

WORLD

Saudis stepping up on green commitments

Oil-rich nation unveils more initiatives to drive Middle East progress on climate

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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Saudi Arabia is demonstrating its green commitments with the announcement of a number of climate-related initiatives, including an emissions reduction center and the staging next year of a regional summit focused on tackling the issue.

The announcement was made by Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud over the weekend during a panel discussion at the Saudi Green Initiative Forum, or SGI, titled "The need for climate action". The event was held on the sidelines of the COP27 climate summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

In addition to establishing the emissions reduction center, the kingdom is also launching what officials are calling a circular carbon economy knowledge hub. The regional summit will take place during the 2023 Middle East and North Africa Climate Week.

"We are going to be launching a circular carbon economy knowledge hub with the hope that our friends and peers can join us in sharing experiences and make sure that we understand technologies, and we'll share lessons learned. I think it's very fundamental. We will kick-start it by 1st of January, 2023," the Saudi minister told the panel.

The knowledge hub will facilitate regional collaboration in technologies and enable the sharing of information and best practices to support the regionwide implementation of nationally determined contributions. In this way, it will help countries achieve targets set under the Middle East Green Initiative, or MGI. Saudi Crown Prince and Prime

Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud on Nov 7 announced the deployment of one of the largest carbon capture, usage and storage hubs in the world, as well as the allocation of \$2.5 billion to support MGI projects, and the planting of 50 billion trees.

"We've been talking with the UNFCCC Secretariat and we will be hosting in 2023 the MENA climate week so we will welcome all of our friends to join us then," said Prince Abdulaziz, referring to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Saudi minister was joined at the event by United Arab Emirates Minister of Climate Change and Environment Mariam bint Mohammed Almhiri, Egyptian Foreign Minister and COP27 President Sameh Shoukry, and Alok Sharma, president of the COP26, held in the United Kingdom last year.

At the panel event, Almhiri congratulated Saudi Arabia on its "remarkable" targets, and said the UAE has \$8 billion in commitments from its partners to transform food systems.

'More can be done'

"This is all about us making sure we're aligning, accelerating, putting a turbo on NDCs (the) countries committed to. More can be done and it needs leadership. We're seeing Saudi leading that," said Almhiri, adding that with the 2022 climate summit in Egypt and the UAE hosting the event next year, it is "our opportunity now to really spearhead" action against climate change.

"There is hope, there is light at the end of the tunnel and I think we are moving in the right direction ... But I

really think we should take this as an opportunity, to catalyze our efforts to put these technologies into place because people will look back. This is like the inflection points that are happening now," the minister said.

Sharma said that even if this year has been "incredibly challenging" geopolitically, many countries have continued to deliver. But he said that "we just need to go a lot further and a lot faster".

"We've got 33 countries that have come forward with their revised 2030 emission reduction targets. If you add up all the commitments (that) came in, you're looking at" a reduction in emissions of 12 percent globally by 2030, said Sharma.

"Now, that's not half. What we need is half of the emissions to be cut by 2030," he said, adding that what is important is implementing the action plans.

Shoukry said the MGI and SGI forums are "a demonstration of commitment" by countries in the region "to be active participants in climate action".

"If we can combine our resources, our abilities and our collective will to address these issues", progress can be made "in the areas of (climate) mitigation and adaptation", said Shoukry.

The UNFCCC Secretariat is tasked with supporting the global response to the threat of climate change. The convention has near universal membership of 198 parties and is the parent treaty of the 2015 Paris Agreement. The aim of the Paris Agreement is to keep the global average temperature rise this century as close as possible to 1.5 C, according to its website.

Prince Abdulaziz said Saudi Arabia has been working with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on establishing a regional center to advance emissions reductions.

The world on their screens



Residents of Kherson gather around facilities enabling them to get back on the internet on Sunday. Much of the city's infrastructure has been destroyed by shelling, affecting services for water, electricity, communications and television, media reports say. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

West's thirst for African gas raises alarm

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt — Wealthy Western nations facing an energy crunch are eyeing natural gas in Africa at the expense of supporting a green transition in poorer countries, climate activists at COP27 charge.

European countries have been scrambling for alternative sources of gas after the continent's former top supplier, Russia, slashed exports in retaliation for Western sanctions over the conflict in Ukraine in February.

Gas-rich Norway has since overtaken Russia as a leading supplier, but Europe sees great potential in African fossil fuel reserves, including promising oil and gas discoveries in Senegal and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Europe wants "to turn Africa into its gas station", Mohamed Adow, director of the Power Shift Africa think tank, said at the UN climate summit in Egypt.

"We don't have to follow the footsteps of the rich world that actually caused climate change in the first place," Adow said.

Exporting natural gas may bring short-term profits but exacerbate the climate crisis and leave African nations worse off in the long run, activists, researchers and advocacy groups said.

