

**Regional Climate Week**

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**Middle East  
and North Africa**

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – 8-12 October 2023



United Nations  
Climate Change

REGIONAL  
CLIMATE  
WEEKS

**Overview  
and Outputs**

# Middle East and North Africa Climate Week 2023

**MENA Climate Week 2023 explored resilience against climate risks, transition to a low-emission economy and collaboration on climate change solutions. Working together opens opportunities to address social inequality and invest in development that is good for humanity and nature.**

**MENACW 2023 was a platform to enable regional collaboration on climate action, contribute to the first Global Stocktake and accelerate implementation of the Paris Agreement.**



# MENACW 2023 Partners

Middle East and North Africa  
Climate Week 2023 was  
made possible through  
collaboration by the host  
government, global partners  
and partners in the region.  
Thank you to all our partners  
for your ongoing cooperation  
and support.



**United Nations**  
Climate Change





MENA Climate Week will explore advancing climate action and inclusive approaches including the Circular Carbon Economy approach which promotes the use of all available technologies, forms of energy and mitigation opportunities.

**Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman,  
Minister of Energy, Saudi Arabia**  
*At the Opening Ceremony  
of Middle East and North Africa  
Climate Week 2023*



MENA Climate Week provides a platform to spotlight regional solutions and innovations, paving the way for strengthened collaboration across borders, sectors and disciplines.

**UNFCCC Executive Secretary  
Simon Stiell**

*At the Opening Ceremony  
of Middle East and North Africa  
Climate Week 2023*



# Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

This year's Middle East and North Africa Climate Week was held in a venue alongside Boulevard City in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from 8 to 12 October 2023.

Photo: IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth

# Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony featured Minister of Energy of Saudi Arabia Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt Sameh Shoukry, incoming COP28 President Sultan Al Jaber, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell, and “young cadets” discussing a sustainable future.



Photo: IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth



**The MENACW 2023 Opening Ceremony featured the voices of young people calling on delegates to secure a sustainable future for our planet.**



# MENACW 2023

**Middle East and North Africa Climate Week 2023** provided a platform to connect policymakers, experts and stakeholders to discuss regional challenges and solutions that inform the first global stocktake performed under the UNFCCC process.



Photo: IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth

## A Quick Look...

**7,300+ Registered Attendees**

**99 Countries of Origin**

**22 Thematic Track Events**

**41 Affiliated Events**

**140 Side Events**

**43 Action Hub Events**

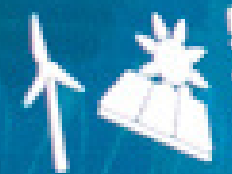


# SAUDI GREEN INITIATIVE

Roadmap to 2030



**650 tonnes**  
clean hydrogen to be  
produced daily from 2026 -  
world's largest producer  
and exporter.



**50%**  
of Saudi's power generation  
will be from renewables  
by 2030



**44mtpa**  
of CO<sub>2</sub> captured and  
sequestered by 2030

# ASIA GREEN HYDROGEN CO

Solar farm with over  
**5 million** solar panels  
producing over 2,000 t of clean energy

**\$8.4bn**

An Expo Hall with digital displays engaged participants on leadership in the region. Stands with traditional foods and coffees, and a gala dinner for all attendees highlighted local culture.

# Youth Engagement

Young people are often at the forefront of the climate challenge. Throughout the Climate Week, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted youth from elementary school children to aspiring delegates. Interactive exhibits and the cube with screens on all sides in the Expo Hall were particularly engaging.



Photo: IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth



Photo: IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth

# MENACW 2023 Events

Middle East North Africa Climate Week 2023 featured more than 255 sessions were held in halls across the venue. Organized by the host government, the climate change secretariat and partner organizations, events advanced discussions on key topics, showcased climate action and facilitated the UNFCCC process.



Photo: IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth



Photo: IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth

## Opportunities to Engage

Each event opened space for discussion on critical topics for the region. Side Events aligned with Thematic Tracks. Affiliated Events advanced multilateralism. Seen here, an Action Hub featured action on the ground.



