4th UNFCCC Capacity-building Talk

Strengthening the capacities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to engage in climate action and seize new opportunities

July, 2022

Summary Report





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The Capacity-building Talks are a public event series launched by the UNFCCC secretariat to facilitate discussion and provision of information among actors and stakeholders involved in climate capacity-building. The talks offer a space to exchange knowledge and share best practices, including with a view to strengthening the focus and work on capacity-building within the UNFCCC process.

The event series aims to reach actors involved or interested in climate related capacity-building efforts. This includes UNFCCC Parties and observers, members of the PCCB network, capacity-building providers, and other interested actors. The talks cater to both novices and experts in the field of capacity-building.

The first Capacity-building Talk was held during the UN Climate Change Dialogues in November 2020 on the topic of monitoring and evaluation of capacity-building. The second talk addressed the topic of attuning capacity-building efforts to developing countries' needs and priorities" and took place in May 2021. The third talk examined the important issue of enhancing access to capacity-building, and took place in September 2021. This report provides a summary of discussions from the fourth Capacity-building Talk, held on April 19, 2022, which focused on strengthening the capacities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to engage in climate action and seize new opportunities.

The 4th Talk

Capacity-building efforts are fundamental to enabling developing countries to access the instruments, resources and knowledge needed to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Climate Change Convention and the Paris Agreement. The capacity-building framework for developing countries* acknowledges and emphasizes the relevance of promoting active participation and improved cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders in climate capacity-building, including governments at all levels, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. The SMEs sector is, in that sense, a key driver of the private sector, as it holds regional, national and global importance when it comes to the economic reset needed for deep decarbonization and climate action. Therefore, capacity-building activities must take SMEs into consideration in order to contribute to the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Economies are significantly driven by the SMEs sector: besides providing inputs to large business supply chains, SMEs account for an average 97% of all enterprises, 69% of employment, and 41% of GDP in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, employ 80% of the workforce in sub-Saharan Africa, and between 10 - 40% in several Arab countries. SMEs are at the same time at the center of resiliency challenges as they need to adapt their activities to climate risks that can impact their enterprises e.g. through infrastructure damage from flooding, droughts and severe weather systems. They also need to consider the demands of companies committed to the 1.5 Co trajectory operating the supply chains in which they are embedded, and to the hardships imposed by a post-pandemic world. However, due to limitations in size, SMEs face larger challenges when it comes to the capacity to green their operations, including knowledge about technologies, the process to reduce carbon emissions, and accessing finance to climate-proof their business.

^{*} The capacity building framework for developing countries was adopted at COP 7 in Marrakesh (decision 2/CP.7).



The 4th Capacity-building Talk aimed to examine how capacity-building can support SMEs to better address climate change risks, contribute to meeting national emission reduction targets and access potential new business opportunities. The findings of research conducted by the UNFCCC secretariat in collaboration with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the UNFCCC's Regional Collaboration Centres (RCC) were discussed in order to provide insights and solutions for enhancing the capacities of SMEs to engage effectively in climate action.

The session presented an overview of the most representative capacity-building needs and gaps of SMEs across different regions, and discussed recommendations for addressing these needs so SMEs can better engage in climate action. It also considered how capacity-building activities can be more efficiently designed to address the needs of SMEs. Finally, the event provided impulses to discussions in the UNFCCC process related to private sector engagement in capacity-building.

In addition to providing space for general reflections and perspectives on the capacity needs and gaps of SMEs, the session specifically considered the following aspects:

- Capacity challenges to fostering SMEs' access to finance to promote green initiatives and associated awareness.
- Actions to enhance the capacities of SMEs to better integrate climate risks into their business models.
- Designing context-specific collaborative capacity-building programmes focused on improving the capacities of SMEs to contribute to the implementation of the Paris Agreement.



