture fostered, as well as externally with regards to their role and responsibilities towards the societies in which they operate.

There has been a consistent rise in legislative initiatives to limit climate change over the past few years, and the purpose-driven initiative known as Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) is having its heyday, rising to the top of the corporate priority list.

ESG goes far beyond the umbrella term of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), holding organisations accountable beyond the traditional performance metrics of financial returns, demanding demonstrable evidence of sustainable practices and community concern in a more transparent, trusted, and ethical reporting framework.

While skeptics may view ESG investments as 'greenwashing', the reality is that ESG reporting is an extremely complex process, requiring an extensive amount of data gathering, deliberate long-term planning, alongside the formation of strategic foundational frameworks. All of these reporting requirements come with a requisite set of disclosures to reputable rating agencies in order to receive accreditation.

The peak of the pandemic made us all realise we were standing at the cusp of change. Alongside the increasing shift and focus on mental wellbeing, the financial landscape was rapidly transforming, as were stakeholder expectations. On a global scale, ESG initiatives were on the rise, forcing many pre-established green initiatives to undergo a more in-depth transition to ensure that ESG investments were not only categorised efficiently but reported in quantifiable numbers rather than qualitative descriptions and assessments.

Organisations and the industry at large will need to consider adopting a long-term sustainability framework as part of their step towards integrating ESG methodologies into the crux of their business operations

Establishing a cohesive ESG framework is not a solo endeavour. Through meaningful partnerships with leading advisory firms, financial institutions can effectively formulate their future ESG initiatives and sustainability roadmaps.

The inherent benefit of an ESG roadmap, should it work in harmony with a bank's priorities, is that it charts a clearer path and way forward to addressing key imperatives of an organisation's employees, customers, and shareholders, with complete transparency and accountability. And by assigning clearly defined Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to pivotal departments, a bank can effectually embed sustainability at the core of its business.

Sustainability-driven growth can lead to the enhancement of key ESG criteria that address stakeholders' priorities, improving customers' experience in a more sustainable manner, nurturing the workforce, preserving natural resources and inspiring ethical financial behaviour.

My prediction for the future is that sooner than later, ESG disclosures will become a standard, audited, business requirement. To begin with, younger, socially-conscious generations are now forming a greater proportion of customer bases, wielding greater influence. Concurrently, innovations in tech and AI continue to modernise and automate channels of communication and financial reporting systems, which combined, will lead to better teamwork, as well as increasing accuracy and transparency in data collection and analysis,

The time has come to fully embrace the formation of ESG strategies to better navigate the rapidly transforming landscape and keep pace with stakeholder expectations: the result will be a no-frills, real-world change for the betterment of our people and planet, for decades to come.

Arabia CSR Awards 2022 From The Archives

Aster DM Healthcare

Winner - Healthcare Sector Category

A Brief about the Organisation

Aster DM Healthcare Limited is an integrated healthcare service provider and one of the biggest and fastest-growing private healthcare providers in the Middle East.

Since its inception, Aster strives to lessen its environmental impact and improve social wellbeing by offering a full spectrum of healthcare, from primary to tertiary care, through state-of-the-art hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies. It continues to offer high-quality healthcare services in 7 Middle Eastern and South Asian nations at competitive prices.

It uses three brands Aster, Medcare, and Access to execute its healthcare operations which offer products and services to people from various social classes and economic backgrounds.

Aster's dedication to providing superior healthcare that is both affordable and accessible to all begins with making a positive local impact in the areas where they operate. It is committed to deliver large returns to investors, stakeholders, and partners which is necessary to focus on creating a sustainable society and aligning them with relevant UNSDGs.

Aster DM Healthcare's strong belief in giving value to all its stakeholders, which incorporates ecological ideas, has enabled Aster to cross borders with compassion and understanding. It places significant importance on preparing the next generation of leaders to walk the path of inclusivity. Accordingly, investments in medical schools as well as innovation and research facilities have added great value.

Aster believes that in order to be successful in the long term, it is essential to utilise recent developments in digital health research, including artificial intelligence, cognitive psychology, block-chain, IoT, and behavioural economics, and to bring on start-ups that can spur innovation and foster collaborative applied research with businesses, entrepreneurs and academic institutions.



Conclusion

Aster works to expand the usual scope of healthcare services in order to make healthcare accessible to millions of people. Unique from providing high-quality medical care, what sets them apart is their commitment to the idea of giving back to society through volunteer work.

Aster believes it is important to prepare the next generation of leaders to walk the path of inclusivity. To further this goal, they have made investments in medical schools as well as innovation and research facilities. The Aster Innovation and Research Center aims to make use of recent developments in digital health research, including artificial intelligence, cognitive psychology, blockchain, Internet of Things, and behavioural economics, and to bring on start-ups that can spur innovation. It also emphasises collaborative applied research with businesses, entrepreneurs and academic institutions.

All of their short- to long-term ESG initiatives are carried out with the help of effective governance frameworks, enabling them to take good care of their partners, employees and the environment. Aster is collaborating with a number of hospitals that have successfully reduced their energy use, carbon dioxide emissions, water use and waste. Additionally, they are acquiring sustainable products wherever possible and installing solar PVs in various hospitals.

Aster

We'll Treat You Well

