

مركز المنصة للتنمية المستدامة  
Platform Center for Sustainable Development



2024

**Roundtable Discussion**

**IRAQ IN THE  
CONFERENCE OF  
PARTIES -  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
AND  
COMMITMENTS**

F E B 2 0 2 4

[www.psdiraq.org](http://www.psdiraq.org)

[info@psdiraq.org](mailto:info@psdiraq.org)

009647731551117



## About Platform Center for Sustainable Development



The Platform for Sustainable Development is a registered center with the Non-Governmental Organizations Department at the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers under the number (1S2106012). It serves as a space for thought, dialogue, and action towards positive change.

### Vision

We seek to establish a platform for dialogue and policies that contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Iraq.

### Mission

Filling the gap between the state and society to ensure the essence of democracy by engaging citizens in the decision-making process through training, monitoring, analysis, research, awareness, and advocacy.

## Strategic Goals

- Preparing a youth elite that rises to its social responsibilities through studying problems, proposing policy alternatives, and working towards their implementation.
- Utilizing knowledge outputs and encouraging youth to work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
- Presenting statistics and issues that occupy the political arenas and societal circles to reflect a deeper understanding of the Iraqi reality.
- Creating a network of active, informed, and committed citizens dedicated to the project of building the Iraqi government.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFO



## Summary of the Roundtable Discussion

On Saturday, January 27, 2024, the Platform for Sustainable Development Center held a Roundtable Discussion titled "Iraq in the Conference of Parties - Achievements and Commitments." The event was attended by several members of the Iraqi delegation to the Conference of Parties, along with experts, researchers, and active non-governmental organizations in climate action. The aim was to discuss the outcomes of the United Nations Climate Conference (COP28) held in the United Arab Emirates and the resulting resolutions and commitments. Two main topics were discussed:

1. Iraq's achievements from the Conference of Parties and mechanisms to enhance them.
2. Iraq's commitments and the role of the international community in supporting them.

Mr. Hashem Al-Husseini, Director of the Research Department at the Platform Center, chaired the session, outlining its agenda and rules, and highlighting the challenge facing Iraq as the most affected by climate change. This necessitates all societal segments, elites, governmental and non-governmental institutions to mobilize efforts and exert more serious work to contribute to adaptation and mitigation of the impacts of climate change.



**Youssef Muayyad**  
Director of the Climate Change Directorate at the  
Ministry of Environment / Head of the Iraqi  
Negotiating Delegation at the Conference of Parties

Mr. Youssef elaborated extensively on the conference proceedings, the negotiation circumstances, and Iraq's achievements on all fronts in its negotiations. He highlighted Iraq's efforts to push through certain resolutions or halt others according to Iraqi interests. Regarding Iraqi presence, for the first time, Iraq had its own pavilion at the conference, in addition to organizing and participating in 34 events. All sectorial ministries were represented in the delegation, including the Kurdistan Regional Government. Notably, Iraqi youth and women's participation was prominent in this edition of the conference. Regarding achievements, Mr. Youssef emphasized that one of Iraq's most important accomplishments was halting UN resolutions against fossil fuels, which would have had a significant impact on Iraq's economy heavily reliant on oil revenues. Iraq, along with China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia, also succeeded in blocking a resolution against aviation fuel, representing 5% of Iraq's exports. Additionally, Mr. Youssef highlighted Iraq's comprehensive involvement. Within the financing from the International

Fund for Climate-Impacted Countries, it's an international recognition and a gain for Iraq in many issues and files, including the water file. Iraq has secured funding for projects related to both mitigation and adaptation, amounting to approximately \$50 million. Mr. Muayyad also mentioned that the Ministry of Environment is working on establishing a dedicated platform for civil society organizations to mobilize efforts in awareness-raising and policy suggestions because the responsibility for addressing the impacts of climate change is comprehensive and requires everyone's involvement. He emphasized the need to accelerate economic diversification to avoid any future damages when resolutions against fossil fuels are passed, and the necessity to promote green investment and sustainable economy. Mr. Muayyad added that 79% of water goes to agriculture, which contributes only about 1% to the Gross Domestic Product, requiring necessary measures to change consumption behavior and direct water towards wiser consumption methods.





**Dr. Amar Al-Atta**  
**Advisor to the Parliamentary Health and Environment Committee**

Mr. Al-Atta emphasized that the Iraqi legislative environment is rich in terms and concepts that can contribute to addressing climate change, starting with the constitution, which contains over several articles focusing on the environment and giving it sufficient care. The same applies to legislation and laws, but what is criticized is the enforcement.

Mr. Al-Atta also pointed out that punitive measures are weak and do not match the scale of damage, especially concerning the government sector, and legislation should be updated to be in line with the magnitude of the challenge.