Date

Venue

Attended by



Time





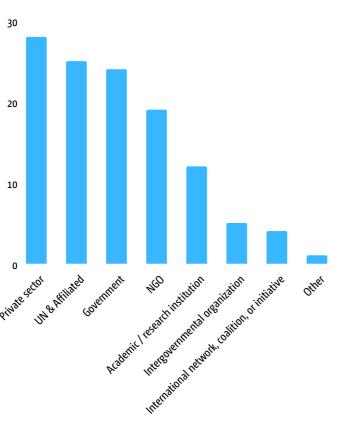
19 April

14:00-16:00 CET Virtual-MS Teams

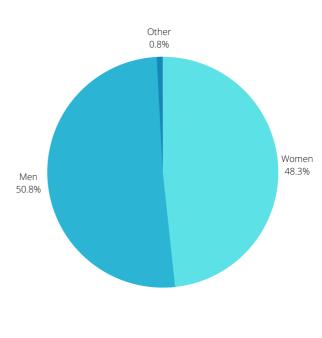
82 participants

Participants Statistics

Type of institutions:



Gender Balance:



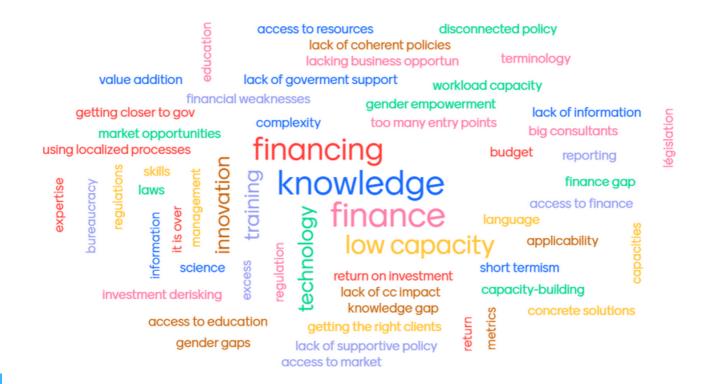
Participants' information

Located in:



Introduction with Menti

As an ice breaker, participants were asked to describe in a few words what are the barriers for SMEs in dealing with climate-related risks. The word cloud below summarizes their responses.



Panel moderator





Director of Sustainable Inclusive
Economies



Managing Director





Marlen de la Chaux







Regional mapping studies

To explore what SMEs lack in knowledge, skills, and capacity to be better prepared for climate change risks and opportunities, a study was conducted by the <u>UNFCCC secretariat</u> in collaboration with the <u>International Development Research Centre (IDRC)</u> and the UNFCCC's Regional Collaboration Centres (RCC). In addition to a literature review, targeted surveys and interviews with SME associations and other networks were conducted to reach as many SMEs as possible in different countries. The ultimate aim was to get an overview of the main differences and similarities with regard to capacity needs and gaps across the regions, taking into account their context and specificities. Among the main results, the studies found that climate change presents material risks to business operations, for instance through infrastructure damage from flooding, droughts, and severe weather systems, which in turn introduces new challenges to fragile and vulnerable enterprise systems. Therefore, given the scale and pace of emissions reductions needed, it is critical that companies across the board urgently act to reduce carbon emissions both in their direct operations and in their supply chains and to be prepared to deal with future climate impacts by increasing resilience.

When it comes to the similarities between different regions, the economic activities of SMEs play a crucial role in the economic well-being of countries. They create wealth and employment and are involved in many supply chains linked to important regional and global economies. In the ASEAN region, SMEs represent an average 97% of all enterprises, 69% of employment, and 41% of GDP, demonstrating how important they are for the regional economic stability. At the same time, the <u>Asian Development Bank</u> projects that the Asian region could lose up to 11% of its GDP by 2100 as a consequence of climate-related risks. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, SMEs typically account for between 10% and 40% of all jobs, demonstrating how important they are to the region's employment balance. However, SMEs in the MENA region are particularly affected by changes in temperature and precipitation, as it is a very water-scarce region.

Moreover, in Eastern and Southern Africa, SMEs employ up to 80% of the workforce, a large percentage of the employment rates. Climate change can impact this aspect by leading to food insecurity, compromised health standards, and economic instability. Therefore, measures aimed at building the capacity of SMEs to better engage in climate action is an important step for countries in different regions to achieve climate goals, such as the transition to a net-zero economy, and ensure the economic well-being of various sectors.

Based on the research results, it was possible to identify the main needs and gaps in capacity-building: In terms of climate change awareness, SMEs generally have a basic knowledge of climate change and want to increase their commitment to climate action. However, when it comes to knowledge of climate policies and regulations, SMEs still struggle to access information and understand its relevance for their businesses. They also often lack tools and methodologies to understand and assess climate-related risks, as well as technical capacity to develop mitigation and adaptation measures. Finally, SMEs still need more information and access to knowledge about funding sources and how to access these financial opportunities. A number of recommendations can be derived from these key findings. One of them is to improve the capacity of the private sector to develop more systematic and comprehensive processes for identifying capacity-building needs and gaps. Academic research platforms and UN platforms are some examples of collaborative capacity-building programmes and coalitions, but these initiatives need to be better communicated to SMEs. Particular attention should also be paid to building capacity for assessing financing and scaling up existing efforts to support SME engagement in climate action.

