

Report on

The Dialogue Institute's participation at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP28

Dubai, 1-5 December 2023



Swedish Dialogue Institute
for the Middle East and North Africa

Executive summary

In early December 2023, the deputy director of the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa took part in the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP28, that took place in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

The purpose of the Institute's participation was to meet with partners, participate in discussions and foster regional and cross-regional collaboration between civil society organizations, private enterprises, and climate actors from the EU and MENA regions, with a particular focus on engaging youth climate actors. During the conference, the Institute conducted several bilateral meetings and group discussions that aimed to facilitate constructive dialogues, share insights, and explore collaborative initiatives to address the global environmental crisis and the challenges posed by climate change.

Key takeaways from the meetings emphasized the urgency of addressing climate change, aligning policies with climate goals, and the importance of collaboration.

Civil society organizations highlighted grassroots efforts, focusing on vulnerable communities and equitable solutions and actors from the private sector shared their thoughts on sustainability initiatives and corporate responsibility. Cross-regional collaboration and broadened dialogue were stressed during the meetings, with discussions exploring potential collaborations between different sectors.

Recommendations included partnerships with academia, advocacy for stronger climate policies, business support for climate resilience, and community-driven solutions. The Dialogue Institute plans to build on these insights in 2024, focusing on EU-MENA connections and exploring cross-sectoral collaborations for a more sustainable and resilient world.

Detailed report

In early December 2023, the deputy director of the Dialogue Institute took part in the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP28, that took place in Dubai. The climate conference gathered people from all over the world to work together on solutions to tackle climate change. The purpose of the Institute's participation was to meet with partners, participate in discussions and foster collaboration between climate actors, civil society organizations, and private enterprises.

During the conference, the Institute conducted several bilateral meetings and group discussions that aimed to facilitate constructive dialogues, share insights, and explore collaborative initiatives to address the global environmental crisis and the challenges posed by climate change. The meetings brought together climate actors from countries across the Middle East and North Africa region as well as Europe.

Key take aways

Throughout the meetings, all interlocutors emphasized the urgency of addressing climate change and the crucial role of collaboration between civil society and different climate actors. Actors from the MENA-region particularly underscored the devastating impacts the region already is facing due to climate change. The need for innovative solutions and community engagement to achieve meaningful progress was highlighted. The interlocutors put emphasis on the need for collaborative initiatives between communities in the MENA-region, as well as between the region and Europe. The importance of aligning national and international policies with climate goals and urging governments to prioritize sustainable practices was underscored.



Meeting with civil society actors from Sweden and the Middle East

Key take aways from meetings with civil society organizations

Representatives from civil society organizations in the MENA region highlighted their ongoing efforts in raising awareness, promoting sustainable practices, and advocating for policy changes. They emphasized the crucial role of grassroots movements in driving change and creating a bottom-up approach to addressing climate challenges. The disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable communities was discussed, and the importance of equitable solutions was underscored. Several civil society representatives from both Europe and the MENA-region showcased their grassroots initiatives and highlighted the role of local communities in implementing sustainable practices and adapting to climate change.

Key take aways from meetings with private sector actors

Several private sector actors shared information about their sustainability initiatives, outlining existing commitments and efforts to reduce their carbon footprint as well as initiatives to help other enterprises to work in a more sustainable way. Discussions further revolved around the importance of corporate responsibility, innovation, and the integration of sustainable practices into business models. Calls were also made for increased corporate accountability, transparency, and the adoption of eco-friendly practices.

Possibilities for future collaboration

During a meeting where the Dialogue Institute brought together civil society actors from Europe and the Middle East, the significance of cross-regional collaboration and dialogue was emphasized. The actors shared their different regional challenges and exchanged best practices and recommendations. They underscored that understanding each other's regional contexts and recognizing shared goals creates a foundation for future collaborations and transcends geographical and cultural boundaries.

The meetings further explored potential areas for collaboration between civil society and private sector. Ideas included joint projects, knowledge sharing, and the development of innovative solutions that align with environmental and social goals. The interlocutors recognized the need for partnerships to amplify impact and drive systemic change and the discussions emphasized that collaboration between civil society and private enterprises could influence policymakers to implement and support climate-friendly policies.

Recommendations for effective and sustainable climate work

Furthermore, the discussions centred on the need for empowering communities through education, capacity-building, inclusive decision-making processes, and recommendations for effective and long-term sustainable climate work.

Recommendations further included:

- Encouraging ongoing collaboration between civil society organizations and different actors working on climate change through regular meetings, forums, and joint initiatives.
- Foster partnerships between academia, research institutions, and private sector entities to enhance the impact of climate initiatives. Promote education and awareness programs to build a more informed and environmentally conscious society.
- Advocate for stronger climate policies at local, national, and international levels, with a focus on inclusivity and social justice.
- Encourage businesses to adopt sustainable practices and support initiatives that contribute to climate resilience.
- Engage with policymakers to ensure the incorporation of sustainable practices in legislation and regulations and push for a broader cooperation between governmental institutions and civil society.
- Prioritize community-driven solutions and empower local populations to become active participants in climate resilience efforts.

Conclusion

The meetings and encounters at COP28 resulted in meaningful discussions and connections for possible future collaboration. The shared commitment to a greener future underscored the potential of impactful partnerships between different sectors in the global fight against climate change. The meetings emphasised that ongoing communication and sustained efforts will be essential to turning discussions and dialogues into tangible actions for a sustainable and resilient world.

In 2024, the Dialogue Institute will aim to build on the work conducted during the last years as well as on the insights and recommendations that came up during the meetings that took place at COP and make use of the valuable contacts that were made. The Institute will put particular focus on EU-MENA connections and explore possible cross-sectoral collaborations, building on previous work on inclusivity – not least regarding women and youth – and explore possibilities to work also with the private sector.