

# HIGHER EDUCATION CLIMATE DIALOGUES

2021

## Outcomes Report

Hosted by

جامعة نيويورك أبوظبي

 NYU | ABU DHABI

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# INTRODUCTION

In realization of the National Agenda Vision 2021, the UAE has been at the forefront of tackling climate change and accelerating sustainability efforts, especially within the Middle East. Grounded in this vision of securing and shaping a sustainable future, a team of students from New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) and the American University of Sharjah (AUS) organized the inaugural **Higher Education Climate Dialogues** (HECD).

Hosted by NYUAD in a virtual format, the event was held on April 11-12, 2021 and it was the first of its kind student-led conference in the UAE focused on advancing sustainability in higher education across three pillars: academia, campus operations and campus culture. The conference provided a space for students, administration, staff, faculty and other stakeholders to exchange best practices for sustainability in higher education, network with each other and inspire future actions.



# CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

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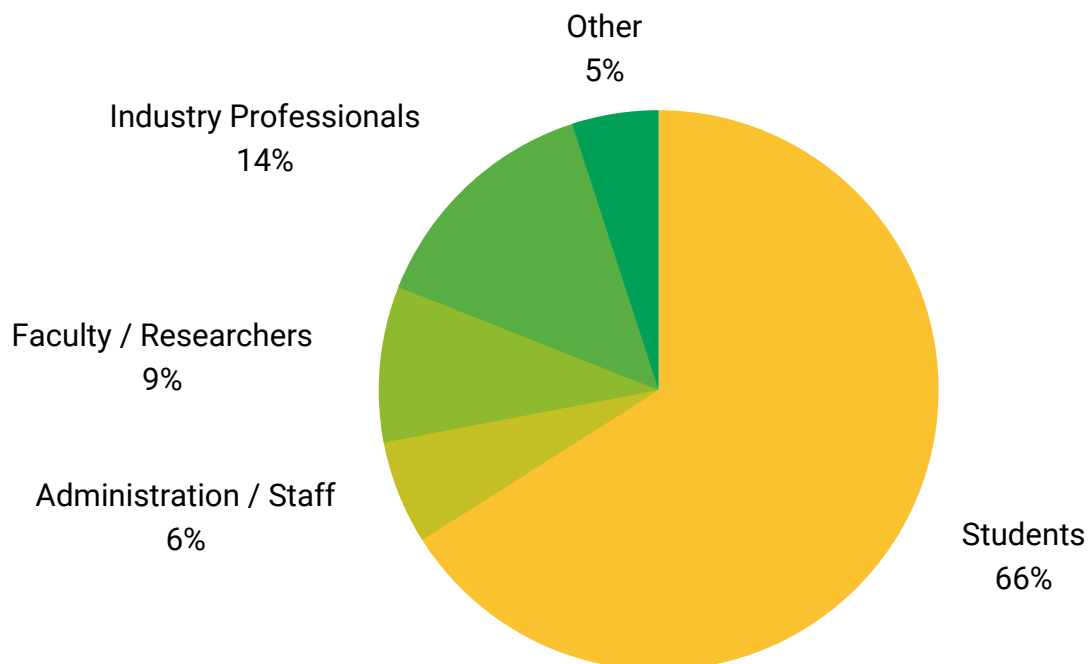
REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS

The Higher Education Climate Dialogues was attended by **112 participants** from **5 continents** and **19 countries** including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, USA, India, South Korea, Kazakhstan, and Nigeria.

Participants hailed from **34 universities** of which **8** were from the **UAE** and **26** were from **abroad**. The universities in attendance include: New York University Abu Dhabi, American University of Sharjah, Zayed University, Khalifa University, Sultan Qaboos University (Oman), University of Toronto (Canada), and Georgetown University (USA).



19  
COUNTRIES



# OPENING REMARKS

The opening remarks were provided by **Qais Al Suwaidi**, Director of the Climate Change Department at the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, and **Mariet Westermann**, Vice-Chancellor of NYUAD.

In discussing the significance and contribution of the youth to advancing actions on climate change, **Al Suwaidi** highlighted four key areas of youth involvement: activism, research and development, entrepreneurship, and policy-making,

**Westermann** continued the discussion by emphasizing the role of universities in contributing to climate action. By building their multidisciplinary expertise, students have the potential to become the next generation of world citizens who will work across national borders to tackle the problem at two levels: systemic and individual.

“We need [young] people with a new set of ideas who can push climate negotiations both domestically and internationally.”

**Qais Al Suwaidi**

Director of Climate Change Department, UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment



“Climate change is a global multidimensional problem that does not observe national borders.”

**Mariet Westermann**

Vice-Chancellor, NYUAD



# PANEL HIGHLIGHTS

## Sustainability and Climate Action in Higher Education

The first panel featured **Debra Rowe**, President of the U.S. Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development, and **Rose Armour**, Head of AUS Sustainability. The panel explored the role of sustainability in universities in the UAE and the importance of shaping eco-conscious individuals that contribute to sustainability goals.



“The sustainability mindset that students gain in university can be carried forward into the future.”