Panel Discussion

The panel discussion addressed the barriers and challenges SMEs face in accessing finance to address climate-related issues, as well as best practices for bridging these gaps and needs to improve their capacity to adapt to climate risks. The discussion also focused on the level of preparedness of SMEs when it comes to having the necessary knowledge to fully integrate climate-related risks into their business models. The panelists outlined the remaining challenges related to training programmes for SMEs and talked about the entry points for these companies to take more sustainable actions. Another important topic was how regulatory frameworks can help these SMEs better integrate aspects of climate change into their business models and develop bankable proposals. The discussion also highlighted the importance of networking opportunities and peer-to-peer learning. Given the challenges associated with climate change, interdisciplinary and holistic approaches are needed and can be sustained through mutual knowledge exchange. The section concluded with an outlook from the various panelists and a call for a stronger listening approach to capacity-building activities.

Panel Discussion

Key barriers and challenges regarding SMEs' access to financial resources in order to address climate-related issues

The panelists pointed out several barriers and challenges that still remain with respect to SMEs' access to financial resources to address climate-related issues.

One panelist emphasized that many SMEs continue to have insufficient knowledge about existing financing opportunities, for example, because they do not know which financial service providers they can work with. It was noted that national governments often do not consider SMEs as a target group to engage in national climate policies, so the private sector is rarely involved in the development of climate change plans and strategies, which limits their knowledge not only about financial opportunities but also about possible legal and regulatory frameworks. This dynamic is even more pronounced in women-owned SMEs. Another panelist pointed out the importance of increasing the capacity of intermediaries, who play an important role in realizing financing opportunities by matching SMEs with investors, mobilizing funds, creating tools and coalitions, pooling support, aggregating necessary information, and reducing bureaucracies. In this context, the lack of connection between academia and entrepreneurs is also an obstacle, as research and knowledge need to be translated into practice through entrepreneurship education initiatives.

In terms of the incentives that SMEs have to engage in climate and sustainability, the panelists highlighted that although many entrepreneurs are aware of climate-related issues, they generally do not view these issues as a top priority for their businesses. From the SMEs' perspective, building their capacity to prepare for climate-related risks can come at a significant cost, so incentives need to be put in place for them to act. One panelist pointed out that there are two different types of incentives: The first relates to compliance with rules and regulations that incentivize SMEs to meet certain standards and requirements. The second type is positive incentives that encourage SMEs to prepare for climate risks and adopt environmentally friendly business practices. The fact that the SME and Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector represents a very diverse range of businesses with different needs and realities was also mentioned as a necessary recognition for creating effective incentives and analysis. Panelists even noted that many SMEs feel that financial service providers do not properly understand their specific needs and challenges, and that products are designed primarily for large industries.

In terms of regulatory frameworks, one panelist pointed out that SMEs also struggle with immature regulations. In addition, SMEs in many countries face limited market opportunities in some sectors that are heavily monopolized by governments, such as clean energy and water. This leaves them little room for growth and access to finance, as banks demand investable projects and SMEs face competition from governments. On the supply side of financing, lenders and investors tend to assess higher risks when evaluating the risk of investing in SMEs, which is another barrier for them to access finance.

Finally, one of the panelists referred to the International Labor Organization's <u>SCORE Programme</u> to point out that the challenges and barriers SMEs face in accessing funding for climate action are often integrated and interrelated. For this reason, integrated measures should also be taken to overcome them more effectively.

Panel Discussion

SMEs level of preparedness and possession of necessary knowledge to fully integrate climate-related risks into their business models

Aside from financial knowledge gaps, the panelists argued that SMEs are not well prepared for the future risks of climate change and the potential impacts on their businesses, besides not being aware of national climate change plans and strategies. One panelist emphasized that the capacity of many SMEs usually depends on the background of the business founders and owners. Another panelist added that even though for those owners who are aware of climate change, they may not necessarily be engaged and concerned with the policies that affect them.

