



70TH CAIRO CLIMATE TALK REPORT

# Keeping the Momentum Up: how do we activate young people to save the planet?

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*On the 14th of October 2020 the 70th Cairo Climate Talk invited young activists from Germany and Egypt discussed how they became active in the field of climate change, environmental politics as well as awareness-raising, and how they keep themselves and others motivated.*

Efforts to strengthen youth activities and opportunities to engage with climate protection is a priority on the Egyptian government's agenda, according to Ambassador Mohamed Khalil, Advisor for External Affairs and Multilateral Agreements at the Ministry of Environment of the Arab Republic of Egypt. The 70th CCT coincided with the 30th anniversary of German reunification, when East and West Germany became one country again. In his opening remarks, Philippe Maupai, Head of the Science Department at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Egypt, drew the connection between youth and this anniversary. The situation in both Germanys might have

differed, but learning from one another experience in the field of environmental protection allowed for new visions and solutions. Similarly, today the exchange between Germany and Egypt is based on mutual learning and cooperation, with a shared goal of protecting the environment.

## WE NEED TO STAY OPTIMISTIC AND BELIEVE THAT A BETTER FUTURE IS POSSIBLE

Marlene Jahn, a representative for the German Green Youth party in Berlin, reflected that the freedom and opportunity that a unified Germany offered to her generation, comes with the responsibility to work on changing the course of climate history, both in Germany and globally. "The day the wall came down the atmosphere was very euphoric because people thought a better future was possible," Johannes Herrmann who is an activist with Fridays for Future said, "we should keep this optimism when it comes to climate action".

Shady Khalil, Co-Founder and Managing Partner at Greenish, pointed out "that we need to adapt our messaging to build cooperation," because making sure everyone understands how they are affected and how their actions affect the others is key in changing behaviors and mindsets. "What happens globally, affects us all so we need to unify now" said Manar Ramadan, Co-Founder and Head of R&D at Alexandria-based Banlastic. Banlastic's efforts for example are inspired by global attempts to ban all single use plastic once and for all and aim at lobbying for similar laws in Egypt.

## MUTUAL LISTENING AND LEARNING ALLOWS FOR SHARED VISIONS AND SHARED SOLUTIONS

The moderator for the evening, Noor A. Noor set the discussion in its momentary and global context emphasizing that “as the international community tries to recover from a global pandemic, it also braces itself for monumental challenges facing people and nature in the 21st Century.” Additionally, the panelists pointed towards the historical responsibilities that exist due to the industrialization of the global North and their subsequent exploitation of the global South. “People in the South should not feel guilty for the state of the planet” said Shady Khalil, rather the North needs to take on full responsibility in moving towards climate protection, mitigation and adaptation to which all panelists strongly agreed. Mutual learning and listening in this process is key for its results.

## TODAY'S MOVEMENTS ARE GLOBAL, INTERGENERATIONAL, DECENTRALISED, DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE

“Today’s environmental movements have a new understanding of themselves: they are globally active, intergenerational, decentralized and inclusive, and they remind us that climate protection should mirror equality and humanity and be accessible to all” said Philippe Maupai. Johannes Herrmann confirmed the importance of diversity. While he acknowledged that Fridays for Future needs to encourage diversity more, he also highlighted that the strong female leadership present in the movement is a sign of change. Ensuring representation, equality and justice is a heavy responsibility for young people working in the field, as they seem to be addressing a multitude of intertwined themes at the same time.

## CONNECT TO YOUR "REASON WHY", RECHARGE AND GET INSPIRED BY THE PEOPLE TO KEEP THE MOMENTUM UP

“So how does one maintain hope?”, Noor A. Noor asked the panelists. “We keep a list of all of our and our partners successes to remind us what we have achieved” shared Shady Khalil, it helps to always stay connected to one's “reason why”. Marlene Jahn stressed the importance to disconnect and recharge, to take care of one’s mental health and well-being, to be able to show up with the same energy again in the morning. Johannes Herrmann stressed that people who are working on climate change are not just optimists, but rather possibilists who believe that if we all come together, we can create the possibility for a better future. And for Manar and her team “the people we work with and how they continuously impress and surprise us by exceeding our expectations with their positive response” are their reason to keeping the momentum up.

## MANAR RAMADAN

CO-FOUNDER AND R&D  
HEAD, BANLASTIC

Manar Ramadan is a co-founder of Banlastic Egypt, heading its facilitators team. Banlastic Egypt is a social enterprise that aims to ban plastic bags in Egypt since 2018. Based in Alexandria, Banlastic achieves its mission through different approaches: it develops and offers alternative products to single use plastics. With Manar's leadership, Banlastic engages with the community through educational and interactive workshops on the hazards of single use plastic. This social enterprise also addresses the cultural challenges facing environmental issues in Egypt by developing Arabic content on the internet relevant to issues of waste.

Marlene Jahn is the Spokesperson for Green Youth Berlin, an independent political youth organisation that works in coordination with the German Green Party. Marlene first joined Green Youth Berlin in 2018, participating in the Fridays for Future movement for the first time, then she co-founded her district branch of the organisation before becoming its regional spokesperson. She has taken an active role in the Fridays for Future movement, a global climate strike movement calling for climate justice through meaningful policies and actions to address climate breakdown. She has also engaged extensively with the European parliament elections campaigning with Green Youth and helped found Anti-Kohle Kidz, an alliance that calls for social, economic and environmental justice.

## MARLENE JAHN

SPOKESPERSON OF THE  
GREEN YOUTH PARTY  
BERLIN

## SHADY KHALIL

CO-FOUNDER AND  
MANAGING DIRECTOR,  
GREENISH

Shady Khalil co-founded Greenish which is a social enterprise focused on educating communities about the environment, and empowering them to develop solutions for their most pressing environmental challenges. Greenish has co-founded VeryNile which is the first project focused on cleaning the River Nile from plastics by community volunteers, then transforming this plastic into products. In less than one year, VeryNile has incubated thousands of volunteers and removed 40 tons of plastic from the Nile.

Johannes Herrmann is a master's candidate in Industrial Engineering and Management at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), specialising in energy economics and technology, and sustainable development. He is involved in several initiatives around sustainability, member of Fridays for Future Karlsruhe, supporting its regional and federal work, and Students for Future, organising outreach activities on climate science and the sustainable energy transition. He is a member of the university Group Kine e.V., leading the SolarCampus Project, and member of the student parliament, representing the Green Alternative List (GAL).

## JOHANNES HERRMANN

ACTIVIST WITH FRIDAYS  
FOR FUTURE

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

**Cairo Climate Talks** are conceived, organized and hosted as a cooperation between the German Embassy in Cairo, the Egyptian Ministry of Environment, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ).



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