**Rose Armour**  
Head of AUS Sustainability

**Armour** provided further context on how AUS has incorporated sustainability into their strategic plans and measurable KPIs. Working with faculty to create classroom engagements with these topics, some of their strategies included field trips, guest speakers, and providing access to primary data collected by the university. As a result, the sustainability mindset that students foster in their classrooms, residential colleges, extracurricular activities, and across campus, becomes permanently integrated into their life. Further on, students will graduate but will have the capacity to integrate sustainability into their future professional and personal decisions.

“Higher Education has to take the lead in education and actions to transition to clean energy.”

**Debra Rowe**  
President of the U.S. Partnership for  
Education for Sustainable Development

**Rowe** introduced how higher education institutions could work toward addressing climate change, in particular by helping students to pursue green and sustainability-focused careers. Looking beyond opportunities that are already available, she called on students to proactively create opportunities themselves as intrapreneurs and entrepreneurs.

# PANEL HIGHLIGHTS

## Generating Intellectual Capital for the UAE Green Market

The second panel featured **Gauri Singh**, Deputy Director-General of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), **Antonios Vouloudis**, Director of Sustainability and Stewardship at NYUAD, and **Abdulaziz AlMulla**, Co-Founder and CEO of Madar Farms for a discussion on preparing students to enter the booming UAE green market.



**Sustainability is a way of life. It is not something you can get into without having the passion for the planet we live in.**

**Gauri Singh**

Deputy Director-General of IRENA

**Singh** stated that the transition toward clean and efficient energy is certain as leaders of major world economies have committed to carbon neutrality by 2050. This, **Singh** said, sets the base and framework of the future for which higher education institutions and students need to prepare for. As energy contributes to 80% of the greenhouse gas emissions, it is clear that transformation in the energy sector will be at the core climate action.

**Vouloudis** recognized the role of student-led bottom-up movements in transforming and promoting sustainability the higher education institutions. In his role at NYUAD, he aims to support a curriculum that informs students about climate change and to create a sustainability culture that students can take forward with them into their professional careers.

**AlMulla** highlighted that higher education institutions need to move away from focusing on content and knowledge transfer to facilitating students' desires to address major societal problems. Increasing number of companies work on early research so there is a need for skills-based approach and nurturing the desire to address societal challenges. **AlMulla** encouraged students to actively reach out for opportunities and for support as people are keen to help those who want to bring change to the community.

**Opportunities are available, students just need to reach out and take action.**

**Abdulaziz AlMulla**

Co-Founder and CEO of Madar Farms

**It is important that everyone understands, in essence, the impact of their choices.**

**Antonios Vouloudis**

Director of Sustainability and Stewardship at NYUAD

# SESSIONS HIGHLIGHTS

The HECD hosted 8 interactive breakout sessions to share and discuss best practices for sustainability initiatives in universities across the UAE.

## Climate Action Initiatives in UAE Universities

Session	Speakers	Description
Lessons Learnt from AUS Sustainability's Efforts Since COVID-19	<b>Bilal Mir</b> , EcoRep, AUS Sustainability <i>Moderator: Gulzar Basheer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following the onset of the pandemic, AUS reflected on how to increase responsibility at an individual level.</li> </ul>
Go Green Week	<b>Dana Alhosani</b> , Student Activities Coordinator, NYUAD <i>Moderator: Tom Abi Samra</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NYUAD Go Green Week 2021 explored the intersectional nature of sustainability.</li> </ul>

