

# EmiratesGBC 2023 Congress Briefing

## *Pathway to COP28: The Role of Sustainable Built Environment in Accelerating Climate Action*

### Panel 3 Briefing: Private Sector Contributions to COP28

During the panel discussion on "Private Sector Contributions to COP28", the panelists reflected on the private sector's pivotal role in driving climate action and highlighted the anticipated contributions of the sector at COP28 while also pointing out the crucial topics that must be discussed during COP28, concluded by sharing the expectations and asks from COP28.

#### Speakers

**Balsam Nehme**, Head of Sustainability, Dar Al-Handasah (Shair and Partners)

**Craig Thackray**, Vice President, Environment, MEA

**David Gatward**, Chief, Engineering and Technical Services Office

**Franco Attasi**, CEO Smart Infrastructure, Siemens

**Omnia Halwani**, CEO & Co-founder at GRFN, as moderator

One of the contributions to COP28 was highlighted by Siemens, who are driving innovation and collaboration at COP28 to achieve large-scale implementation of sustainable, low-carbon buildings. The implementation of such buildings will require a focus on decarbonizing and enhancing building efficiency through the interconnection of smart technologies and smart HVAC. Contributing to COP28 through the digitization and automation of the IOT will enable the integration of various building components. Thus, also building on the data and analytics that can start informing decisions. Moreover, through collaborations with agencies, governments, and research institutes Siemens can learn from past experiences, share knowledge, and leverage insights to further innovate in addressing climate change and contributing towards COP28.

Moving on, Siemens pointed out that sustainable cities and transportation is a crucial topic to be discussed at COP28. Another crucial topic to be addressed is the utilization of renewable energy

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sources, such as wind and hydrogen, to create a smart and sustainable city. Moreover, designing resilient, sustainable cities catering to diverse populations and their needs, is another substantial topic along with the recognition of the significance of smart manufacturing in building a smart and sustainable city. Even though the mentioned topics are of high importance, Siemens emphasized on the need to address not only the built environment but the entire city ecosystem to achieve a truly smart and sustainable urban landscape. Furthermore, Dar, which was highly involved in COP27, added that they can contribute to COP28 through leveraging on the fact that they have heavy presence in the region, thus a vast portfolio of projects and experiences. Building on their knowledge of what works to decarbonize the built environment, DAR can contribute to COP28 by suggesting solutions and sharing them, as done during COP27, through round table discussions, panels, and presentations, emphasizing their practicality and integration based on successful client projects and real-life case studies. For Dar, decarbonizing the built environment, encompassing not only buildings and infrastructure but also integrated solutions that would shape the future, were highlighted as topics of extreme importance to be discussed during COP28. Energy transition, sector-specific energy solutions, carbon capture, and the role of science and technology in operationalizing sustainable practices were also highlighted as key points of consideration.

AD Ports Group, which has implemented strategies and initiatives to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable practices within the maritime and port industry, can contribute through shaping sustainable agendas, ESG, and sustainability policies and procedures within the built environment. The Group can also play a part in developing comprehensive guidelines beyond mandated regulations, guiding the master planning team and consultants to make smart and informed choices for sustainable design solutions. Through collaborating with COP28, AD Ports Group can influence the supply chain, from main contractors to available products, to embrace technologies that promote sustainability.

Moreover, AD Ports Group stressed that contributing to and collaborating with COP28 will be most successful if private sector entities, government agencies, and international organizations work hand in hand to amplify their sustainability efforts. AD Ports Group can play the role of facilitators and contribute to COP28 by actively engaging with government entities and forming collaborations with non-governmental agencies, thus, working on testing, improving concepts, and partnering with startups and universities, including international institutions, to foster research and produce valuable white papers.

As for AECOM, its contributions to COP28 will expand on their previous experience at COP26 in Glasgow that consisted of collaborating with the UK Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy in hosting various workshops that involved master planning and landscape architecture. AECOM will be a major contributor to COP28 as the sustainability consultant in

partnership with Masdar developing sustainability environment management plans, carbon monitoring models and tools, operations manuals, attaining ISO20121 certification for sustainable events and driving compliance. AECOM will also work on the auditing and analysis of carbon emissions during the event to ensure alignment with sustainability objectives outlined in the operations plans. The organization will collect and analyze data post-event to prepare a comprehensive report indicating carbon offsets achieved to deliver a carbon neutral event.

The panel concluded by sharing their expectations and asks from COP28. One key point highlighted was the need to emphasize the economic impact of emission reduction. Funding was also identified as a crucial aspect, with the need for funding models and collaboration between the government and private sector to support decarbonization efforts. The panel also expressed optimism about engagement, collaboration, and innovation being prominent at COP28. They hoped for specific and measurable outcomes rather than general discussions and the implementation of straightforward legislation. Another point brought up was the importance of ensuring that sustainability was a priority during the event by learning from past events and addressing criticisms of insufficient sustainability measures. The panelists recognized COP28 as part of a larger journey and emphasized the importance of setting new benchmarks and guidelines to guide future COPs, enabling progress toward more sustainable practices.