Photo: IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth

# MENACW 2023 Events By the Numbers



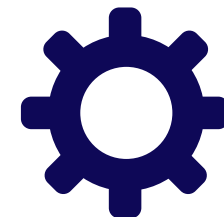
## 140 Side Events

Side Events covered critical topics in detail. Organizers hosted events with experts to engage key stakeholders and constituents.



## 43 Action Hub Events

The Action Hub was held in the a dedicated space to showcase inspiring and scalable action on the ground.



## 41 Affiliated Events

Affiliated Events advanced the UNFCCC process by engaging specific groups as directed by governments.



## Virtual Participation

Select events were streamed to the UN Climate Change YouTube channel and MS Teams allowed for virtual participation for all events.

# MENACW 2023 Thematic Tracks

MENA Climate Week 2023 opened space for policymakers, business, practitioners, and civil society to exchange on climate solutions, overcoming barriers and opportunities for the MENA region. Discussions were designed to inform the GST with region-focused contributions around four major system-based tracks:

1. Energy systems and industry
2. Cities, settlements, infrastructure and transport
3. Land, ocean, food and water
4. Societies, health, livelihoods and economies

**22 Thematic Track Events were held.**



# **MENACW 2023 Thematic Track Outputs**

## **Track 1 – Energy systems and industry**

**Discussing the energy transition to efficient and low-emission energy systems, barriers to action investment and innovation for sustainable development.**

## **Track 2 – Cities, settlements, infrastructure and transport**

**Covering all aspects of cities and human settlement, infrastructure, transport, nature-based solutions, waste and social impact of policy and investment.**

## **Track 3 – Land, ocean, food and water**

**Exploring challenges and opportunities in leveraging land for adaptation, collaboration on oceans, the water-climate nexus and resilient food systems.**

## **Track 4 – Societies, health, livelihoods and economies**

**Discussing the circular economy, whole of society approaches to transformation, human health and livelihoods, including decent jobs and skills building.**



# Thematic Track 1

**With focus on Energy and Industry, Track 1 showcased opportunities and discussed challenges related to the energy transition in the region. Sessions were well-attended and focused on an integrated systemic transition to clean energy anchored in justice, inclusivity, and sustainability.**

**Participants stressed the urgent need to transition in line with NDCs. Tailoring energy transition pathways to national contexts and regional collaboration were mentioned as essential.** Economic diversification can ensure resilience to socio-economic impacts. Water scarcity, land degradation and social inequalities were identified as barriers to meeting NDC targets. Finance is crucial, with \$570 billion needed by 2030. Quality and quantity of climate finance, public-private partnerships, blended finance and robust reporting systems were discussed.



# Thematic Track 1

**Significant renewable energy potential and increased energy efficiency can help, including the scale up of CCUS and Direct Air capture technologies to address GHG emissions. Some countries are already making progress in sectors such as building.**

**Just Energy Transition opens opportunities for poverty eradication, economic diversification, energy access, youth empowerment and more.** Access to clean, reliable energy and clean cooking are crucial for a just energy transition. MENA region is making strides in renewable energy, but progress differs by country. Scaling through policies, institutional capacities and partnerships is needed. Promoting public-private collaborations and stakeholder action is crucial.

**Market mechanisms and climate finance can mobilize the private sector for this transformation. Engaging the youth is also essential.** Participants identified examples like youth councils as innovation platforms. There is a need to build on such examples.

# Thematic Track 1

**It was discussed that the MENA region has the potential to be the global leader in Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage. CO2 transport and storage infrastructure, including pipeline networks, knowledge to manage subsurface reservoirs and a path for hard-to-abate industries** such as cement, chemicals, and steel, makes CCUS attractive in the region. It was recognized that additional efforts to innovate in the processes to capture CO2 would be needed to ensure durable reservoirs. Mature and stable regulatory framework, fiscal and financial incentives aided by market mechanisms and climate finance can scale tech and lower costs, which enables transformation.