In order to efficiently integrate climate-related risks into their business models and improve their climate change preparedness and knowledge, SMEs need to be aware of the benefits of such measures. However, panelists argued that they are often not well versed in this type of information, such as how climate-related events can impact their businesses in terms of risk and damage, and the financial and cost-saving opportunities that result from implementing climate change adaptation measures. In this regard, one panelist pointed out that many SMEs struggle to collect and analyze data to quantify losses and risks resulting from climate change impacts, further limiting their ability to integrate these impacts into their business models. As a result, SMEs often struggle to provide quality data to investors and funders, which reduces their chances of accessing funding.

Solutions and ideas to develop and enhance the capacities of SMEs as regards coping with climate change and seizing new business opportunities

With reference to access to finance, one panelist pointed out that governments could provide dedicated funds to SMEs to ensure they have the resources they need to implement sustainability measures. The Dubai Green Fund, managed by the Government of Dubai, was cited as an example of a fund with a mandate to help SMEs finance green transition projects. In addition, SMEs need to have improved access to data to efficiently measure the risks and impacts of climate change on their business, and this should also be integrated into their business models.

When it comes to trainings initiatives, panelists noted that national and regional governments and SME associations should be involved, with a particular focus on young entrepreneurs and womenowned SMEs. Besides that, these training programmes need to be better communicated, as many SMEs know little about available in-country training opportunities on climate change In this regard, universities can play an important role as local capacity-building centers that can promote collaborative research training on climate change, provide climate change information platforms, conduct customized training, develop business incubation initiatives, and offer consulting programmes for entrepreneurs with innovative solutions. The Kenya Climate Innovation Centre (KCIC) was cited as an example of such initiatives.

Panel Discussion

Panelists also highlighted the need for greater collaboration between academic institutions, government, and the private sector. In this sense, large companies can provide support and funding, and also develop tailored training programmes for executives, young talent, and SMEs so that they understand their climate-related risks and how to tailor their operations to address them. In addition, one of the panelists emphasized the importance of working with local organizations (listed below) to identify champions that can drive capacity-building initiatives in a sustainable, accessible, and relevant way. To this end, professionals and dedicated individuals from government agencies, public institutions, networks of freelance consultants, training institutions, universities, and think tanks can be identified and empowered to promote and drive more climate action in SMEs.

Regarding entry barriers for engagement in climate and sustainability measures, panelists explained that SMEs are often discouraged from initially engaging with climate action because they lack the knowledge and are unwilling to invest too much in the early stages. One solution to reap the low-hanging fruit is to lower the barriers to entry for these companies by facilitating communication and identification of entry points for SMEs and promoting strategies and actions that can be adopted immediately and do not require expensive investments in new technologies and radical changes to their business models. One panelist also encouraged SMEs to talk to their city hall and ask them about climate-related disasters in their location to already begin examining climate-related risks to their operations. By removing such barriers to entry, more SMEs can become involved in adapting to climate-related risks, thus increasing their efforts later on.

Finally, with regards to specific groups within SMEs, one panelist emphasized that women-led SMEs are a group that needs to be more involved in capacity-building activities and financing opportunities. The Women in Agriculture Impact Investment (WAII) Facility was cited as an example of how women-led enterprises are supported at the regional level with the intention of providing blended financing to these SMEs. In addition, domestic companies often face more barriers compared to multinationals, which argues for contextualized interventions such as training programmes that take into account the specific regional characteristics of the location of such SMEs and can be delivered in the local language and dialects.

Open Plenary Discussion

This moderated open plenary discussion session invited participants to ask questions to the panel and share their own views and perspectives on the event topic.

Best practices and real-life experiences were brought up by the different participants throughout the open plenary session. Participants and panelists pointed out that there are still many challenges in terms of collaboration and capacity needed to overcome current barriers. However, several solutions and initiatives already exist that can be leveraged to support SME efforts to better prepare for climate-related impacts and even seize new opportunities. Furthermore, the importance of networks and peer-to-peer learning were considered beneficial to enhancing capacities and providing mutual long-term learning opportunities.

The questions addressed to the panelists and panel moderator are summarized below:



What kind of support do you think would be most helpful, both from large financial institutions and larger companies, such as professional services or consulting services?

