

Green Growth – the UAE Approach

Your Excellencies, distinguished participants:

I am honored to speak with you today on the theme of the Green Economy, especially at this inaugural meeting of the Pacific Island Development Forum. Green growth has emerged as one of the most significant policy agenda items in the UAE, reflected both in our domestic planning and in our international engagements. The rationale for this is very simple: we believe green growth is the only viable way forward for both developing and developed countries. National and international efforts must aim to delink economic and social betterment from environmental damage.

It is in this context that, in March this year, the UAE announced the establishment of a US\$50 million grant fund for renewable energy generation projects in Pacific island countries. Following advice from Pacific governments and the International Renewable Energy Agency, we saw that our region shares a surprising commonality with the Pacific: energy is one of the most significant economic drivers, representing a large share of GDP. Renewable energy is therefore an essential part of our green growth equations, allowing us to provide cost-competitive, low-carbon energy access to our populations. Since March, we have been actively working with Pacific governments to identify their top priorities for funding, and we look forward to announcing the first projects in January 2014 during Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, the world's largest annual clean energy and water event, which also includes the IRENA General Assembly.

It is our hope that the UAE-Pacific Partnership Fund can help to prove the viability of green growth as a choice for developing countries.

Domestically in the UAE, this is also our mission.

Our nation's commitment for green growth builds on the legacy of our founding father, His Highness the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who instilled principles of sustainable development in the vision for the country.

In January last year, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, announced the development of a National Green Growth Strategy for the UAE. It will formulate an Action Plan to meet our economic, social and environmental goals in a sustainable manner. The National Strategy will be issued by the end of this year, with technical support from the Global Green Growth Institute.

It builds on and aligns with existing and emerging initiatives to create a comprehensive economic model. It is also notably informed by six key approaches:

1. **Supply low-carbon energy.** We have set renewable energy targets that will deliver 7000 MW of solar, wind, and waste-to-energy, as well as implemented a peaceful, transparently managed nuclear energy programme.
2. **Ensure resource efficiency and set performance standards.** There is often a fear in

developing countries that performance standards hurt growth. We are rapidly that the opposite is true. There are countless areas where long-term savings on resource consumption already justify higher upfront investments, even in an energy-rich country like the UAE. We are especially proud of Estidama, the first mandatory green building code in the Middle East. It was developed specifically for the climate of the region, and it cuts water and energy consumption by roughly 33% -- a huge savings rate. We are finding similar, major gains in appliance regulation, such as air-conditioners, and in agriculture, where we are removing water-inefficient crops.

3. **Invest in clean transport.** We recognize that we must tackle the transport sector, which I understand is a key priority in the Pacific too. This includes state investment in buses, metro, and rail, as well as performance standards and R&D on biofuels.
4. **Foster innovation, education, and awareness.** We recognize that culture is critical too. The full population needs to understand the value of green growth and to begin to integrate it into their daily thinking. They need to come up with innovative approaches for government and business. We are therefore reforming our national curriculum to include conservation, and we have built world-class clean-tech universities, such as Masdar Institute, to kick-start new industries.
5. **Enhance environmental protection.** Regulation is a key part of cultural change, and we are also therefore building a regulatory system that rewards high environmental performance. A promising new development is the completion of our first carbon inventory. This will give us the framework for even greater resource efficiency.
6. **Build international partnerships.** This last point is especially critical, and it is the mentality of our country. Since our founding, we have welcomed foreign companies and individuals to work in all of our industries, from oil to defense to environmental regulation. We know that growth happens fastest when the best and brightest work together, and when different viewpoints interact. It was with this outlook that the UAE was selected as the host of the International Renewable Energy Agency, the first major international organizations in the Middle East, with 160 member countries and a regional office here in Fiji. This is also the concept behind Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, and it drives our bid to host the World Expo in Dubai in 2020.

So it is our very much our hope that we can continue this trend of international partnerships on sustainability, especially here in the Pacific, where the green growth potential is so high.

We look forward to working directly with Pacific governments under the UAE-Pacific Partnership Fund, as well as through IRENA and the Global Green Growth Institute. We furthermore welcome and applaud the addition of the Pacific Islands Development Forum to the alliance of partners to achieve green growth.

From our experience in the UAE, we can affirm it is the right choice.

Thank you.