He also highlighted that climate change is an economic and political issue, not just an environmental one. Therefore, Iraq cannot commit to international targets because they harm the Iraqi economy, which relies on oil. International commitments may dry up budget resources, especially.

He added that climate change affects Iraq in three main aspects:

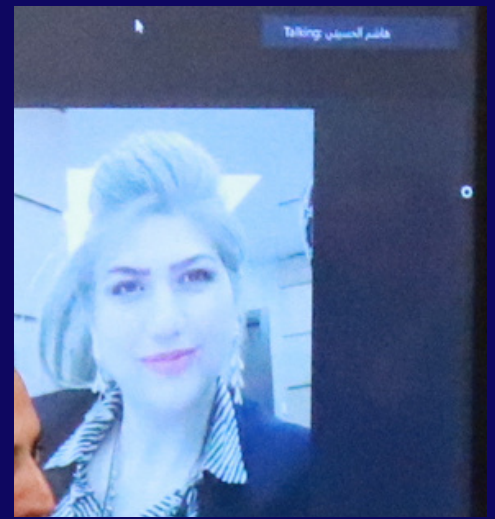
1. Population Axis: The continuous population growth exacerbates pressure on services.
2. Water Axis: Water scarcity poses significant challenges for Iraq, necessitating tough decisions such as changing water management practices.
3. The last axis is the global economic axis represented by the demand for oil.

He also mentioned that the recent budget included allocations for environmental and climate issues totaling around \$8 billion, which is equivalent to 10% of the budget. This allocation is divided into important projects, including gas flaring reduction, seawater desalination, and other allocations aimed at reducing damage and enhancing adaptability.



**Adel Al-Mukhtar**  
Advisor to the Parliamentary  
Agriculture, Water, and Marshlands  
Committee

Mr. Al-Mukhtar pointed out that most international events do not rise to the level of danger, whereas Iraq faces a significant risk due to poor water management and the amount of water discharge it receives, which could be sufficient for all human, industrial, and agricultural activities if managed wisely. The annual water intake to Iraq is approximately 30 billion cubic meters, compared to Jordan's 1 billion cubic meters, which suffices for its needs and enables it to produce, cultivate, and export to most countries in the region, including Iraq. He explained that the upcoming summer will witness a water deficit of around 4 billion cubic meters, compared to the previous year, which the Ministry of Water Resources struggled to overcome. Mr. Al-Mukhtar also highlighted that abandoning agriculture could ensure comfortable water abundance for Iraq because agricultural consumption represents the majority of water revenues, consumed through primitive irrigation methods.



**Suzan Al-Banna**  
Consultant Expert with the  
United Nations Development  
Programme (UNDP)

Ms. Al-Banna believes that Iraq's gains in the conference are numerous and very encouraging. Among them is the presence of an organized and well-trained negotiating delegation capable of conveying the country's image to the International community and securing funding for its projects. Ms. Al-Banna emphasized that supporting food security and combating desertification were the most important issues on the conference agenda, critical issues for Iraq. She also believes that Iraq is an essential part of international agreements, not just a recipient but an active and influential participant. Building on such matters can lead to further gains in future editions of COP. She stressed the importance of continuing to build the capacity of the negotiating delegation, with each member responsible for a specific portfolio of issues relevant to Iraq and monitoring the gains associated with them.



**Laith Mohammed**  
Member of the Iraqi delegation representing the Bay of Sciences  
Dialogue Forum

We participated in COP28 at the Iraqi Pavilion, where we hosted several programs, including collaborations with international organizations and the German side. We also organized a side event for countries within the Tigris and Euphrates Basin to discuss water and environmental challenges under the theme "Water Coordination: Collaborative Solutions for Regional Resource Management Adaptive to Climate Change." This aimed to enhance a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between climate change and water resources and regional cooperation. The event outlined goals, strategies, and common frameworks for sustainable water management that could benefit all coastal countries. Representatives from Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Syria attended, along with official, academic, and artistic participation from the Tigris and Euphrates Basin countries. The event also included discussions and proposals contributing to maturing dialogue on the necessity of regional cooperation.

The event resulted in several recommendations, the most important of which are:

1. Establishing a regional Green Fund to garner support for climate change mitigation efforts.
2. Conducting joint regional research on sustainability and environmental balance preservation.
3. Formation of a permanent joint committee comprising officials, academics, and experts in the region, particularly from countries within the Tigris and Euphrates Basin, to discuss cooperation in water management based on mutual understanding.
4. The importance of establishing a specialized center for water management and climate change encompassing the Tigris and Euphrates Basin countries, with the possibility of researchers, specialists, and technicians from other countries joining to assist governments in formulating policies and strategies to address environmental challenges and climate change.