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"Pro bono consultants and those types of resource are useful, but connections are also very important, because we have been hearing in the context of capacity-building about the importance of retaining capacities and ensuring local ownership of countries, so that is where connections come in, and panelists mentioned academia, research organizations based in the countries, how can you help them build their own capacities their own capacities so that they are able to provide capacity? So, it's about those connections and also how to capitalize on what's already been there, better use the platforms, make the information available to SMEs, but also with a special focus on the micro level."



Open Plenary Discussion





"We have a programme called the <u>Uganda Green Enterprise Finance Accelerator</u> funded by the <u>European Union</u>, and in this programme we designed what we call the Uganda Green Finance Academy, through which we support commercial banks to develop products that provide green financing products, and we can safely say that equity banks, for example, have already developed a green finance product with lower interest rates for green SMEs, which is very helpful in our sector. [...] The last point I want to focus on is the issue of catalytic financing, and that builds on my last point. I think the Swedish Embassy, particularly in East Africa, has done a lot to develop catalytic finance that not only incentivizes but also exposes the risks to investors who are working with these financial institutions. This is a broad area, because in the local context there are different levels of financial institutions, and the focus should not only be on commercial banks, but also on microfinance institutions, which is where most SMEs turn to for financing."

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"The question is also about how their organization could work with SMEs. It's not just about helping them report their carbon emissions or carbon footprints. Based on my experience, if we use the carbon footprints, or energy consumption as entry points, SMEs may not be so interested because they may not consume that much electricity or energy to begin with. However, the locations where they operate have an impact to some extent on these climate-related disasters, and I think it was also mentioned in the study that the knowledge and capacity in terms of the impact of these climate-related disasters on the operations of SMEs in the local areas is still insufficient. If you as a technical advisor can collect this information about climate-related disasters in their areas and share your information with the SMEs, that would be a good first step, a stepping stone to get the SMEs to talk about climate change and take action."



Open Plenary Discussion



How can we best engage SMEs in our work, in our climate change agendas, nationally and internationally, and how can we best support them in mobilizing funding for their climate change-related programmes?



Marlen de la Chaux

"SMEs provide the bulk of employment worldwide, most companies in countries are SMEs, key players, but as a result in most contexts there is already to some extent a supportive environment, SME agencies, business development, financial service providers, innovation centers that are specifically focused on SMEs. An important element of the work is mainstreaming environmental issues, climate resilience, these issues into these organizations, helping to equip and build the capacity of these intermediary organizations, so that they can work with small and medium enterprises. Work around capacity-building on climate change cannot be a separate issue but needs to be embedded in other concerns and needs of SMEs, e.g., by linking issues of workplace collaboration and working conditions in SMEs to environmental issues, resource efficiency and cleaner production, and then linking that with productivity concerns."

Key take-aways

The panelists noted that SMEs are critical players whose capacities still need to be strengthened to manage climate-related risks and seize new opportunities from the green transition. In order to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and continue efforts to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in line with the Paris Agreement, engaging SMEs is a necessary step as they are directly involved in many economic processes and therefore also need to improve their business practices in a more sustainable way. Continued pressure on governments and policymakers, as well as the involvement of large companies, are also crucial to improving the capacity of both intermediaries and SMEs.

It was further noted that there needs to be greater emphasis on enhancing the collaboration across different sectors and that capacity-building actors need to think about how the private sector, particularly the SMEs, research institutions, and governments can have more collaborative spaces to support each other.

What is next?

The insights from this Capacity-building Talk relate to the work of the PCCB. The PCCB prepared its 11th Durban Forum on Capacity-building, which took place in Bonn in 2022 as part of the Bonn Climate Change Conference SB 56, where many of the topics we have talked about during the 4th Capacity-building Talk were discussed in more detail. In addition, the information provided during the 4th Capacity-building Talk will also serve as input for the preparation of the 4th Capacity-building Hub to be held during COP 27.



Panelists



Erin Tansey

Erin is the director of IDRC's Sustainable Inclusive Economies programme. She joined IDRC in November 2020 and brings over 20 years of experience in international development and humanitarian sectors within Canadian and international non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and bilateral development programmes. She worked with the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) in Malawi, CARE Canada in Bosnia Herzegovina, the Unites Nations Refugee Agency in Thailand, Algeria and Ghana, the United Nations World Food Programme in various countries in sub-Saharan Africa and with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Pretoria, South Africa. Erin holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and French Literature from the University of Western Ontario and a Master of Arts in Political Science from the University of Windsor.

