



Press Release

65th Cairo Climate Talks

23rd January 2020

On 23 January 2020 – Cairo Climate Talks hosted its 65th panel discussing the outcomes of COP25. COP is short for “Conference of Parties” and refers to the United Nations’ annual Climate Conference¹ which took place under the Presidency of the Government of Chile in Madrid from 2nd to 13th of December 2019. During the CCT titled “COP25: An Ambitious Call for Action”, representatives of governmental organisations, civil society and environmental science came together to discuss what international climate negotiations mean for Egypt and Germany and what is the best way forward.

Ms. Isabell Mering, Director of the DAAD Cairo, reflected on the prevailing sentiment of disappointment following the latest negotiations: “unfortunately, the outcomes of COP25 showed that our battle to combat the negative impacts of climate change is still on the losing front.” Mr. Philippe Maupai, Head of the Science Department at the German Embassy, added that recent extreme weather events are a powerful reminder of the urgency of global climate action. Citing the fires in Australia and northern Germany, as well as increased flooding globally and in Egypt, he warned: “We can all see that climate change is already affecting us, and if we continue with the current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) we will not only miss our target of 1.5 degrees, but we will head towards a 3-degree increase, with catastrophic consequences for life as we know it.”

Dr. Kira Vinke, researcher and project leader at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, compared human-made climate change to the impact of fever on the human body: with global temperatures rising to levels never seen before, the world’s organs are beginning to shut down. Dying coral reefs and burning rain forests (often dubbed the lungs of the world) are some of the consequences of the world’s ‘fever’ we can already see and predict. With almost 30% of the Delta predicted to be lost due to rising sea levels, Egyptians already belong to the most vulnerable to climate change. Dr. Mohamed Gad, Ambassador and Director of Environment and Sustainable

¹ Under the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Development at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointed out that “we currently estimate the cost of Egypt’s adaptation needs 70-80 billion\$, the needs of Africa would exceed 20 trillion dollars”. Negotiating shared financial responsibility therefore remains at the heart of international climate negotiations.

However, all panellists agreed that not all is lost. Dr. Gad cautioned the audience that “in the world of diplomacy, you don’t have a magic wand,” processes might seem slow, but they do eventually move towards progress. He highlighted how the fact that world leaders have met a total of 25 times to discuss climate change is a success in its own and assured that last year’s negotiations aren’t lost but form the foundation for next year’s agreements.

The importance of the private sector as a driver towards climate protection was affirmed by Mr. Uwe Gehlen, Head of German Development Cooperation at the German Embassy in Egypt. He spoke of a changing climate awareness, which brought climate politics to the political negotiating tables and led to “a systemic shift in Germany two decades ago.” Mr. Gehlen stressed on this need for both top-down and bottom-up approaches, as governments’ and individuals’ needs meet at the consumption level, they need to jointly push corporations towards climate protection and sustainability.

This change in consumer behaviour is increasingly built by civil society. The panellists frequently mentioned the Fridays for Future movement that has taken young people by storm, emphasising how a society increasingly educated about climate change can become a vital driver in pushing for climate protection. Ms. Haneen Shaheen, a board member for the Climate Action Network - Arab World, presented the civil society aspect of COP25. “There needs to be proper streamlined communication between civil society, the government and negotiators,” Ms. Shaheen pointed out. Only when the concerns and well-being of societies are reflected in the agreements, the panellists agreed, a transparent climate dialogue can be achieved within and beyond COP, as well as between representatives of the Global South and North.

While the panel discussion was a rollercoaster of optimism, sobering truths and fascinating scientific facts, all attendees reached the same conclusion climate change needs to change into climate protection ASAP, or as Mr. Maupai framed it: “We need to choose the path of hope; a path full of climate actions, a path where we are on the way to carbon neutrality. And this path starts now.”

Background Information:

The 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 Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

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