

SPECIAL SESSION @UNEA-6

Note to Speakers and Co-organizers

INTERACTIVE ROUNDTABLE

The Urban Environment and the Near-Zero Buildings of the Future

APPROACH

The Forum's approach is pragmatic and oriented towards integrated policy and technology driven solutions that assist in the realization of environmental goals.

The Forum and its community uphold the values of equity, ethics, transparency, diversity, and inclusion, as crucial for attaining a fair and sustainable future. Central to the Forum's operations is its foundation in science, ensuring that its initiatives and discussions are rooted in scientific understanding and evidence.

The sessions are crafted to provoke innovative and inclusive thinking, enriching the dialogue and action around achieving environmental goals. They encapsulate diverse perspectives from government, industry, finance, science, and society.

The Forum's sessions are organized to explore critical aspects from three perspectives:

- **Policy Perspective:** Focusing on policy coherence, an all-encompassing government approach, safeguards, accountabilities, and the role of the multilateral system.
- **Corporate Perspective:** Examining technology and financing solutions, business practices, resource efficiency, value chains, circularity, and transparency, and advocating for an all-encompassing economic approach.
- **Societal Perspective:** Embracing an all-inclusive societal approach, the sessions engage major groups, youth, women, and indigenous communities.

ROUNDTABLE FORMAT

The conversational style roundtables promote dynamic and interactive discussions among star speakers from diverse backgrounds. The aim is to explore complex topics through informed debate, allowing each speaker to present their viewpoints, challenge ideas, and respond to counterarguments in a respectful and engaging manner.

The UNSPBF Roundtables foster a lively and insightful dialogue, encouraging a deep dive into the topics at hand while ensuring a productive and respectful exchange.

Unlike traditional panel discussions, which often feature a unidirectional flow of information, the UNSPBF roundtable discussions prioritize interactive dialogue, where participants are encouraged to interact with each other and the floor, guided by the session moderator.

This approach is particularly advantageous when accommodating more diverse perspectives from a larger panel, representing multiple sectors, as it facilitates a richer exchange of ideas and perspectives.

Each session will start with a 3 minute introduction by the moderator, to frame the topic and key areas of discussion, followed by a lively conversation with the roundtable panelists. The session will conclude in an open floor.

Guidance for Speakers

- Prepare concise key points and arguments in advance based on the session framing and conversation starters.
- Be ready to present your perspective, support it with evidence, and respond to differing viewpoints.
- You will have an initial 5-minute slot to present your stance on the topic being discussed, followed by inputs to the conversation and points raised by the moderator and other panelists.
- Keep your arguments clear, concise, and relevant to the topic.
- Actively listen to other speakers and prepare to offer constructive feedback or counterarguments.
- Adhere to the time limits set by the moderator to ensure all participants have equal opportunities to contribute.
- Evidence-Based: Support your arguments with facts, data, or specific examples to strengthen your case and contribute to an informed discussion.

FRAMING

Urban areas are at the forefront of the pollution crisis, contributing significantly to global greenhouse gas emissions. Sustainable buildings offer a solution to reduce urban pollution levels and combat climate change. This session delves into how near-zero emission and resilient buildings can play a pivotal role in mitigating these challenges. It will bring together top experts to discuss the intersection of sustainable architecture, urban planning, and environmental health.

The session comes a week ahead of the Buildings and Climate Global Forum, convened in Paris by the governments of France and Morocco, in partnership with UNEP and the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction.

Key Themes:

- Global and Regional Perspectives: Analyzing the importance of sustainable buildings in different regions, considering environmental and health impacts.
- Economic and Policy Frameworks: Evaluating economic models and policy initiatives that support the adoption of sustainable building practices.
- Innovation and Technology in Sustainable Architecture: Exploring advancements in building materials, energy efficiency, and sustainable design.
- Community Engagement and Equity in Urban Planning: Understanding the role of community participation and equity in shaping resilient urban landscapes.

PANELISTS

- H.E. Hassaan Mohamed, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology Maldives
- H.E Dr. Osama Ibrahim Faqeeha, Deputy Minister, Saudi Arabia
- John Thompson, Asst. Secretary, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, US Department of State
- Kerstin Stendahl, Special Envoy for Climate and Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland
- Dechen Tsering, Director, UNEP's Climate Change Division
- Juergen Weichenberger, Vice President AI New Value Stream, Schneider Electric
- Nasra Nanda, CEO & ESG Lead, Kenya Green Building Society
- Yubo Zhang, General Manager, NAAS Carbon Neutrality
- Kweku Lisk, Deputy Mayor, City of Freetown, Sierra Leone

- Harry Verhaar, Vice President & Head of Global Public and Government Affairs, Signify
- International Finance Corporation (IFC)

CONVERSATION STARTERS

The following framing questions are designed to explore the multifaceted aspects of the topic at hand. The questions are designed to engage the panelists in a dialogue that covers the key themes of the discussion, encouraging them to share their insights, experiences, and visions.

Each question is tailored to the expertise of the roundtable star-contributors, aiming to provoke thoughtful discussion on sustainable practices, policy implications, and the future of Sustainable Buildings:

H.E. Hassaan Mohamed, Deputy Minister, the Maldives

- Policy and Climate Adaptation: With the Maldives being at the forefront of climate vulnerability, how is the Ministry integrating near-zero and resilient building concepts in its national climate adaptation strategies, and can you share any success metrics or targets from recent initiatives?
- International Cooperation: Why is the Global Cooling Pledge particularly important for Small Island developing states, such as the Maldives, that are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change?
- Sustainable Tourism and Construction: Considering the significant role of tourism in the Maldives' economy, what policies are being implemented to ensure sustainable construction practices in the tourism sector, especially for new developments and resort renovations?

