

A sand cat is peering out from a hole in a sand dune. The cat has light-colored fur with darker spots and stripes, and large, pointed ears. Its eyes are a striking green color. The hole is roughly circular and is set into the soft, sandy surface of the dune. The background is a vast, open desert landscape under a clear sky.

UNESCO
SULTAN QABOOS
PRIZE

FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
PRESERVATION

14th A W A R D I N G C E R E M O N Y • 2 0 1 7

2017





SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

UNESCO SULTAN QABOOS PRIZE
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

2017



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

HIS MAJESTY
SULTAN QABOOS
BIN SAID

SULTAN OF OMAN





Thousands of sea turtles migrate annually to lay their eggs on the Sultanate's shores

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THE SPEECH OF HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID

EARTH SUMMIT – BRAZIL, 3-14 JUNE 1992

On the occasion of the convening of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development it gives us pleasure to address the world community at large, especially the conferees, recalling their previous meeting in Stockholm, that historic gathering, which is regarded as the first sound step for establishing a correct relationship between man and the environment.

Since that meeting was held twenty years ago the world has witnessed numerous environmental catastrophes as a result of conflicts and other man-made pollutants before it has again realized the gravity of the present situation.

We in the Sultanate of Oman and in the Arab world as a whole would like to pay tribute to the U.N General Secretariat's decision, as well as to its role in organizing the Conference. We would also like to thank the friendly government of Brazil for the efforts it has exerted to make such excellent arrangements for the Conference.

As human-beings co-existing on this planet we have gravely neglected the vital necessity of conserving the environment and natural resources due to the lack of collective coordination. Indeed, we have taken a potentially fatal opposing course of luxury and industrial progress, regardless of the resulting imbalance between development and the environment, and without taking into account the dire consequences of the effects upon the atmosphere and the ozone layer, river and sea water, the extermination of certain species, the destruction of forests, and the contamination of once fertile soil. Should this continue, humanity will court collective suicide.

The conservation of the environment is the responsibility of all of us, a responsibility that knows no political boundaries. Therefore, man, wherever he lives, must order his life accordingly. This must be done in a planned, rational way and taking into consideration the numerous causes of pollution, whether natural, biological, industrial, chemical or physical.

We must set a limit to haphazard methods and protect what is left of our grazing lands and water resources against desertification and drought.

We also call upon industrialized nations to temper their heedless technological rivalry, which directly contributes to this dangerous situation, and to strive to narrow the wide disparity which exists between their own and the developing countries, in order to redress the balance between development and the maintenance of a clean environment.

We are sure that the Conference will give the utmost importance to the issues related to that subject.

We, in the Sultanate of Oman, through our deep personal interest and the directives we have given our Government to act in concert with neighboring countries, are making energetic efforts to protect our environment and territorial waters from pollution and other problems.

Recently the Gulf region and the Middle East witnessed regrettable and painful environmental disasters as a result of regional conflicts. Unless those regional problems are properly settled, the efforts exerted to conserve the environment and to continue the development process will be disastrously jeopardized.

We hope that world detente and the positive trend being pursued in settling serious problems will permit us to work together, regardless of ideologies and selfish national interests, to address the environmental and development-related issues which face us in a spirit of reconciliation, amity and peace so as to secure a healthy life for ourselves and the generations to come.



FOREWORD BY HER EXCELLENCY THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION SULTANATE OF OMAN



Among the priorities of the Sultanate of Oman's development plans is ensuring the safety and preservation of the environment and its varied natural resources. This care emanates from the personal attention His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has devoted to environmental preservation in general and the preservation of the Omani environment in particular. The Sultanate of Oman is one of the foremost countries in the setting of regulations and laws to protect its environment and develop its natural resources in the belief that maintaining a healthy and diversified ecological system is essential to the achievement of sustainable development. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs has enacted laws and legislation as part of its strategic plans to reflect the commitment of the Sultanate of Oman to international conventions and treaties related to preserving ecological systems and promoting sustainable development.

The efforts of the Sultanate of Oman are not limited to the preservation of the environment at the local level, but are extended to establish international cooperation and partnerships with other countries based on mutual understanding and dialogue. This concept of cooperation and partnership is based on the importance of the common interests of countries in the preservation and management of environmental resources. Thus, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, during his visit to UNESCO in Paris in 1989, announced his intention to establish a UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation to illustrate the fruitful cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and UNESCO in this field.



Since its launch in 1991, the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation has made a significant contribution to encouraging scientists and institutions concerned with environmental issues from all over the world to conduct research and applied studies. This research has addressed issues and challenges facing different ecological systems, as well as promoting a favourable culture to strengthen the relationships between individuals and the environment through education and training on sustainable development.

The UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation 2017 will be awarded to the laureates at the World Science Forum 2017, which will be held in Jordan between 7th and 11th November 2017, which coincides with the UNESCO celebration of World Science Day for Peace and Development. I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to the government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, UNESCO and all international partners who contributed to the organization of this important event.

