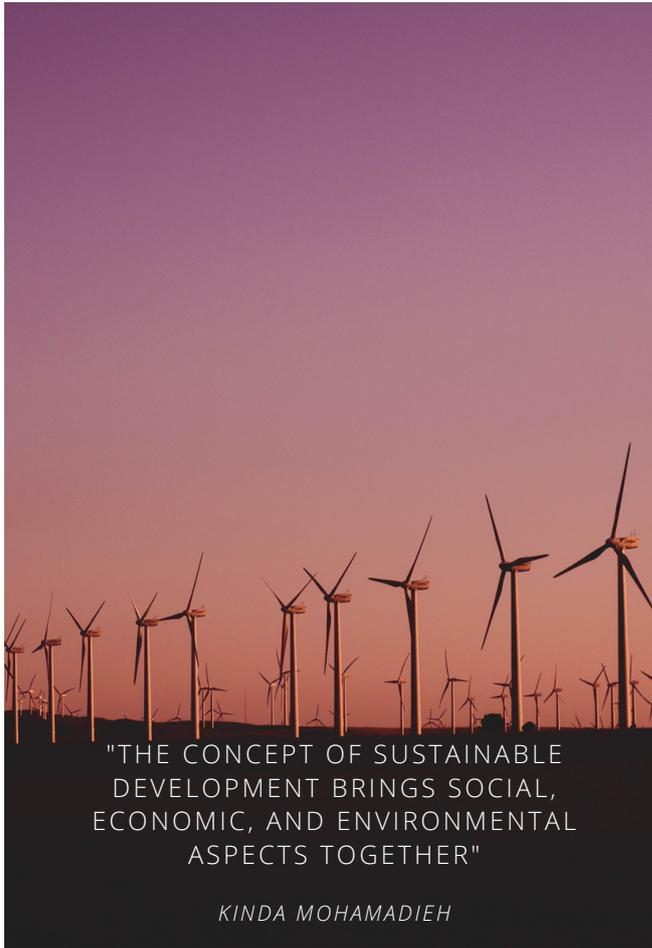


71ST CAIRO CLIMATE TALK REPORT

BUSINESSES AND SDGS: HOW TO CONTINUE TO MOVE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE MARKETS

18 DECEMBER 2020 // PREPARED BY AMENA SHARAF & LILLY VON STACKELBERG



On the 18th of December 2020 the 71st Cairo Climate Talk (CCT) took place to discuss sustainable business practices that can transform our economies and allow for a recovery focused on building back better.

2020 has been a difficult year for businesses, especially small businesses, young enterprises and start-ups. It has been a time to reshuffle and for many to evaluate how to move forward, or if moving forward in the same way as planned is still feasible. Re-evaluating how we do business has long been recognised as an opportunity to turn climate change into climate protection. The double-layered challenge of facing a health and a climate crisis has spelled out the importance of exploring the potential of businesses to contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During the the 71st Cairo Climate Talks (CCT) on the topic of: "Businesses and SDGs: How to Continue to Move Towards Sustainable Markets" four multidisciplinary experts representing the private sector, academia, international cooperation, and civil society came together to discuss the steps that need to be taken to transform markets.

The talk was opened by Philippe Maupai, Head of the Science Department at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Egypt, and Dr. Ali Abo Sena, Minister Assistant for Projects & Head of Bio Energy Association at the Ministry of Environment of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Dr. Ali emphasized the efforts of the Ministry of Environment to seize the current challenges as an opportunity towards a green and sustainable recovery.

THE PANDEMIC HAS SHIFTED PUBLIC DEBATE AND HAS POPULARIZED THE CALL FOR NEW VALUE CHAINS

A key to achieving a transition towards a green economy, according to all panelists, is mutual learning and cooperation between sectors and countries. While Dr. Ali's notion that the political will is present was strongly supported by all panelists, they also identified gaps between the narrative shift and the shift in actual legal frameworks. The SDGs give us a roadmap for the kind of practices we need to engage in individually, as nations and as institutions, in order to reach the ambitious priorities of the 2030 vision. Each of these points needs to be implemented by businesses, as well as supported through the infrastructure of new emerging businesses.

Moderator of the evening, Nadeem Abdel-Gawad, highlighted that during the pandemic "we have seen a significant shift in public debate" with "terms that were once completely overlooked by mainstream academic and policy circles such as green new deal, rights-based economy or degrowth" entering the public discourse.