Haider Al-Kafishi  
President of the Sustainable Smart  
Cities Organization - Participant in  
the Conference of Parties

Mr. Haider Al-Kafishi believes that Iraq should have a strong voice in international events and forums, given its significant vulnerability to climate change.

He pointed out that Iraq's water system is outdated, designed based on old data, and does not suit the current situation. Therefore, it should be updated based on current data. He also explained that the retreat of lakes leads to reduced evaporation and consequently the encroachment of the rainy line beyond the borders, resulting in the loss of agricultural lands dependent on rainfall.

Mr. Al-Kafishi believes that Iraq is progressing well in various fields, including agriculture, the adoption of modern irrigation methods, and reducing gas flaring. He sees the current priority as better preparation for COP29, prioritizing key issues to work on and securing funding for them.

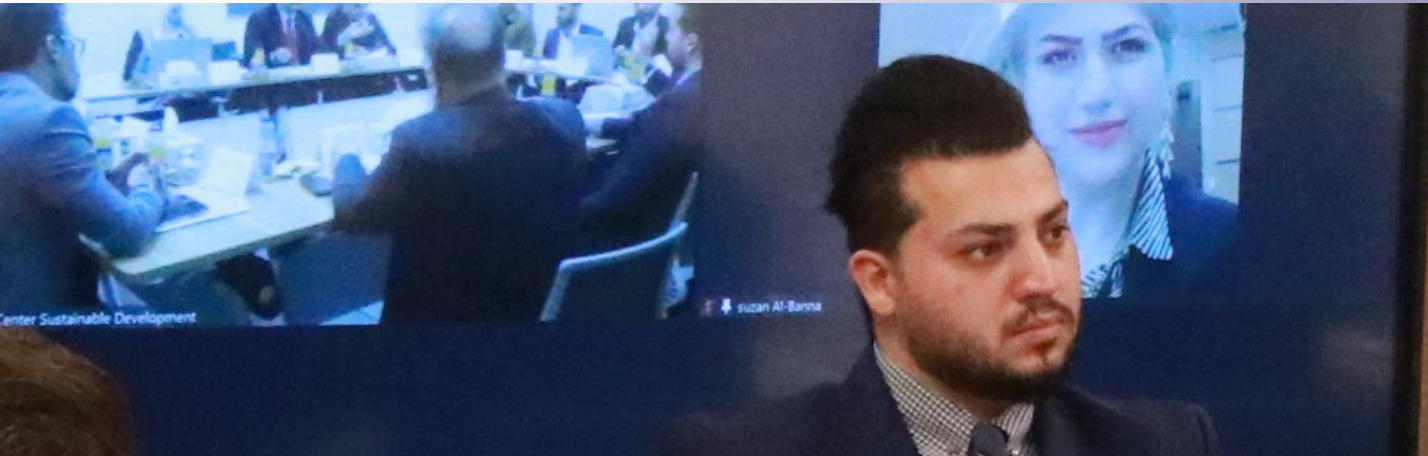
He also believes that the Ministry of Environment is currently working well and sponsoring important events aimed at raising public awareness of the dangers of climate change to change societal behavior towards more sustainable and rational consumption.



Dr. Ahmed Al-Rubai'i  
Green Spring Organization

Dr. Al-Rubai'i believes that Iraq should not rely on international support because it is difficult to obtain support and funding from international funds unless they come with significant commitments that may harm Iraq. He also notes that the International Financing Fund has not yet been finalized, and there is disagreement globally about who should manage it. He also sees it as important for Iraq to update its legislation and regulations related to climate-related activities to align with the risks it faces, which may not be addressable through pamphlets or instructions and require bolder and more serious legislation. He sees the necessity of opening up opportunities for investments in more sustainable and productive sectors, which contributes to localizing international interests that may ensure international protection for Iraq's interests, especially in water resources.





## Haider Al-Jawhar Member of the Iraqi delegation representing the youth category

Mr. Al-Jawhar highlighted the role of Iraqi youth and their active participation in COP 28, where they presented plans and files that had been worked on two months before the conference in collaboration with the United Nations and the Ministry of Water Resources. He emphasized that the youth delegation successfully conveyed the message of young people to the International community, stressing the importance of their involvement in climate-related policymaking, entrepreneurship, and the green economy. This resulted in a partnership between the Ministry of Environment and the International Labor Organization to empower youth in the green economy, in addition to addressing education and incorporating climate concepts into educational curricula.

