



Press Release
77th Cairo Climate Talks
July 27, 2021

On the 27th of July 2021, the 77th Cairo Climate Talks hosted a conversation between experts in fields of cooling and urban studies to discuss ways we can cool ourselves down without heating the planet up.

Philippe Maupai, Head of Science at the German Embassy in Cairo, reflected on average temperatures in Egypt which have increased by 0.31°C. “In Germany, average temperatures have also been rapidly rising in the last decades, with several extreme heat waves hitting our country and the rest of Europe in the recent past, causing the deaths of tens of thousands of people,” he added. Ezzat Lewis, Head of Ozone Unit at the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) started his welcome words stressing on the role of human activities in the increase of global temperatures. “The observed climate change, marked by a 0.75 °C increase of the average surface temperatures globally over the past century, is altering the frequency and intensity of weather and climate extremes, such as floods, droughts, heatwaves and sandstorms” he explained. Lilly von Stackelberg, coordinator of the Cairo Climate Talks, had introduced the event referencing how heat is one of the most notable effects of climate change. Effects of heat were impossible to miss with photos of wildfires and melted ceiling fans.

To start the discussion, Zeinab Salah, Researcher in the Scientific Research Department at the Egyptian Meteorological Authority (EMA), introduced the EMA and the importance of its work. Zeinab Salah explained that heatwaves are defined by the duration of the abnormally high temperature in relation to the average temperature. She continued to explain that other factors like humidity also affect our perception of the weather. Mohamed Salheen, Chairman of the Integrated Development Group, and national representative of the Cool Up project explained that the project is a continuation of a previous project which addressed energy efficiency in buildings. The project is a six-year project funded by the German Ministry of Environment (BMU) under the International Climate Initiative (IKI), and in partnership with the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency. Mohamed Salheen explains that the research was focused on decreasing the energy needed for cooling, but also decrease the demand for cooling through passive design. The three main focuses of the project are policy, technology, and finance.

To explain the urban landscape and how heat fits into the equation, Heba Khalil, Professor of Sustainable Urbanism at Cairo University explains that the weather forecast is not expressive of all the parts of the city. “The reality in different parts of the city is very different” she shared with the audience. Heba Khalil introduced the concept of urban heat islands; a concept that scientists use to describe the urban circumstances that cause an increase of heat in the core of the city, like the height of buildings, lack of vegetation, and certain building materials. She continued to expand on the concept of urban microclimates, saying that the differences in temperatures within the same city can reach up to 8°C. Heba Khalil then listed ways in which the Nile River acts as an adaptation measure for Cairo and its residents, who use it for boat rides or walk beside it for a natural breeze. “We sometimes forget that Cairo is the biggest arid city in the world, we have the Nile but it’s still a desert city” she concluded.

Marwa Dabaieh, associate professor of Urban Studies at Malmö University, noted that the environment should play a big part in the way we design our cities. She stressed on the importance of changing the urban design based on the environment rather than using the one-size-fits-all approach, she gave an example of office buildings which are becoming more uniform and standardized. “We have different levels of luxury, but we all have the same basic needs, you can help people live a better life if you adjust solutions to their needs” Marwa Dabaieh commented on the excessive use of air conditioners and active systems “we’re not building for the rich, we’re building for humanity” she concluded.

The experts agreed on a few key points, including that “the Nile is the lungs of the city” as Heba Khalil expressed it. The second point is planning for the climate and the specificity of the urban area can act as a weapon against heat as well as increase the efficiency of buildings and neighborhoods, for example by using the abundant local materials and traditional knowledge. Lastly, international treaties and national policies should reflect in our urban strategy and design.

Background Information:

The 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).

You can find the recordings for all talks here: www.youtube.com/cairoclimatetalks

And the reposts for all talks here: https://bit.ly/CCT_report

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