**Critical minerals are essential for clean energy and demand is projected to rise rapidly. The region has a strategic location, abundant resources and infrastructure,** opening potential to meet new demand. For this, strong regional cooperation and the exchange of technology and expertise are critical. A circular carbon economy framework supporting emission reductions, creating infrastructure, market access, economic diversification and job creation were identified as areas to explore.

# Thematic Track 1

**Methane emissions reductions are also key. Existing methane mitigation measures and technology can affordably reduce over 75% of methane emissions.** Much of that potential is in the region and ten MENA countries have joined the Global Methane Pledge and several companies have joined the Oil & Gas Methane Partnership 2.0. Methane mitigation in the next NDC updates will be important.

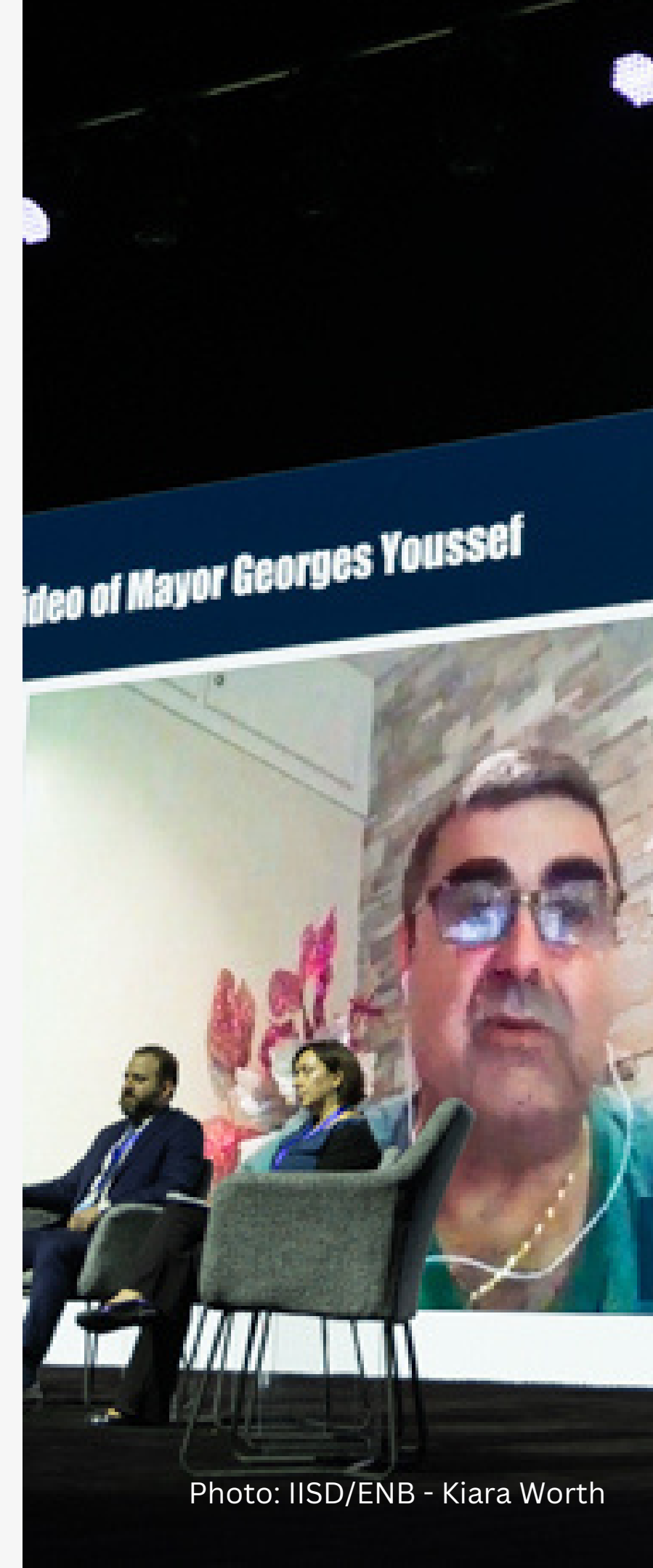
**The session on hydrogen underscored the importance of market readiness and international collaboration.** The MENA region should prioritize hydrogen in climate plans, specifying milestones for scaling up production and adopting technology. Discussions prioritized quality standards to ensure low GHG footprint for clean hydrogen.



