



Press Release,

72nd Cairo Climate Talks

December 2, 2020

On the 2nd of December 2020 the 72nd Cairo Climate Talks (CCT) hosted a conversation between experts from several fields to discuss sustainable infrastructure possibilities and required efforts to address the challenge of rapidly increasing populations with the added strain that COVID-19 has imposed on the world.

The CCT titled “**Sustainable Infrastructure: Post-Covid-19 Paths to the SDGs**” was moderated by Marwa Barakat who stressed that looking at Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sustainable infrastructure not only is the core of 4 goals; goal 6 on clean water and sanitation, 7 on affordable and clean energy, 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, 11 on sustainable cities and communities, it also plays a significant role in achieving most of the other goals such as reducing poverty and inequalities. But despite progress, many people still lack proper access to basic services and infrastructure networks and the Covid-19 crisis magnified the implications of this. In his opening remarks, Philippe Maupai, Head of the Science Department at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Cairo, underlined “the importance of developing infrastructure everywhere around the globe but especially in countries with growing populations, without compromising the environment which we equally need to survive.”

Eng. Samah Saleh, Manager of the Sustainable Development Unit at the Ministry of Environment, reassured the panel and the audience that despite the stagnant nature of the past year, the Egyptian government is taking an assertive approach to ensure the realization of the SDGs. She shared that the government plans to double the budget for environmental projects and sustainable development. In addition, she pointed out that “all projects coming from the ministry of housing will be reviewed from the perspective of sustainable development principles” including calculating the carbon footprints from the start of the implementation of projects until their conclusion and utilization by the community.

Prof. Dr. Heba Abouelfadl, Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture at Alexandria University kicked off the conversation explaining that infrastructure is an integral part of city planning and includes needs and services like roads, sanitation, and electricity. Infrastructure planning, she stressed, “does not plan just for current density and population but also for future generations” as urban spaces are not static but dynamic. This planning also strengthens resilience which she explained as “the ability to plan for certain stressors that might exist in cities, like what we are having now with the pandemic, climate change or sudden growth of population which will affect the city and its inhabitants”

A specific challenge for Egypt is providing essential services for unplanned settlements, which lack access to formal and quality infrastructure which poses a threat to its inhabitants who take matters into their

own hands. [Dr. Hassan Elmouelhi](#), Senior Researcher at the Habitat Unit - International Urbanism, and Project Leader at the Urban Development Department TU Berlin Campus El Gouna, highlighted that at the moment national strategies for urban planning tend to be superficial, without covering the social and economic aspects of development, while development cooperation projects often fail to create lasting change due to a lack of evaluation and learning from one's failures and successes.

The German Development Cooperation (GIZ) follows a human focus when planning sustainably said François Menguelé, Head of Capacity Building through Urban Infrastructure Development Project (CBUID) at GIZ. According to Menguelé, we need to make sure we improve the development literacy of the demand side, be it civil society networks or local administrations. He described the human focus as applying a notion of capacity development, which entails looking at people as co-producers of public goods. Consequently, the GIZ has “a structured planning methodology which starts with the identification of needs, going right through the analysis of the cause and effect.”

While decentralization is an opportunity to divert the pressure on infrastructures, according to Menguelé “it has to be tied to the administrative and political traditions of a country and cannot be a solution to all the problems, **because the problems have to be solved by the people.**” Encouraging social economic development can hence be a great gateway to support local development, hence the German Development Bank (KfW) enables access to finances especially in support of SME's. “The positive impact of such investments is sometimes much higher than targeting one or two large infrastructure projects” said Walid M. Abdel-Rehim, Deputy Director of the KfW Cairo Office. The Egyptian and German governments have agreed on three main focus areas of development cooperation, namely water, energy and job creation with the technical cooperation implemented by the GIZ and the financial by the KfW. All development projects are in support of and in cohesion with Egypt's long-term sustainable development plans and focuses on reforming sectors.

In regard to COVID-19 and its relation to infrastructure, François Menguelé explained that responses are not supposed to be aimed at facing one specific disaster or crisis but is meant to build resilience and adaptability. He clarified that we need to make sure people living in overcrowded areas have proper ventilation, clean water and social rights that ensure their protection like good jobs and healthcare.