

CLIMATE CHANGE AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Roundtable - COP28

Hosted by

MASDAR 

Executive Summary

Held during the ADSW Special Edition at COP28, Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW) hosted a live roundtable discussion to explore the ways in which climate change is amplifying the spread and severity of infectious diseases, and the potential for solutions through collaboration and decisive action across society. The session brought together a diverse group of experts, representing a spectrum of expertise – from health practitioners and researchers to government stakeholders and private-sector executives.



Key takeaways

- Climate change, health and prosperity are interlinked; climate change is a public health crisis.
- Green finance mechanisms, more robust government support and innovative use of technology can help us turn the tide on infectious diseases.
- A holistic, multi-sectoral approach that includes stakeholders inside and outside the health system is essential.

Climate change is a public health crisis

Participants called for the recognition of climate change as a public health crisis and highlighted the ways that climate change directly and indirectly influences the spread of infectious diseases, including shifts in disease vectors, changes in ecosystems and human migration patterns. They also explored how public health threats are being exacerbated by climate change, including food security, mental health concerns and the proliferation of respiratory diseases due to rising temperatures and extreme weather events.

The dialogue was underpinned by the immediate need to build resilience in the global health system by bringing together historically separate, siloed sectors. Participants agreed that the scale and complexity of climate change's impact on infectious diseases requires a broad coalition of stakeholders, both from within and beyond healthcare. They called for a concerted effort to include finance experts, policymakers, technologists and private-sector leaders to create holistic solutions.

Sticking with finance, the group discussed the evolving landscape of health funding. Participants noted the decline of official development assistance for communicable diseases and called for increases in innovative financing. The potential of tools like green bonds and impact investment funds was noted, as was the minimal allocation of funds that such mechanisms currently provide for infectious disease initiatives. The discussion emphasized the need for a health pillar within green financing to ensure that climate funds can also support health initiatives.

The need for collaboration on the sharing and integration of data and the value of combining environmental and health data to identify patterns in the spread of diseases were emphasized. Participants called for the establishment of a global surveillance system to map and track diseases, especially for tracking vectors and infection incidences in areas severely impacted by climate change. Strengthening early warning systems, investing in robust data analytics and promoting evidence-based policymaking were also identified as crucial actions.

Participants were keen to point out that successes in combating infectious diseases – such as the eradication of polio and the ongoing fight against malaria – could be leveraged to attract capital and create momentum. The importance of dedicated public communication campaigns and strategic advocacy was underscored, as well as the need for messaging to be carefully crafted to align with the values and priorities of funders.



COP28 and beyond

Collaboration, innovation and global awareness are crucial for building resilience and mitigating the impact of climate change on the spread of infectious diseases. Noting the unpredictable nature of climate change, the roundtable acknowledged the need for health systems to be adaptable and supported by funding mechanisms capable of addressing challenges swiftly and effectively.

Research and development alone are insufficient;

a multi-sectoral approach that combines expertise in health, the environment and socioeconomics is vital to address the dual climate-health crisis. The panel emphasized the importance of robust political willpower and a long-term commitment to sustainable financing, training, education and advocacy to combat infectious diseases. The dialogue closed with an agreement to sustain momentum beyond COP28 in the hope that, at the next COP, participants can return with news of positive progress.

Roundtable Participants

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Noble of the Realm and Lord Speaker, Parliament of Tonga

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Partners

Principal Partner



Roundtable Partner



About Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week

Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW) is a global initiative championed by the UAE and its clean energy powerhouse, Masdar, to accelerate sustainable development and advance economic, social, and environmental progress.

Established in 2008, ADSW provides a global platform for all who have a stake in the future of our planet.

ADSW brings together leaders from across governments, the private sector, and civil society to discuss and engage in bold climate action and innovations that will ensure a sustainable world for future generations.

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About Masdar

Masdar (Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company) is one of the world's fastest-growing renewable energy companies. As a global clean energy pioneer, Masdar is advancing the development and deployment of solar, wind, geothermal, battery storage and green hydrogen technologies to accelerate the energy transition and help the world meet its net-zero ambitions. Established in 2006, Masdar has developed and invested in projects in over 40 countries with a combined capacity of over 20 gigawatts (GW), providing affordable clean energy access to those who need it most and helping to power a more sustainable future.

Masdar is jointly owned by TAQA, ADNOC, and Mubadala, and is targeting a renewable energy portfolio capacity of 100GW by 2030 while aiming to be a leading producer of green hydrogen by the same year.



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