

“The Road to Climate Neutrality” Regional Webinar Successfully Concluded

A rapidly growing number of businesses, organizations and governments across the world are on the journey towards climate neutrality and net zero targets. But what does it mean to go climate neutral or net zero? What are the benefits, and what are the challenges?

At the “The Road to Climate Neutrality: Experiences, Challenges, and Support” - a Regional Webinar for Asia, the Pacific, Middle East and North Africa - prominent speakers from companies, organizations and governments provided their perspectives on the road towards climate neutrality. Organized on 19th May as a joint collaboration between [UNFCCC-IGES RCC Bangkok](#), [UNFCCC-WGEO RCC Dubai](#), [the UNFCCC Secretariat](#), [the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific \(ESCAP\)](#) and [the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia \(ESCWA\)](#), the virtual event brought together more than 125 registered participants from across the region.

- Watch the full recording from the event here: [The Road to Climate Neutrality: Regional Webinar for Asia, the Pacific, Middle East and North Africa - YouTube](#)

The webinar began with a high-level opening session with participation from **His Excellency Ken O’Flaherty**, COP26 Regional Ambassador for Asia-Pacific and South Asia; **Ms. Roula Majdalani**, Director of the Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA and **Dr. Stefanos Fotiou**, Director of the Environment and Development Division, ESCAP.



The opening speakers provided perspectives from the region on the road to the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow in November, the critical role of the private sector, the UN and the enabling environment needed to promote business action on climate change.

“Businesses should set net-zero commitments by 2050 or earlier, with short term action plans including science-based targets to reach those commitments”.

- Ken O’Flaherty, COP26 Regional Ambassador for Asia-Pacific and South Asia



Following the opening session, Miguel Naranjo from the UNFCCC secretariat, presented the revamped Climate Neutral Now initiative with new criteria, tools and opportunities for organizations to get engaged in climate action.

He also invited participants to join the [upcoming webinar series on how to get started on the road to net zero](#),

providing practical actions and examples on measuring, reducing and reporting on GHG emissions.

A company panel discussion was then convened with leading corporations sharing their experiences, challenges and opportunities in moving towards climate neutrality. As critically highlighted by the panelists, many emission reduction efforts require substantial resources and upfront investments to be implemented. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, such investments have sometimes been delayed due to the challenges and uncertainties in supply chains and the investment environment. However, there is indeed enhanced awareness and understanding about climate change across the region, but as highlighted by one of the speakers on the panel, Dr. Soud Khalifa Al-Thani from the Qatar Foundation - understanding does not always guarantee action, and action must remain a priority.

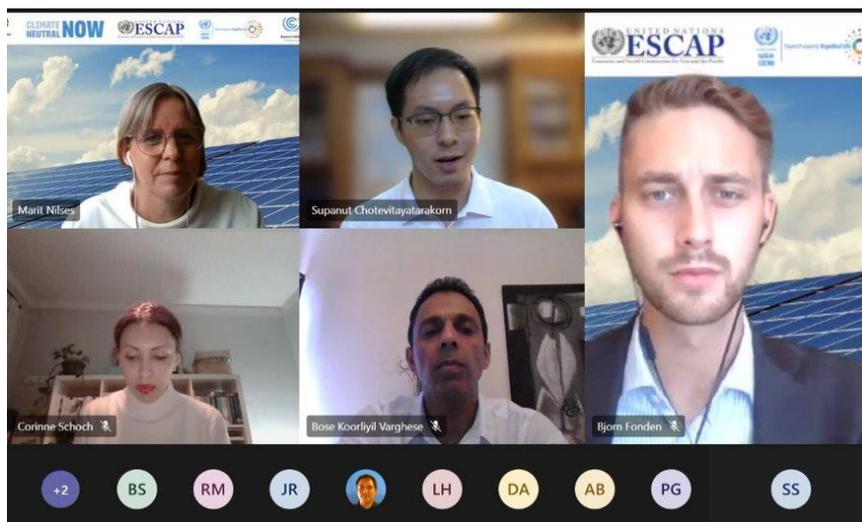
The company panel discussion was moderated by Rachel Panaino, World Green Economy Organization and included the following panelists: Andrew Buay, Vice President, Group Sustainability, Singtel; Lauren Blasco, Director of Sustainability, Potato Head; Soud Khalifa Al-Thani, Sustainability Director, Qatar Foundation; Gabriel Petrus, Deputy Director, Global Partnerships & Development, International Chamber of Commerce.



Following the company panel discussion, a policy roundtable was organized, in which panelists discussed the enabling environment needed for the private sector to contribute to achieving our common climate targets.

During the roundtable, Bose Varghese, Head of Green Initiatives at Infosys, highlighted that the transition to climate neutrality requires a major scaling up of private sector investments, which in turn requires enabling policy frameworks that set a clear direction and intention. Such frameworks can give the investor community the courage and confidence to enhance green investments, while also spurring innovation and collaboration. Corinne Schoch from Global Compact Network Australia built upon this point, stating the importance of long-term, robust policy frameworks and policy coherence:

“When you don’t have a clear, long-term national direction, you end up viewing climate change through a risk-lens. It is very hard to see any strategic opportunities, because the policies are not there to support the long-term investments you need to leverage those opportunities.”



The policy roundtable was moderated by Marit Nilses, Economic Affairs Officer, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP and included the following panelists: Bose Varghese, Head, Green Initiatives, Infosys; Supanut Chotevitayatarakorn, Legal Officer (Specialist), Thailand Greenhouse Gas Management Organization, TGO; Corinne Schoch, Head of Programmes Global Compact Network Australia.

The COP26 Regional Ambassador Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Ambassador Janet Rogan closed the event by sharing concluding remarks. She reiterated that the global low-carbon transition is accelerating, with businesses playing a central role in this transition. She also called on companies and organizations alike to commit to net-zero emissions by mid-century, and to [join the Climate Neutral Now initiative](#), [the Race to Zero](#) and the [Race to Resilience](#).



The event was organized by the UNFCCC-IGES RCC Bangkok, UNFCCC-WGEO RCC Dubai, the UNFCCC Secretariat, UN ESCAP and UN ESCWA, and moderated by Mr. Björn Fondén, Climate Change Support Officer at RCC Bangkok. To learn more about the Climate Neutral Now initiative, do not hesitate to reach out to Miguel Naranjo from the UNFCCC secretariat: mnaranjogonzalez@unfccc.int.

If you have questions about the event or want to get in contact with any of the speakers, you can reach out to RCC Bangkok on RCCBangkok@unfccc.int or RCC Dubai on RCCDubai@unfccc.int