

Outcomes Article

Empowering Universities for Climate Action: Challenges and Opportunities for Decarbonization

The Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection and the PCCB Network

Background

On July 9th, 2024, the [Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training](#), the academic arm of the [Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection](#) hosted a webinar under the PCCB Network entitled "Empowering Universities for Climate Action: Challenges and Opportunities for Decarbonization". This event aimed to highlight key strategies and innovations enabling universities to lead in climate action and decarbonization.

In the opening remarks, H.R.H. Princess Dr. h. c. Abze Djigma, Co-Chair of the UNFCCC PCCB, highlighted the critical role of capacity building in addressing climate change. Mr. Ayman Cherkaoui, Director of the Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training, stated that the Foundation is dedicated to education for sustainable development, engaging in lifelong learning initiatives from preschool to adulthood, involving various stakeholders in Morocco, Africa, and globally.

The session covered best practices and experience around the fourfold objectives: to showcase the impact of universities for climate action, introduce the Moroccan Carbon Footprint Tool, facilitate knowledge exchange and inspire action and collaboration. It demonstrated various initiatives, including the African Green Universities and Youth Education Network (AGUYEN) and the Moroccan Carbon Footprint Tool.



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Highlights from the Initiatives and Institutions

The webinar showcased several initiatives that help enhance the role of educational institutions in climate action:

- [**The Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection's decarbonization program**](#)

The decarbonization program is aligned with the goals of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, equipping stakeholders with educational and practical tools for measuring and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. This program has trained over 200 participants and involved 65 companies and trained 16 trainers with the participation of 18 African universities. Five regional awareness-raising meetings were organized. The collaboration with strategic partners such as the Moroccan Institute for Normalization (IMANOR), the Moroccan Agency for Energy Efficiency (AMEE), and the Association for Low Carbon Transition (ABC) ensures the impact of this program..

- [**African Green Universities and Youth Education Network \(AGUYEN\)**](#)

AGUYEN, with 33 member universities from 11 African countries, is dedicated to promoting sustainable development by providing the necessary knowledge and tools to universities. This network empowers higher education establishments and students to tackle climate change effectively, supporting ongoing local capacity building for sustainable climate solutions. Since its creation in 2021, the AGUYEN program has organized over 8 hybrid capacity-building, training, and awareness-raising workshops for around 300 participants from 29 universities and hosted five webinars for over 200 stakeholders.

- [**African Youth Climate Hub \(AYCH\)**](#)

The AYCH is a continental initiative represented in 53 African countries, produced by, for, and around Africa. It aims to be a positive space for exchange and concrete support for young Africans both in terms of skills and knowledge and in terms of entrepreneurship and job opportunities.

- [**ICCCAD's Least Developed Countries Universities Consortium on Climate Change \(LUCCC\)**](#)

The LUCCC emphasizes the practical application of research and local engagement to address specific climate challenges and tailoring solutions that are not only sustainable but also culturally and contextually relevant.

- [**Moroccan Carbon Footprint Tool**](#)

This tool was emphasized as an important resource for universities to accurately measure and manage their greenhouse gas emissions, aligning with global climate goals, through context specific data that is aligned with international standards.



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- [School of Mines of Rabat's Holistic Educational Approach](#)

During the webinar, the School of Mines of Rabat detailed its comprehensive strategy encompassing governance, training, research, and networking to embed sustainability across its operations. The institution has implemented sustainable technologies on campus and has integrated a robust sustainability curriculum that covers energy efficiency, renewable energies, and carbon footprint assessments. Their global networking fosters knowledge exchange and enhances educational impacts across continents.

- [Jean Lorougnon Guédé University's Focus on Biodiversity and Carbon Sequestration](#)

From Côte d'Ivoire, the Jean Lorougnon Guédé University shared its proactive projects in agroforestry and forest restoration within high cocoa production zones and degraded forest areas. The university's initiative to develop a 60-hectare arboretum on campus aims at conserving biodiversity and enhancing carbon sequestration, showcasing a model for ecological conservation through academic leadership.

Synthesis and Best Practices

- **Localized Solutions:** Participants underscored the importance of understanding and integrating local contexts into climate action strategies. This ensures that solutions are not only effective but also sustainable over the long term.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** The success of universities in driving climate action is amplified through their collaborative approaches, engaging various stakeholders including government bodies, private sectors, and international networks.
- **Educational Pivots:** By revising curricula to include climate change and sustainability topics, universities equip the next generation with the knowledge and skills necessary to address and mitigate environmental challenges.
- **Research and Practical Application:** Bridging the gap between theoretical research and practical application, these institutions foster innovations that directly contribute to sustainable development goals.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Stephen Davison, Higher Education Lead for the [Climate Champions Team](#) Co-convenor for the Network of Networks and Director of Strategy for [Cambridge Zero](#) at the University of Cambridge, discussed universities' potential to align academic efforts with institutional missions while navigating legal and administrative constraints. He also underscored the value of knowledge mobilization through research, education, external engagement, and operational improvements,



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urging universities to empower academics to engage with systems like the UNFCCC. Moreover, universities play a crucial role in convening diverse stakeholders to advance the climate agenda, creating neutral platforms for evidence-based discussions and fostering global collaboration to enhance information exchange.

Conclusion

Universities around the world are proving to be crucial in the fight against climate change, acting as incubators for innovation and change. The case studies presented by ICCCAD, the School of Mines of Rabat, Jean Lorougnon Guédé University, and University of Cambridge, underscore how academic institutions can lead by example, implementing sustainable practices that serve both their communities and the global environment. The ongoing challenge remains to expand these practices more widely, ensuring that higher education continues to play a significant role in global climate strategies.

Call to Action

Participants and institutions worldwide are encouraged to adopt and adapt these best practices to enhance their own contributions to climate action, fostering a more sustainable and resilient future. This article not only encapsulates the shared strategies and successes but also inspires other institutions to reflect on their potential roles within the larger framework of global climate action.

For more information on this event, please visit the [webpage](#).



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