# Thematic Track 2

**Robust discussions were held in all Track 2 sessions, where we heard the great potential in MENA for local contributions to NDCs, NAPs and long-term climate plans. Best practices exist and scaling solutions requires collaboration across sectors and governments, including the private sector and finance for climate resilient development.**

Cities play a major role in climate resilient infrastructure, transportation, waste management, capacity building and awareness raising. Large cities tend to attract more financing for climate resilient projects, but it's also crucial to engage smaller cities for transformation. City budgets often respond to immediate local needs, so it is important to find ways to directly link day-to-day needs with local climate impacts.



# Thematic Track 2

**Alignment was noted to be key, for example between local, regional and national levels, with examples of local action aligned with NDCs. This can help secure finance and long-term investment. Enabling actions build capacity for local governments to act.** Understanding financing instruments for different projects or stages of projects was highlighted. Multilevel activity and partnership building was featured across the Track 2 sessions. There is a willingness to explore engagement across public and private sectors to local climate action.

**The track took a deep dive into the building and construction value chain and transportation as crucial sectors to achieve decarbonization and resilience.** There is no one-size-fits-all answer when addressing future building and transportation demands here and globally. Proper planning and exchange of best practices is key, as is scaling best practices such as green procurement for sustainable buildings and transportation infrastructure.

## Thematic Track 2

Discussion on resilient infrastructure and adaptive capacity highlighted economic barriers that pose a challenge to implementing solutions, with NAPs providing cities with initial guidelines.

Waste management through circular economy in cities and human settlements was identified as an important pillar of climate resilience. Some notable initiatives are already underway on circular economy, plastic recycling and waste diversion. This contributes to economic value and creates opportunities or new jobs here in the MENA region.

## FIRESIDE CHAT

Paving the way for a low emissions built environment in MENA



**Yves-Laurent Sapoval**  
Senior Advisor, Ministry of Ecological  
Transition and Territorial Cohesion  
France  
**MODERATOR**



**Rania Hedeiya**  
Regional Representative, UN-Habitat  
Regional Office for Arab States



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ACTION

# Thematic Track 3

**Track 3 focused on addressing vulnerabilities and climate impacts on water, land, food, and ocean systems, emphasizing collaborative and regionally relevant adaptation solutions.**

**One of the region's primary challenges is water security. 14 of the 20 most water-insecure countries in the world are here.** Groundwater resources are critical, and discussions underscored the need to improve management. Traditional methods like rainwater harvesting, combined with improved irrigation, were advocated. Water recycling and reuse techniques were highlighted, with awareness and policy support deemed essential to encourage adoption. Desalination, although critical, faces energy-related barriers.

**The interconnectedness of water and food security was emphasized,** highlighting the need for a holistic approach to ensure balanced water use across domestic, agricultural and industrial sectors – ***there is no food security without water security!*** This nexus was also identified as a potential trigger of conflicts, especially in the context of shared resources.



# Thematic Track 3

**Increased heat and salinization of land threaten agricultural production. Efforts such as innovative drought-resistant crop varieties and precision irrigation were showcased.**

**On oceans, innovative initiatives were highlighted, such as mapping the Arabian Sea to monitor biodiversity and public-private partnerships like the Red Sea Global project, which promotes tourism while safeguarding biodiversity preservation.**

**Contextualizing global assessments and predictions were emphasized to generate data for diagnostics and evidence to inform actions and policies.** Data should also include soft data, such as local knowledge. Initiatives like RICCAR and the Regional Sand and Dust Storms Warning Advisory and Assessment Center are already being used for planning and response.