Moreover, the Iraqi youth delegation presented several recommendations, including:

- Prioritizing climate-affected areas: focusing on supporting green projects led by youth in regions such as Muthanna and Thi Qar, and building the capacities of local youth affected by drought and climate change. Strategically allocating resources to targeted programs and educational awareness, integrating youth perspectives into policies, and creating green job opportunities.
- Increasing youth representation: ensuring increased and purposeful youth participation in decision-making processes related to environmental policies and sustainable development at all levels.
- Education and awareness: implementing comprehensive educational programs focusing on environmental issues, climate change, and sustainable development, targeting youth at various educational levels.
- Access to Information: Facilitating easy access to accurate and up-to-date information about environmental issues and climate change, and empowering youth to stay informed and participate in relevant discussions.
- Support for Youth-led Initiatives: Allocating resources and funding to support projects and initiatives led by youth aimed at addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainability.
- Climate Adaptation Training: Developing and providing training programs to equip youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to build climate-resilient communities.
- Comprehensive Policies: Advocating for the integration of youth perspectives in the development and implementation of climate action and environmental sustainability policies.
- Green Job Opportunities: Creating employment opportunities in green industries, promoting the transition to a sustainable economy, and providing job options for youth.
- Youth Empowerment Programs: Establishing programs that empower youth to actively engage in environmental advocacy, community resilience, and sustainable development efforts.
- Support for Technology and Innovation: Investing in and encouraging the use of technology and innovation to address environmental challenges, and fostering youth participation in finding creative solutions.
- Collaboration Platforms: Establishing platforms for collaboration and effective communication between youth, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to collectively address environmental issues and climate change in Iraq.



Mr. Al-Jabri emphasizes that the primary issue regarding climate in Iraq lies in consumption rather than resource availability. Baghdad, for instance, consumes around 6 billion liters of water daily, while Istanbul consumes only 1.2 billion liters, despite having double the population of Baghdad. The same applies to electricity consumption. He believes that private sector involvement can lead to improvement in sectors and help alleviate pressure on state institutions in providing essential services and enhancing infrastructure. He also stresses the need for mandatory standards for everyone, rather than just codes, as codes lack enforcement measures to deter violations related to water or environmental issues.



Khalid Al-Jabri  
President of Asoul Organization  
for Economic Development



Dr. Shahad Ali  
Mustansiriyah Center for Arab and  
International Studies, specializing in  
Public Policy and Crisis Management.

The Iraqi government often disregards the findings of scientific research and rigorous studies that could contribute to proposing solutions and policies. This widens the gap between elites and decision-makers and exacerbates institutional ignorance. Additionally, Iraq lacks reliable databases regarding climate issues, leading to gaps in critical data for action.

Mr. Jalil believes that most environmental issues are linked to political decisions. Therefore, if we want to push forward with addressing certain issues and files, it's essential to create a conducive political environment for negotiation, prioritizing the most important issues first. He also sees that Iraq has many opportunities and qualifications that enable it to obtain international gains if managed well and utilized at the right time.



Haider Jalil  
Researcher interested in climate  
issues from the Peer Youth  
Development Organization.



Athir Abdul Sada  
Bahr Al-Ulum Science  
Forum for Dialogue

Mr. Abdul Sada highlighted the importance of transboundary water resources as the lifeline for the countries sharing their use. He emphasized that overcoming differences and reaching moderate solutions can help countries overcome crises. He also mentioned the "Thirst Project" initiated by the Bayt al-Hikma Foundation for Dialogue among Civilizations, aiming to influence both popular and official levels and bridge the gap to form internal pressure groups that contribute to sharing the burden.



Wathiq Al-Shammari  
Researcher

Mr. Al-Shammari pointed out the efforts of the Ministry of Oil in reducing water usage in oil field injection, as well as minimizing gas flaring. Additionally, he mentioned the implementation of gas systems for vehicles, all of which are significant projects in reducing carbon emissions, the main driver of climate change.

He believes that Iraq lacks efficient water management and optimal utilization practices. There is a need for developing policies, regulations, and strict enforcement, especially concerning irrigation, which consumes over 70% of the water. He noted a lack of oversight or compliance with the Cabinet's decisions regarding the use of modern irrigation systems.

JANUARY  
2024

مركز المنصة للتنمية المستدامة  
Platform Center for Sustainable Development



## Recommendations

1. Initiating the establishment of an alliance of organizations and institutions concerned and specialized in climate issues to coordinate efforts and facilitate effective communication with governmental institutions and decision-makers.
2. Continuing to support and train the negotiating delegation participating in international conferences and events, including the United Nations Climate Change Conference.
3. Emphasizing the importance of specialized institutions in monitoring and following up on decisions related to climate issues, including promoting the use of modern irrigation methods and preventing encroachment on water sources.
4. Establishing a Climate Change Mitigation Fund to support sustainable projects and initiatives.
5. Updating legislation and regulations and implementing deterrent penalties commensurate with the damage caused by excessive water consumption.

# Your Journey in Policy Work Starts with Us