



ABU DHABI
SUSTAINABILITY WEEK

DECARBONIZING CITIES: LEVERAGING OPEN DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Roundtable - COP28

Hosted by

MASDAR 

Executive Summary

Held during the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week Special Edition at COP28, this roundtable discussion brought together thought leaders, policymakers and experts in technology and finance to discuss how cities can use digital infrastructure to meet their climate goals.

Key takeaways

- Digital infrastructure plays a pivotal role in accurately measuring climate progress, allowing for better planning and execution of decarbonization projects.
- Actionable, incremental steps in city-level climate change solutions have a higher chance of ultimate success, building a toolkit over time to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Incentivizing innovation and transition can be an effective mechanism to accelerate the green transition.
- Cross-sector collaboration, involving technology, finance, policy and governance, is needed to drive the transition, and each participant has a unique contribution to make to the ongoing efforts.



Taking the lead with data

The significance of the roundtable was emphasized by its timing alongside the first Global Stocktake at COP28. A 5-yearly exercise in accounting and accountability designed under the Paris Agreement, the Stocktake asks pledge makers – countries, cities and corporations – to measure their achievements to date against their commitments.

Data is key for this exercise, especially in the creation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventories. These comprehensive statistical reports were highlighted during this roundtable as a crucial step in crafting informed plans for emission reductions.

The discussion highlighted the UAE's position as the host of COP28 and suggested it as an example for future climate leadership. As global experts prepared to convene for COP28, the UAE undertook an evaluation of its progress in addressing climate issues, including greenhouse gas emission inventories, decarbonization plan assessments and more.

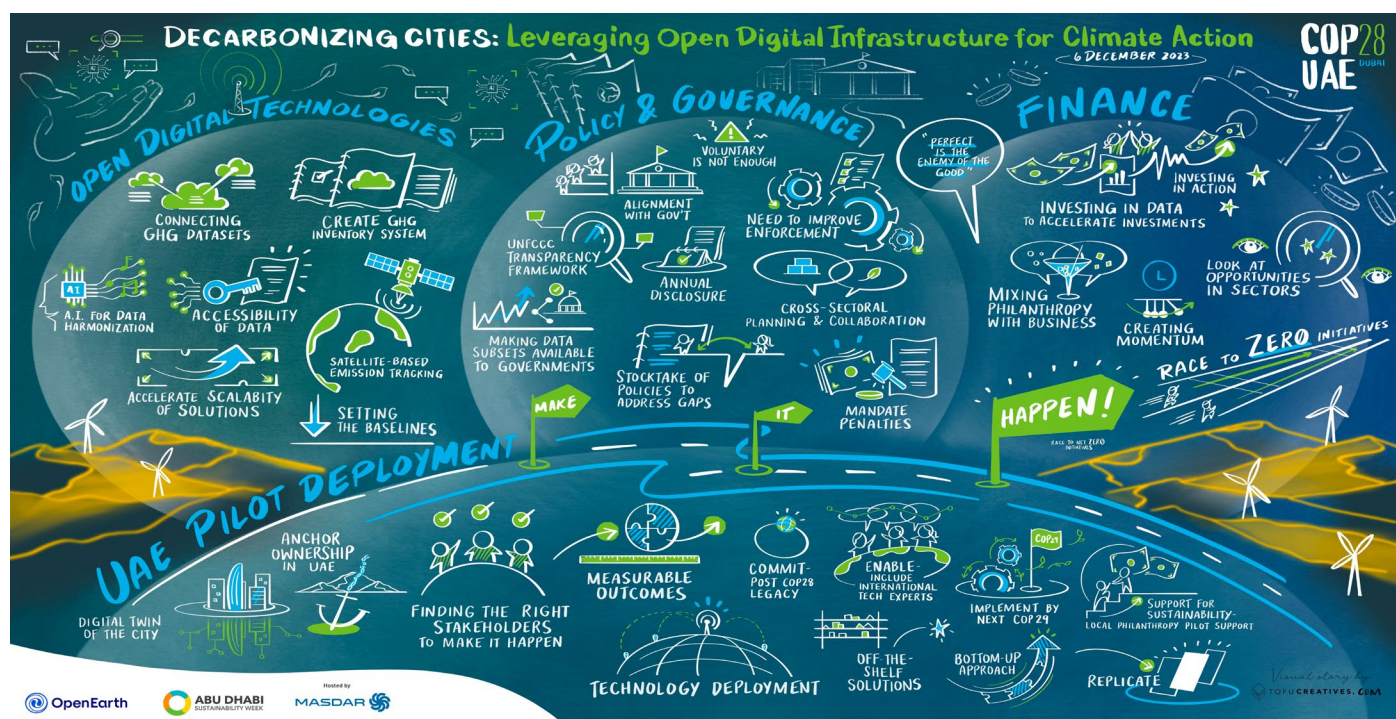
The panel explored the possibility of this model continuing, with future hosts inheriting the mantle of self-assessment as inspiration for event attendees.

In addition to the importance of accurate data, speakers from a swath of nations, sectors, and specialties expanded on individual tools, platforms, processes and software that could form an arsenal of green digital solutions: ranging from waste management tools to AI optimization.

The range of solutions presented underscored the immense power of technology to support climate adaptation. The incorporation of these technologies into city infrastructure, the roundtable agreed, would be vital in understanding and mitigating emissions across sectors such as energy, waste and transportation.

Participants also cautioned that technology needed to be used thoughtfully. For example, while AI has immense potential across industries, one contributor's assessments estimated that even a small-scale AI model may generate the equivalent of one person's carbon emissions over two years.

Fully understanding technology's potential and limitations was highlighted as key to designing effective solutions.



Small steps for big impact

When discussing potential solutions, the panel stressed the importance of pragmatism to ensure progress. Participants emphasized the challenges of implementing comprehensive climate change solutions at the city level or higher, highlighting the perils of trying to achieve too much at the outset, and ultimately achieving nothing.

The idea of focusing on specific, achievable goals and building on them incrementally was presented as a practical approach, creating a toolkit for addressing climate change over time. Participants also discussed the importance of green policy and investment in innovation, proposing that individuals and companies can be incentivized to contribute if they see tangible benefits.

Overall, a consensus emerged on the need for a collaborative approach, uniting different sectors to contribute to digital action towards climate change solutions. This includes aligning finance with planning, utilizing policy to promote rapid implementation, and sharing best practices for climate action.

Participants left with a clear intention to leverage their unique capabilities toward a collective goal: transforming urban environments into living examples of climate resilience and sustainable living.

Roundtable Participants

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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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