## Supporting Higher Education in the Race to Net-Zero

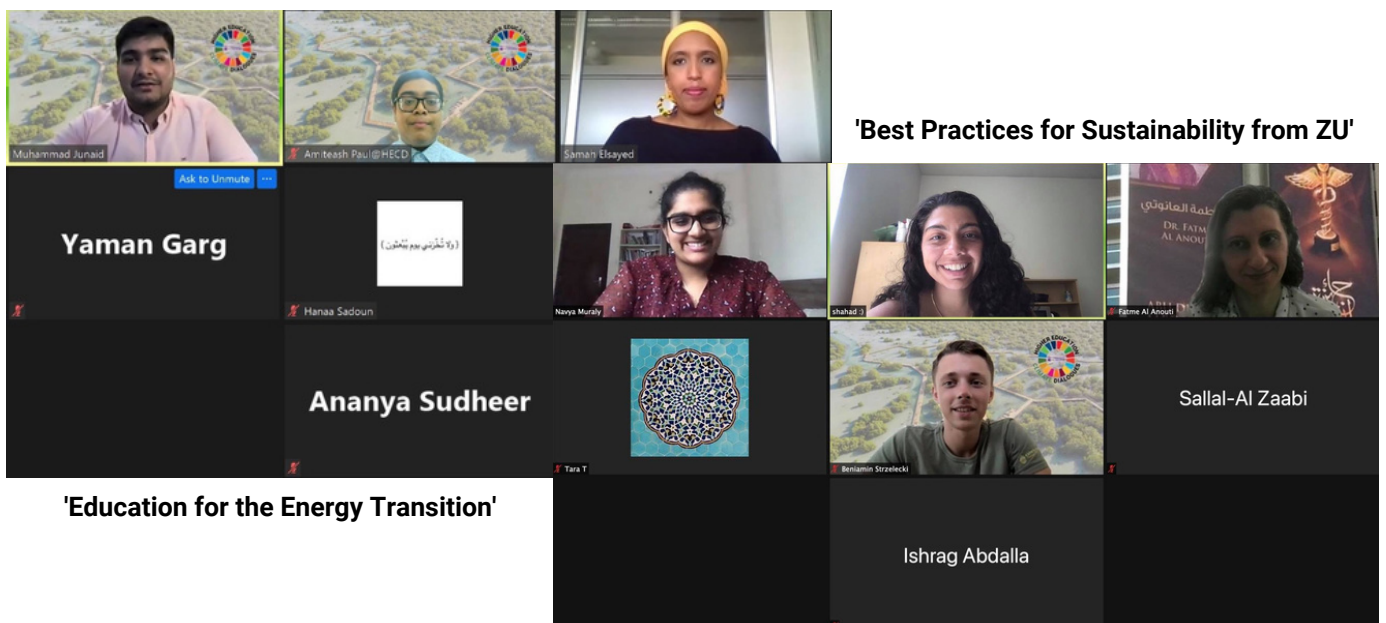
Session	Speakers	Description
The Role of Attachment in Promoting Pro-Environmental Behavior	<b>Claudia Nisa</b> , Psychology Postdoctoral Associate, NYUAD <i>Moderator: Killian Dumont</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attachment priming combined with social norms is the most effective nudge to climate change action</li> </ul>
Recycling and Waste Diversion at NYUAD	<b>Louise Larkins</b> , Waste Management Manager, Serco ME <i>Moderator: Katie Glasgow-Palmer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion on the impact of the pandemic on recycling and waste management operations at NYUAD</li> </ul>
3D Printing for a Sustainable Future	<b>Mohammed Kharroub</b> , Co-Founder, Azure3DP <i>Moderator: Anushna Bagchi</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation on optimizing designs, minimizing material use, and extending life of products with sustainable 3D printed materials</li> </ul>



# SESSIONS HIGHLIGHTS

## Preparing for the Future of Sustainability

Session	Speakers	Description
Future Skills	<b>Zainab Al Ali</b> , Masdar; <b>Simarna Singh</b> , Coco Veda; <b>Yazan Zamel</b> , FSL Alum <i>Moderator: Ara Fernezian</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panel on how the changing job market requires consideration of rapid technological progress, changes in business and economy, social demographic shifts, and moral responsibility</li> </ul>
Education for the Energy Transition	<b>Samah El Sayed</b> , Programme Officer- Renewable Energy Education, IRENA <i>Moderator: Mohamed Junaid</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation about cross-disciplinary skills, innovation and entrepreneurship, and emerging skills (storage, digitalisation etc.) needed for future energy workforce</li> </ul>
Best Practices for Sustainability from ZU	<b>Fatme AlAnouti</b> , Associate Professor, ZU <i>Moderator: Navya Muraly</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation about integration of innovation through clubs, community outreach, and research at ZU</li> </ul>



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

In the final session, we asked attendees to reflect on and share what they have learned over the course of the HECD. Discussions progressed on how they plan to implement actionable steps in their lives, educational institutions, and workplaces. The main takeaways are summarised below:

## **01. Continue the Dialogue**

Continue this important dialogue within and outside of universities, including in social media and intimate discussions with family.

## **02. Create a Culture of Engagement**

Create a culture of engagement about the environment and progress the conversation about sustainability.

## **03. Connect with Alumni**

Bridge between current students and alumni to brainstorm ideas for sustainability initiatives.

## **04. Maintain & Spread Awareness**

Be aware of what is going on around – read the news, participate in webinars and local events, and maintain connections with people throughout academic and professional careers.

## **05. Develop Knowledge & Expertise**

Develop knowledge and expertise to advance sustainability in the future workforce.

## **06. Reflect on Current Progress**

Reflect on how much progress is already happening and reinforce our insistence through collective action toward sustainability.

## **07. Formalize Sustainability Education**

Institute formal sustainability education in universities if it is not a requirement yet in the curriculum.

## **08. Persevere**

Try to maintain enthusiasm throughout the process, even if failures occur. One opportunity will lead to the next one.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The HECD organizing team would like to extend gratitude to **all speakers, panelists, participants, and advising staff** for being a part of the inaugural edition of the conference. We would like to extend our special thanks to Dana AlHosani, Suparna Mathur, Mowafiq Alanazi and Declan Dowdall from **NYUAD** as well as Rose Armour and Julia Carlow from **AUS** for close support in preparation of the event. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the members of the **HECD Advisory Board**: Suparna Mathur, Dana AlHosani, Rastraraj Bhandari, Hannah Melville-Rea and Raunak Shrestha, who were key to setting strategy for the event and fitting it within the greater sustainability landscape of the UAE. Finally, we would like to thank our moderators, facilitators, and Masters of Ceremonies without whom this conference would not be possible.

## Higher Education Climate Dialogues (HECD) Organizing Team

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