# Thematic Track 3

**Adaptation was identified as a top priority for the region, with a critical need to scale up finance for adaptation to match mitigation funding.** Discussions encouraged more focus on local priorities and high-quality proposals. A better understanding of project adaptation components is needed by investors, and diversified finance instruments can de-risk projects.

**Innovation, including in management and entrepreneurship, were identified as crucial and can engage youth.** Looking at the whole supply chain was discussed to find opportunities for further efficiencies rather than additional investments.

**The need for strategies to enhance human and institutional capacities,** building from existing ones and taking into account local realities and needs, was seen as crucial to implement relevant actions. Initiatives like Tadamon Programme and Takaful Insurance, which build on local practices, were showcased. For collaborative projects, coordination across sectors essential.



Photo: IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth

# Thematic Track 4

**Track 4 focused on economies, societies, livelihoods and health. A comprehensive overview of achievements in the MENA region highlighted substantial progress.**

**Achievements underscored the significance of contextual solutions and showcased projects aligned with the core principles of the circular carbon economy.** Discussions acknowledged progress made by countries as regards integrating climate change into education, socially inclusive NDCs conducting climate health assessments and implementing inclusive health policies and systems.

**Throughout the sessions, prevalent challenges in the MENA region were identified.**



# Thematic Track 4

Issues such as lost productivity due to extreme heat and accessing adequate funds for climate investment create barriers for the deployment of innovative climate solutions and whole of society approaches.

More could be done to expand discussions on climate related mobility, strengthen participation in policy-making processes, improve regulatory frameworks and standardize policies.

Amidst these challenges, promising solutions and forward-thinking strategies were proposed. The need for intensified research emerged as a priority, especially in the realm of homegrown science, enabling accurate predictions of local impacts like saltwater intrusion and coral bleaching events.