Kerstin Stendahl, Special Envoy for Climate and Environment, Finland

- National Action: Finland was the first country to prepare a national circularity roadmap. The construction sector being a major consumer of resources and materials, how is Finland implementing circularity approaches in the Buildings and Construction sector?
- Given that Finland is located in a cold climate and has a high heating demand, how is the country tackling the decarbonisation of heating dependent on oil and natural gas?
- International Policy and Environmental Diplomacy: As Finland is known for its proactive stance on climate and environment, how is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs facilitating international collaboration to promote sustainable building practices globally?
- Finland's Contribution to Global Standards: Can you discuss Finland's role in influencing or establishing international standards for sustainable buildings, particularly in cold climates?
- Leveraging Climate Finance: How is Finland utilizing climate finance mechanisms to support sustainable construction both domestically and in developing countries?

H.E Dr. Osama Ibrahim Faqeaha, Deputy Minister, Saudi Arabia

- Urban Planning and Policy Frameworks: With Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 emphasizing sustainable urban development, how is the Deputy Ministry incorporating sustainable building standards into urban planning and construction regulations to meet these ambitious goals?

- Innovation and Technology Adoption: Can you highlight any specific technologies or innovations in sustainable architecture that have been successfully adopted in Saudi Arabia's recent construction projects, particularly in reducing carbon emissions?
- Stakeholder Engagement: In the context of Saudi Arabia's transformation, how are you engaging with developers, investors, and the public to promote the adoption of near-zero buildings?

John Thompson, Asst. Secretary, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, US Department of State

- Strategic International Policies on Green Buildings: With your extensive experience in international environmental policy, how can international collaboration be enhanced to set standards for green building practices globally?
- Overcoming Barriers in Implementing Green Building Codes: From your viewpoint, what are the primary obstacles to the global adoption of green building codes, and how can international policy initiatives address these challenges?
- The Role of Environmental Diplomacy in Urban Sustainability: Can you discuss the importance of environmental diplomacy in promoting sustainable urban planning and green building practices among nations, especially in the context of climate change mitigation?

Dechen Tsering, Director, UNEP's Climate Change Division

- How does UNEP support the transition to net-zero and resilient cities and buildings?
- Given the urban heat island effect's impact on increasing city temperatures worldwide, resulting in discomfort particularly for low-income and vulnerable groups in warmer developing countries, what climate-friendly strategies can be implemented to promote a sustainable built environment and ensure healthy living conditions?

Juergen Weichenberger, VP, Schneider Electric

- Technological Innovations: With Schneider Electric leading in energy management, what are the latest advancements in AI and IoT that could revolutionize energy efficiency in near-zero buildings?
- Given that digitalization is a key theme to accelerate the decarbonization of the building sector, how do you see our lives in 2050 in relation to the Paris Agreement target?
- Corporate Sustainability Goals: How is Schneider Electric incorporating its own technologies into its facilities to achieve near-zero emissions, and what lessons have been learned that could be applied broadly across urban environments?
- Partnerships for Scaling Solutions: Can you provide examples of how Schneider Electric is partnering with cities or other corporations to implement sustainable building technologies at scale?

Nasra Nanda, CEO & ESG Lead, Kenya Green Building Society

- Building Sustainability in Kenya: As CEO & ESG Lead, how is the Kenya Green Building Society influencing policy and practice in Kenya to promote sustainable building, and what are the key challenges and successes you've experienced?
- Community and Equity: How do we ensure that sustainable building practices also address community engagement and equity, particularly in urban planning?

- Metrics and Standards: What metrics or standards should we advocate for in assessing the sustainability of buildings in Kenya, and how do these align with international practices?

Harry Verhaar, Head of Global Public and Government Affairs, Signify

- Lighting and Sustainability: How is Signify contributing to the development of sustainable buildings through innovative lighting solutions, and what impact do these solutions have on energy efficiency and carbon reduction?
- Global Policy Advocacy: What role does Signify play in advocating for global policies that support sustainable lighting in near-zero buildings?
- What are the key challenges to establishing climate-friendly lighting practices as a norm and scale-up their use in the Global South?
- Collaborative Projects: Can you highlight any collaborative projects where Signify's lighting solutions have been pivotal in achieving near-zero emissions in building projects? Linking that to environmental goals under multilateral environmental agreements.

Yubo Zhang, General Manager of NAAS Carbon-Neutrality

- Carbon Neutrality in Construction: How is NAAS advancing carbon neutrality in the building sector, and can you share insights into the most impactful technologies or practices that have been implemented?
- Policy Influence: What are the building codes and standards that need to be standardized to achieve sustainability both in China and beyond?
- Cross-Sector Collaboration: How important is it to foster collaboration across different sectors (e.g., technology providers, construction companies, government agencies) to promote the adoption of near-zero emission buildings?

Kweku Lisk, Deputy Mayor Freetown, Sierra Leone

- Challenges in implementation: Freetown, Sierra Leone is already experiencing the impacts from climate change. What are some of the challenges faced by the city, in particular, related to its built environment?
- Urban Resilience and Planning: Freetown is a City Champion for the Global Cooling Pledge. How is the city tackling the issue of urban resilience to climate change, in particular extreme heat?
- Community Engagement: To what extent is it important to engage communities in the planning and implementation of sustainable building projects?

International Finance Corporation (IFC)

- Given that IFC is closing working with real estate developers, how can they benefit from the Edge certification and/or tools (Apps) when they work on green building development?
- How can finance institutions mobilize adequate private sector capital in emerging markets to help support the transition to sustainable cooling and implementation of the Global Cooling Pledge?

