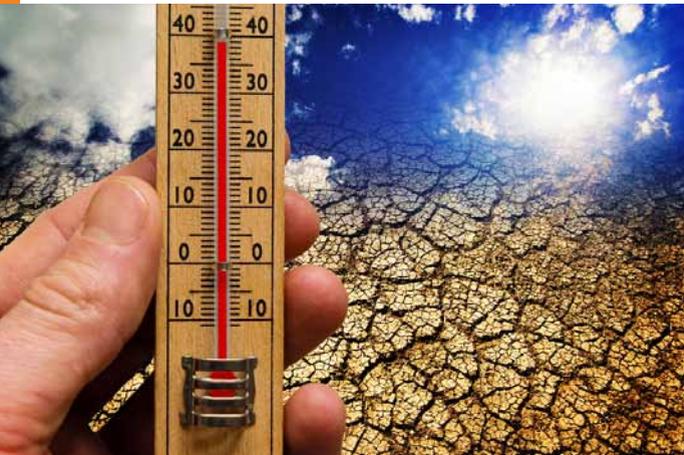


Climate Change Warriors

BGREEN SHINES LIGHT ON THE CARBOUN INITIATIVE



BGreen: Although recently launched, Carboun seems to have a strong and unified vision for the future. What do you think catalysed the formation of the initiative?

Karim Elgendy: The initial catalyst behind Carboun was a fundamental belief in the global need to transition to a more sustainable development model for our cities and a desire to reverse the adverse impacts that the Middle East's prevalent development models have had on its economic development. Carboun was also born out of a personal concern regarding the scarcity of information about the region, especially where it relates to the built environment. This concern helped shape Carboun's mission to include creating a body of regional knowledge that others can build on.

Wissam Yassine: I think this is related to Carboun's pace of development. The founders of the initiative were very careful not to expand its activities too fast to ensure that the initiative's vision and objectives were maintained. They initially launched the initiative at a small scale without much of a fanfare and focused on developing quality content that would raise awareness and attract likeminded people to the initiative. This worked out very well that when the initiative decided to expand it was very successful in attracting talented individuals who believed in and shared Carboun's objective of promoting sustainability and environmental conservation in the Middle East.

BGreen: How do you see Carboun developing in the coming months? Are there any particular milestones you wish to cross?

KE: In addition to the exciting projects we are currently working on, we also have plans for growth for the coming few months. We have recently debuted our Carboun Ambassador and Carboun Student Ambassador programs in Lebanon and Jordan, where they received an overwhelmingly positive response. Our plan is to roll these programs into other countries and to initiative advocacy work into a number of countries, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

WY: Having the UNFCCC's Conference of Parties (at which major climate change negotiations take place) in Doha is an unmatched opportunity to raise awareness of climate change issues in the Middle East. For that reason we have decided to focus our attention and efforts on this objective through the Road to Doha project. We are also working on several other projects in parallel such as the Lebanon 24/7 Electricity project and the Storytelling Sustainability project in Jordan. We hope we will share updates on these exciting projects soon.

BGreen: How did the "Road to Doha" project come about and how is it being coordinated across countries?

KE: The credit for the initial idea goes to our National Coordinator in the UAE, Wissam Yassine. His initial proposal was unanimously welcomed by the entire team, who saw the presence of such a global event in the region for the first time a great opportunity to raise awareness of climate change in the region. We believe issues relating to climate change and its impacts are not sufficiently covered in the region and thus took it upon ourselves to bring the global debate to the region and to advocate for a sustainable future for its people.

WY: Well, we were having one of our regular conference calls earlier this year, and were discussing the fact that the COP

18 would be held in Doha and it seemed obvious that this is a great opportunity to promote sustainability and climate change awareness in the region. Thus we decided to launch a year-long project which would run up to the conference in late November, and to culminate our project with live conference coverage. The project will include country analyses of 10 representative MENA countries, looking at the source of their greenhouse gas emissions, how they are impacted by climate change, steps they have been taking to mitigate or adapt to climate change and future steps to be taken. Our national coordinators around the MENA region carry out these country analyses.

BGreen: Wissam, how are you finding your role as the UAE National Coordinator so far? Any exciting new plans in the pipeline?

WY: Volunteering with Carboun has been a very rewarding and challenging endeavour. Being the UAE National coordinator is a really special role because of the vision and the leadership the UAE has demonstrated in adopting sustainable development practices and strategies. The country is home to many of the most significant sustainability initiatives in the MENA region. Masdar city, housing the IRENA headquarters, the Estidama program in Abu Dhabi and the green building code in Dubai, the construction of Noor 1 and Shams 1 solar power stations, and launching the nuclear energy program, are but a few examples. Keeping up with all of these development requires great effort, but I think we are doing a good job.

As for our upcoming plans, we are currently preparing for a series of film screenings and discussion sessions, focusing on global warming and its impacts on the MENA region. The sessions will be part of the Road to Doha project. We are currently finalising the details and hope to hold the first session in early May. 🌱

To read this month's installment of Road to Doha: Towards Sustainable Transportation, please turn to page 38.