



PRESS RELEASE

44th Cairo Climate Talks

November 22, 2016

“The Nexus between Water, Energy and Food Security in Minya”

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The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Cairo organized the 44th Cairo Climate Talks on Tuesday, November 22nd 2016, at 3pm at the University of Minya under the title “The Nexus between Water, Energy and Food Security in Minya”. The panel was held within the framework of the German Days in Upper Egypt, a four days event in the cities of Luxor, Qena, Sohag and Minya, initiated by the German Embassy in Cairo and implemented together with numerous German organizations such as DAAD, GIZ, Goethe-Institut, DWZ and DAI. It was the first time for a CCT to be held in Minya and the third time ever outside Cairo.

The Minya governorate is a densely populated and important agricultural area, where the most common crops grown are sugarcane, cotton, beans, soybeans, garlic, onions, tomatoes, potatoes, watermelon and grapes. A lot of the local industry focuses on food processing, particularly on sugar refining, onions drying and grinding as well as cotton weaving and spinning. Minya, just like the rest of Egypt's agricultural regions, is struggling with rising temperatures due to ongoing climate change. These developments are having a detrimental impact on yields and agricultural productivity.

At the 44th Cairo Climate Talks, experts from different fields of expertise gathered to provide an insight into how farmers in the Minya governorate and neighboring areas could use the already scarce resources like water, fertile soil and energy more efficiently and effectively to guarantee long-term sustainability. This would not only ensure food security for current generations but would also minimize the depletion of natural resources, thereby maintaining them to meet the needs and rights of future generations.

In his opening remarks the program's top responsible in the International Development Research Centre, Dr. Hammou Laamrani, discussed the interrelation of the three sectors water, energy and food, stating that they should be treated as a whole interrelated item: “When talking about water misuse we are talking about energy and food waste at the same time. The same thing applies for the two other sectors.” Dr. Laamrani added that “these factors go within their orbits through an infinite circle, as they are very costly sectors representing a current pressure on natural resources and

on policymakers in Egypt, considering the governmental orientations to reduce the subsidies in these sectors that shall lead to important socio-economic impacts.”

He also stated that, if there was no such interrelation between the named sectors, the farmers will not be able to produce sufficient food to meet the need of food security which in turn would lead to a high cost. Besides this, Dr. Laamrani pointed out that “Egypt suffers from inefficiency and wasteful use of resources in the three sectors, it is necessary that we address more than ever, the three resources as a whole interrelated unit. This must be clear to both, the community and the government as well, in order to ensure future generations’ rights to these three elements.”

In his intervention, Eng. Mohamed Ashraf, expert in urban development at the Technical University Berlin, focused on the interrelation between the three sectors by stating that “the importance of these three elements doesn’t represent only a vital need for our life but also they are the constituent elements making up our material body. As such, securing them guarantees our life continuity.” Eng. Ashraf also alluded to the fact that the great challenge before us is to create a nexus between water, energy and food, as well as to provide people with the required access to these resources on affordable prices. In order to guarantee the sufficiency of these resources and to achieve sustainable development, we should promote a culture of self-sufficiency, considering only the basic needs and putting aside luxury goods: “There are those who say that following the American consumption patterns would mean that we should have two earth-like planets to meet our needs.”

Dr. Nasser Barakat, Professor for Biology at the Faculty of Science at Minya University, shared the previous panelists’ views, underscoring that the rational use of our natural resources is the way forward for sustainable development. This would require both a balanced and an adequate use of resources for equitable conservation and use of natural resources to meet the needs and rights of future generations. He also added that “we should grow less water consuming crops and replace them with crops that are adapted to current impacts of climate change, such as temperature rise.” According to Dr. Barakat, some of these crops have already been experimented with in the Minya governorate.

The discussion then was moved forward by Dr. Laamrani, who postulated a further rationalization of energy consumption, a diversification of energy sources and a shifting to renewable energy, besides decreasing dependency on fossil fuels. He admitted that this shift might be a great challenge as renewable energy is still very expensive and has a low return on investment, in addition to the lack of required modern techniques in the majority of developing countries. “In spite of all constraints, investment in renewable energy is a must; it will save money and efforts in the long run”, Dr. Laamrani concluded.

The three speakers agreed on four points briefed by Dr. Laamrani as follows:

- The need to link between the three sectors water, energy and food, recalling that the nexus can no longer be considered a luxury.

- The awareness that any of the three sectors posed to a potential risk is likely to affect the performance of the other two sectors, making rationalization a radical but necessary solution to avoid depletion of natural resources.
- The necessity to increase capabilities with other nested spheres.
- The call for regulations relevant to the three sectors, leading the community to change its behavior towards resources in order to maintain them to meet the needs and rights of future generations.

Eng. Ashraf concluded the discussions by asking the audience a question: “What will we do in 100 years, if we don’t have self-sufficiency in water, energy and food?”

Background Information:

The Cairo Climate Talks are conceived, organized and hosted by the German Embassy in Cairo in close cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Environment, the German Science Center (DWZ), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). For more information, please visit our website www.cairoclimatetalks.net or contact press@cairoclimatetalks.net.