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Qatar University Life Science Symposium 2016: Biodiversity, Sustainability and Climate Change, with Perspectives from Qatar

Qatar's vision of global problems, challenges and solutions

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ABSTRACT

Since Qatar first signed the Biodiversity Convention in Rio in 1992, Qatar has been a strong advocate with keen interest in sustainability and the preservation of its biodiversity noting that advancement in industry should not compensate Qatar environment for future generations. This is spelled out in the Constitution of Qatar. Qatar's National Vision 2030 set in 2008 sets 4 main development focus points for the country. These are: Human, Social, Economic and the Environment. Government authorities are all working in collaboration with local stockholders and interested partners including foreign companies to advance aspects of Qatar Vision 2030 through world solutions with applicable operations. Climate Change is now known to have an impact on both natural and cultural resources. Meanwhile, the World has been seeking solutions to safeguard our Planet. Recent awareness of the colossal effect of Climate Change on the whole Planet brought the world partners once more together (Paris COP21) to seek a solution that in their hope would restrict the Global temperature rise at 1.5 degrees Celsius!!! New concepts include the initiative "North America Climate Smart Agriculture Alliance (NACSAA) – (*Application of Climate Science to Agriculture and Forestry*) to find means to cope with climatic warming. The prospect is to introduce in farming what would be highly productive and sustainable. Combating pollution and bio invasions is yet another aspect for concern. In 2010, it was reported that 14% of global gas emission were from the Transport Sector. Recently Smart Transportation to combat climate change came in as a solution. To reduce/prevent pollution and introduce sustainable Solid waste Management is yet another world concern linked to Climate Change. Qatar is a small country that is highly populated due to the large numbers of workers in all aspects of life in Qatar. Major concerns are food and water security and waste management. Qatar has no natural rivers or lakes and the only source of their water's needs come from the numerous desalination plants. Fish is a main diet for Qatar and the Natural Gas, the main revenue of Qatar, lies in the sea. The negative impact of desalination plants, coastal development, overfishing, and others couples with rising temperatures and high evaporation threaten these vital resources. These also have a negative impact on marine life in the Arabian Gulf and threaten Qatar marine biodiversity and sustainability (bearing in mind that a number of other Gulf States are in the same situation). The Arabian Gulf is now the sea with the highest salinity. Ground water resource has been used for Agriculture which does not sustain the local needs. This is suffering from overuse and poor precipitation. Qatar with over 85% of its land a stony desert, cannot practice agriculture following the old traditional methods. Qatar stands unique in providing financial means for advance and applied research to address relevant problems. Energy, Food Security, Water resource, Sustainability, Climate Change, Combating desertification are a few of some of Qatar's set priorities. Smart solutions must be found and Qatar has already taken steps addressing some of these challenges.

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