Ahmed Elbermbali

Ahmed Samir Elbermbali is the Managing Director of the MENA Clean Energy Business Council (CEBC), a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting clean energy and clean technologies and solutions MENA Region. Ahmed joined CEBC in 2018 and is the youngest Managing Director to hold this position in the history of CEBC. He is very active in bringing together the industry stakeholders from across the private and public sectors in the different MENA countries together to discuss policy challenges and solutions and accelerate the policy maturity for clean energy in the region. Ahmed is an achieved consultant with a portfolio of 25+ companies from across Ireland and Canada whom he helped expand their business and operations to the MENA region. He holds an MBA in Sustainable Mobility Management from the Technical University of Berlin.



Annex

Panelists



Marlen de la Chaux

Marlen de la Chaux is the technical expert for SMEs productivity and working conditions at the International Labour Organization, where she has worked for four years, and has extensive work and research experience with private sector issues and entrepreneurs. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Jacobs University Bremen, a Master of Philosophy in Innovation, Strategy and Organization from the University of Cambridge, and a PhD in Management from the University of Cambridge.

Eddie Sembatya

Eddie Sembatya has over 15 years of professional experience in the field of impact investment, economic development and business development working with social and climate smart MSMEs, investors and development agencies. He is the Founder and Managing Director of Finding XY, a not-for-profit innovation Centre providing business advisory, market-based research, investment, and project consulting services. Eddie currently oversees facilities promoting green finance, impact investment in female-led enterprises and promotion of climate smart technologies in East Africa. He is an Oxford university alumni and a member of Private Financing Advisory Network (PFAN).



Sooksiri Chamsuk



Sooksiri Chamsuk is a Deputy Representative for UNIDO in Thailand and a regional programme officer. She has worked with UNIDO Regional Office in Thailand since 2008. Her responsibilities have ranged from engagements with United Nations Country Team to project's design for resource mobilization. She collaborates with other UN agencies- such as UNESCAP and UNDCO- at the regional level on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and technical backstopping related work. She is specialized in formulation of projects aiming to achieve low-emission-sustainable development which includes clean energy, climate change mitigation, environmental and sound chemicals management for sustainable development, green economy, and circular economy for Southeast Asian countries. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Chiang Mai University, Thailand and a Master's degree in Energy for Sustainable Development from the United Kingdom and Graduate Certificate on Energy for Sustainable Development from Lund University.



Panel moderator

Alejandro Kilpatrick



Alejandro Kilpatrick has more than 20 years of professional experience in environmental protection and sustainable development policy development. Since 2011, he has been the Team Leader for Climate Finance and Capacity-building at the UNFCCC Secretariat, based in Bonn, Germany. He gained most of his professional experience in the United Nations system, first in the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). He then focused on supporting the regional and global implementation of multilateral environmental agreements such as the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). He holds a Bachelor of Engineering in Ecology Engineering from the Universidad del Valle de México, a Master of Sciences in Environmental/ Environmental Health Engineering from the Universidad del Valle de México, and a Diploma in Climate Change Law and Economics from the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales.

Programme

Welcome & Introduction

• Alejandro Kilpatrick, Capacity-building Subdivision, UNFCCC secretariat

Panel Discussion

The discussion focused on capacity-building needs for SMEs and their capacities to deal with climate-related risks, as well as experiences, best practices and lessons learned.

- Alejandro Kilpatrick, Capacity-building Subdivision, UNFCCC secretariat
- Erin Tansey, Director of the Sustainable Inclusive Economies programme at the <u>IDRC</u>
- Ahmed Elbermbali, Managing Director at the <u>CEBC MENA</u>
- Marlen de la Chaux, Technical expert for SMEs productivity and working conditions at ILO
- Eddie Sembatya, Managing Director of <u>Finding XY</u>
- Sooksiri Chamsuk, Programme officer at the <u>UNIDO</u> Regional Hub in Bangkok (UNIDO)

Open Plenary Discussion

This moderated open discussion session invited participants to join the discussion, either by requesting the floor or through the chat.

What is next?

• Alejandro Kilpatrick, Capacity-building Subdivision, UNFCCC secretariat





Useful links

- Recording of the 4th Capacity-building Talk
- 4th <u>Capacity-building Talk page</u>
- <u>Capacity-building Talks main page</u>



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Webpage: https://unfccc.int/Capacity-building Talks



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