'Serious threat'

Research group Climate Action Tracker called the global dash for gas a "serious threat" to the Paris Agreement goals of keeping global warming well below 2 C, and preferably at 1.5 C, compared with pre-industrial levels.

Some African leaders argued that the potential benefits for people on the world's poorest continent outweighed the harm from the production and export of fossil fuels.

"We are in favor of a just and fair green transition, instead of decisions that harm our development process," Senegalese President Macky Sall told some 100 world leaders last week at COP27.

Germany, the European country most dependent on Russian supplies before the conflict, has been keen to tap Senegal's gas deposits.

Omar Farouk Ibrahim, secretary-general of the African Petroleum Producers' Organization, said the slight increase in the continent's marginal contribution to greenhouse gas emissions "would make a fundamental difference in whether people live or die".

"History shows us that ... extraction in African countries has not resulted in development," said Thuli Makama, African program director at Oil Change International.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

World's cutting-edge technologies put on show at fair in Shenzhen

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Covering a record exhibition areas of more than 300,000 square meters in Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong province, this year's China Hi-Tech Fair will display the world's cutting-edge technologies and promote exchanges to explore emerging areas and potential fields.

Running through Tuesday to Saturday, CHTF has attracted more than 5,000 exhibitors from nearly 40 countries and regions, of which about one-fourth were Fortune Global 500 companies, listed companies, industrial leaders and high-growth enterprises that have been key players in segmented sectors, according to the organizer.

The company exhibitors are arranged in two exhibition centers of Shenzhen — one is in the city center of Futian district with about 100,000 sq m and the other is located near the airport in Bao'an district, which started operation in September 2019.

This is the fair's 24th session, which has been jointly sponsored by seven ministries, two top academies of China and the city government of Shenzhen since 1999. It has been widely regarded as a window to showcase the opening-up of China's high-tech industry and a significant platform for the commercialization of high-tech achievements that venture capital and investment institutes are actively participating in.

The sponsors — in the fields of commerce, science and technology, industry and information, reform, agriculture and intellectual properties — have organized the most diversified new technologies and products to the fair.

They fall in a wide range of categories, including biomedicine, modern agriculture, aerospace, telecommunications, blockchain, big data and artificial intelligence.

300,000+
square meters

Exhibition area of the 24th China Hi-Tech Fair

5,000+

Number of exhibitors that are attending the fair

To enrich the ecosystem for innovation, the sponsors of the fair invited a couple of research institutions, dozens of leading universities including Tsinghua and Peking universities, venture capital institutes and financial consultancy companies to attend CHTF.

The fair has nurtured many startups to grow to industrial leaders, such as Tencent, BYD and Han's Laser, over the past two decades.

Several forums will be staged during the fair to inspire new ideas, which will be attended by government officials, international organizations' leaders, top scientists, renowned entrepreneurs and investors.

X-Lake Forum, the main forum of the fair, will be held on Tuesday, centering on the themes of openness, integration and the future. Thirteen parallel forums will explore topics including science and technology, education, industries, finance, talents and the synergic development of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao.

Themes such as metaverse, emerging technologies that might change the world, innovation and life science will be discussed in other forums of the fair, according to the organizer.

The Water Conservation and Innovation Exhibition, a show to exhibit the latest water-saving technologies and achievements, will be held for the first time as a

part of CHTF, together with a high-tech talents attraction show and an expo for emergency safety. All of the three professional fairs will enrich the content of CHTF, the organizer said.

The water-saving show has captured the trend of going green and low-carbon and focuses on environmental protection, new energy, green materials and energy-saving applications. It will support Shenzhen to be a model city in saving water.

To aid the experience for exhibitors and visitors who are not able to attend the fair, the organizer also upgraded its online system to be equipped with 5G-plus ultra-high definition videos as well as virtual reality technology.

All of the displays, the projects looking for partners and investors and cloud forums can be viewed through livestream broadcasting. The reviews and the system can also allow real-time interaction and business talks.

The function has been happily welcomed by a couple of international delegations, such as the education and science ministry of Russia and the Bavarian government of Germany, to organize local companies and institutions to exhibit online. Some of them have attended the fair for more than 20 years.

Some delegations have adopted a combined model that brings some of the companies to the site while some attend the online show. For example, the Swissnex in China — a Switzerland-based education and research organization — has organized a dozen of growth enterprises including SynSense to attend the fair either online or on site.

CzechTrade has invited Skoda, a car brand of Volkswagen based in the Czech Republic, and several industrial leaders in the country in high-end manufacturing, energy and environmental protection areas to attend the fair.



CHINA HI-TECH FAIR 2022

Sci-Tech Reform Drives Innovation

Sci-Tech Innovation Empowers Development



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NOVEMBER 15-19, 2022



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