IN THE NEXT 30 YEARS WE NEED TO RADICALLY CHANGE THE WAY WE DO BUSINESS

Ghada Hammouda, Chief Sustainability & Marketing Officer at Qalaa Holdings, added that also the private sector has gone through a massive shift and proven their agility to react to changing systems, even though when Covid-19 hit there was already a lot of pressure on the business community as global attention shifted to businesses incorporating ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance). “We need to start asking the question of what is green, and I think we need to find greener solutions from where we are now” she said and highlighted how the private sector can be the innovative force needed in this transition. Jonas Naguib, Cluster Coordinator for Private Sector Development at GIZ, who has for a long time worked on increasing employment through supporting SMEs and Startups in Egypt, seconded that by highlighting how the innovative creative power of the 800,000 Egyptians entering the market each year needs to be part of the solution.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos in early 2020 German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that “the whole way we do business, the way we live and that we have grown accustomed to in the industrial age will have to be changed. We will have to leave that behind us in the next 30 years and we have to come to completely new value chains.” Changing how we do business and changing our economic patterns to embrace economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability will help us regain economic stability after the pandemic and as Ghada Hammouda pointed out we need to focus on conscious and sustainable capitalism.

A GLOBAL CRISIS ALWAYS OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES TO THINK OUT OF THE BOX

But the panelists were also cautious of the gap between what ambition countries and sectors show, and what legal frameworks and long-standing business practices are hindering reaching those ambitions. “I think we are all glad to hear these transformational notions and concepts” said Kinda Mohamadieh, Legal Advisor and Senior Researcher at the Third World Network, “but it needs to translate into policy”. Anna Pegels, Research Associate at the German Development Institute, highlighted the importance of facilitating such a paradigm shift by creating incentives for all sectors and consumers. “A global crisis always offers opportunities to think out of the box”, she said, urging governments to use the window of opportunity at hand to radically change the way we conduct business and approach the economy and reach the transition our planet needs.

Anna Pegels stressed that we must not lose sight of the fact that “we are talking in the background of such a severe ecological crisis looming that we might risk the basis for human civilization” and hence governments and policy makers need to have the future of humanity in their minds in all aspects of recovery and moving towards truly sustainable markets. In her closing remarks Kinda Mohamadieh reminded the audience that luckily the roots for such development are already laid out: “The green new deal is not an environmental concept or an environmental approach to the economy or just more financing for environmental projects, it is way beyond that, it is addressing the fundamentals of the economy.”

Anna Pegels is a Senior Researcher at the German Development Institute (DIE), Germany. Her research focuses on the economic and political aspects of Climate Change mitigation, in particular the transition to clean energy in developing countries. Furthermore, as an economist she has worked on low carbon development, green industrial policy and circular economy and recycling among other interrelated topics.

ANNA PEGELS

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE AT THE GERMAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

KINDA MOHAMAD MOHAMADIEH

LEGAL ADVISOR AND SENIOR RESEARCHER AT THE THIRD WORLD NETWORK

Kinda Mohamadieh is based in Geneva, where she is currently a Legal Advisor and Senior Researcher at the Third World Network. Prior to this, she was a Senior Researcher at the Global Governance for Development Programme (GGDP) of the South Centre, where she worked on issues relating to international investment governance and the role and accountability of business enterprises with respect to human rights. She has, also, worked as Policy Advisor at the Arab NGO Network for Development (Beirut) where she addressed issues relating to development and economic policies in the Arab region.

Jonas Naguib is the Cluster Coordinator for Private Sector Development at GIZ, his work focuses on the promotion of small and medium enterprises, and approaches to foster innovation to create new and better jobs. Prior to working at GIZ Egypt, he has worked in Indonesia and Germany tackling SMEs support and job creation.

JONAS NAGUIB

CLUSTER COORDINATOR FOR PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT AT GIZ

GHADA HAMMOUDA

CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY & MARKETING OFFICER AT QALAA HOLDINGS

Ghada Hammouda is Chief Sustainability and Marketing Officer for Qalaa Holdings and she is on the board of the Cairo American College. Her focus is on the responsibility of the private sector to engage with the Sustainable Development Goals. At Qalaa she led their public listing, business transformation and entry to African markets in pioneering sectors like solid waste management and river transportation, and developed their corporate responsibility programs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Cairo Climate Talks are conceived, organized and hosted as a cooperation between the German Embassy in Cairo, the Egyptian Ministry of Environment, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ).



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