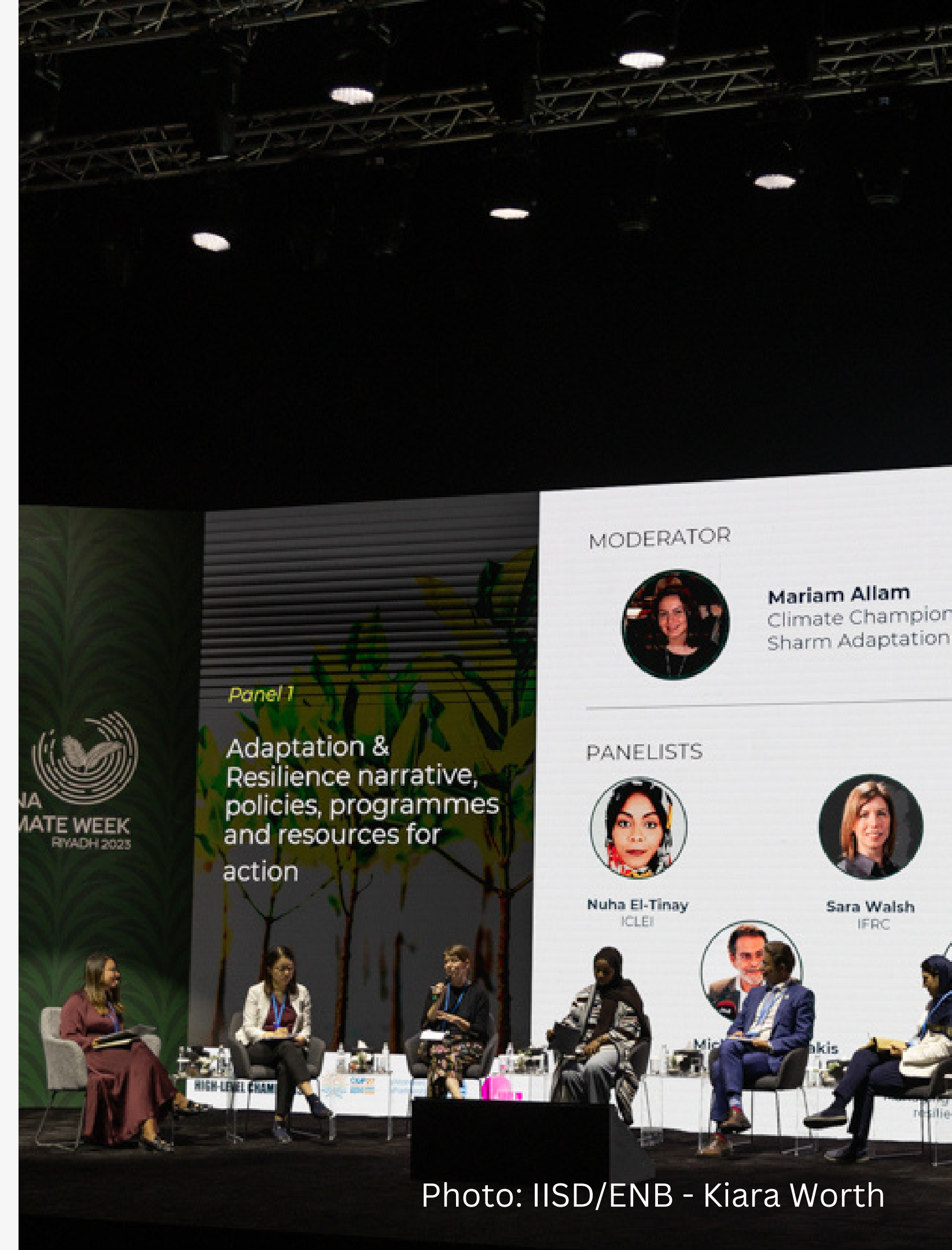


Photo: IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth

# Thematic Track 4

**Technology research was highlighted, particularly in promoting the transition from a linear to a circular economy.** Emphasizing the importance of enhancing incentives and attractiveness for investments, particularly in research and development in technologies such as CCUS and DAC, was underscored.

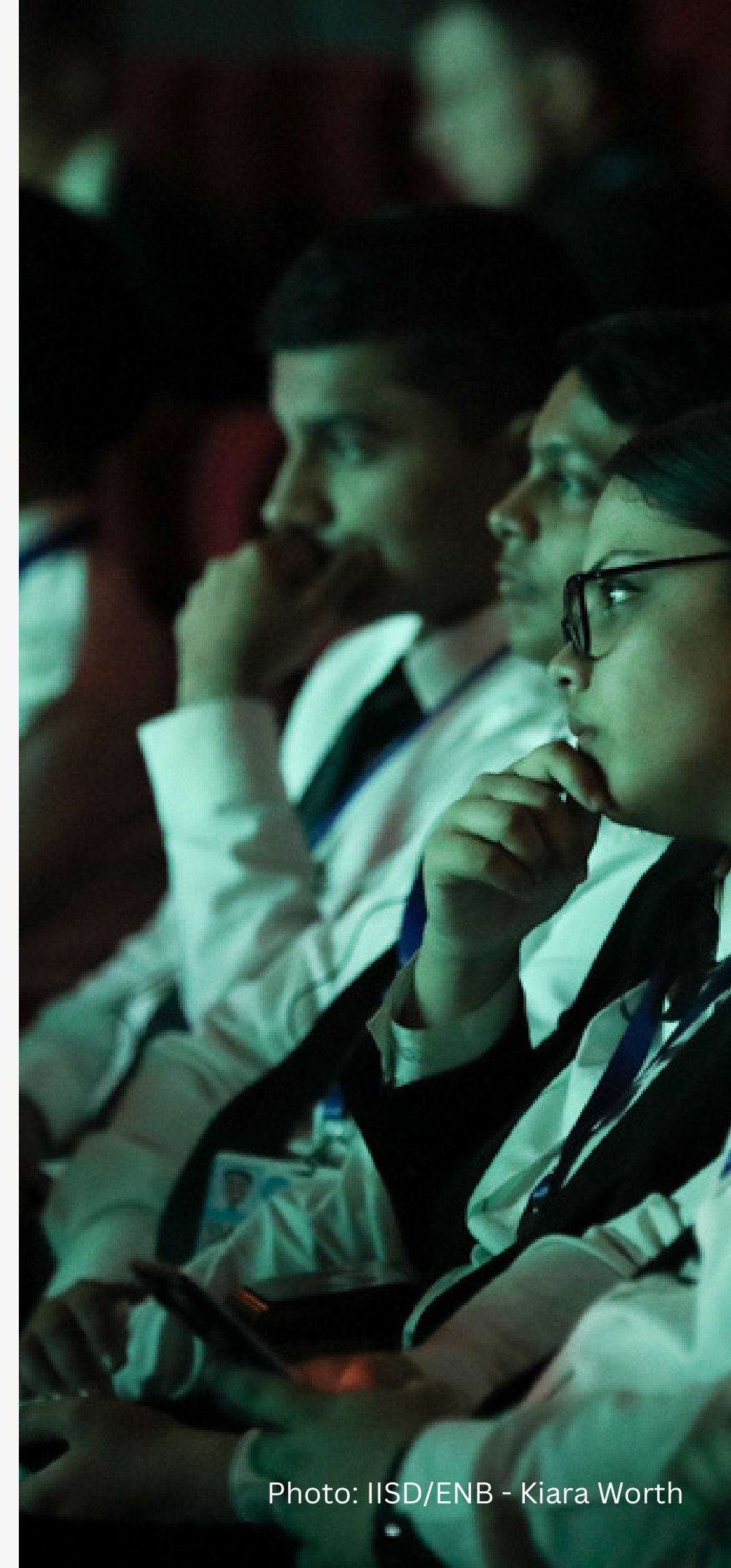
**The Track emphasized the need for solutions tailored to the MENA region context.** Culturally informed sustainable and equitable development can enhance livelihoods in the face of extreme heat Education, cultural awareness, teacher training, and fostering adaptability were identified as crucial components in addressing climate change effectively. The promotion of nature-based solutions was emphasized as a direct approach to advancing the circular carbon economy.



# Thematic Track 4

**There was a strong call to broaden the spectrum of solutions in NDCs, including carbon abatement capacity targets, biofuels, waste-to-energy with hybrid bamboo as a promising resource of circular economy.** Active civil society engagement in developing and implementing NDCs requires understanding of complex social structures and hierarchies across the MENA region. The need for effective community engagement was emphasized, through tailored approaches, institutionalized platforms, and inclusive opportunities for engagement between community stakeholders, governments, and non-party stakeholders.

**Finally, Track 4 stressed the importance of early action and anticipatory approaches to heat waves.** Implementing heat health action planning deepening the research efforts on heat stress to keep the legislation relevant and up-to-date, and proactive measures in food systems were identified as critical strategies.



# **MENACW 2023 Recognition**

**MENA Climate Week 2023 successfully brought together leaders and stakeholders for solution-oriented discussion. UN Climate Change would like to recognize the leadership of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, collaboration by global and regional partners and the participation of dignitaries, delegates and stakeholders.**

**The success of MENACW 2023 is your success to share.**



# MENACW 2023 Resources

MENA Climate Week 2023 featured more than 240 sessions, four Thematic Track discussions and virtual participation. More information on MENACW 2023 can be found at these links:

- [MENACW 2023 Webpage on the UNFCCC.int site](#)
- [MENACW 2023 Session Details](#)
- [MENACW 2023 on YouTube](#)
- [MENACW 2023 on Flickr](#)

Thank you to [IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin](#) for publishing photos and conference info.





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**Thank You**