I would also like to commend the efforts of the committee formed by UNESCO to decide the winners of the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation 2017.

Finally, I wish every possible success to the World Science Forum 2017.

DR. MADIHA AHMED AL-SHAIBANI

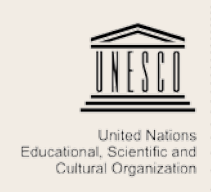
Minister of Education

Chairperson of the Omani National Commission
for Education, Culture and Science



HE Irina Bukova, Director-General of UNESCO and HE Dr. Madiha Al Shaibani, Minister of Education, Sultanate of Oman, opening the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize exhibition, Brazil, 2013

FOREWORD BY HER EXCELLENCY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO



*I*n 2015, the international community marked two milestones in the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the *Paris Climate Agreement*. Together, these agreements for a single agenda for human rights and dignity, for more inclusive and sustainable development, and for lasting peace.

To take this agenda forward, we need the full power of scientifically sound information and data. This is essential for more effective public policy and to raise the public awareness about responses to challenges facing all societies today. Science is key to crafting effective solutions to enhance public welfare while respecting the boundaries of our planet.

This is the importance of the *UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation*, created in 1991 to shine light on outstanding contributions by individuals and organizations to environmental and natural resources research, environmental education and training, the creation of environmental awareness and activities aimed at establishing and managing UNESCO designated biosphere reserves and natural World Heritage sites. Each in different ways, Laureates of this Prize are making long-lasting, positive impacts on sustainable development.

In this spirit, I wish to highlight the pivotal role of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Al-Said of Oman. The *UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation* would not have been possible without the foresight and generosity of His Majesty to whom I am deeply grateful. UNESCO is honoured to have been entrusted with one of the world's leading prizes in the field of the environment and sustainable development at a time when this has never been so urgent.

IRINA BOKOVA

Director-General

of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organisation

SEVENTEEN GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD



*“The conservation of the environment is the responsibility of all of us,
a responsibility that knows no political boundaries”*



His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said

Brazil, June 1992



A COMMON CAUSE FOR ALL NATIONS – THE PARIS AGREEMENT



The Paris Agreement builds upon the Convention and - for the first time - brings all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so. As such, it charts a new course in the global climate effort.

The Paris Agreement's central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Additionally, the agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change. To reach these ambitious goals, appropriate financial flows, a new technology framework and an enhanced capacity building framework will be put in place, thus supporting action by developing countries and the most vulnerable countries, in line with their own national objectives. The Agreement also provides for enhanced transparency of action and support through a more robust transparency framework.

So far 162 Parties have ratified of 197 Parties to the Convention

On 5 October 2016, the threshold for entry into force of the Paris Agreement was achieved. The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016.

UNESCO SULTAN QABOOS PRIZE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

Allah has granted Oman an environment rich with natural resources that provides a source for income and prosperity and a rich habitat for a wide variety of birds and animals.

His Majesty's government was from the very start committed to protecting and sustaining this environment while it was proceeding with industrial, agricultural and infrastructural developments. This meant taking the environment into account at all planning stages to ensure that it was protected from any potential risk associated with human development.

The establishment of the Environment Protection and Pollution Control Council in 1979 was a major accomplishment on this path and this culminated in the establishment of the Ministry of the Environment in 1984 to carry out a national plan for the environment and to implement regulations, in coordination with other ministries and agencies. Since the tasks of both the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Regional Municipalities were the same, the government consolidated the two ministries into one, with the creation of the Ministry of Water Resources. The main aim of this Ministry is to protect the Omani environment in all its forms and diversity from pollution and to establish nature reserves for various species of birds and animals (for example, the Al-Harases nature reserve for Oryx re-habitation and the turtles' nature reserve in Ras Al-Jinz).

During his visit to the headquarters of UNESCO in 1989, His Majesty donated a prize for those interested in environmental affairs globally. In Paris in November 1990, the Council of "Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)" expressed its thanks, appreciation and deep gratitude to His Majesty for his generous donation and the following year, it was announced that the prize would be awarded to individuals, groups of individuals, institutes or organisations for distinguished efforts in the field of environmental management and preservation.



Sand dunes in Sharqiyah region

PRESENTATION OF THE
14th
UNESCO
SULTAN QABOOS
PRIZE FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
PRESERVATION
2017
7 NOVEMBER · AMMAN · JORDAN

WORLD SCIENCE FORUM
2017 JORDAN
SCIENCE FOR PEACE
7-11 NOVEMBER 2017



Dana Biosphere Reserve, Jordan

THE STATUTES OF THE PRIZE

■ Purpose

The purpose of the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation is to afford recognition to outstanding contributions by individuals, groups of individuals, institutes or organisations who have contributed to environmental and natural resources research, environmental education and training, creation of environmental awareness through the preparation of environmental information materials and activities aimed at establishing and managing protected areas such as biosphere reserves and natural world heritage sites. The objective of the Prize is on conformity with UNESCO's policies and is related to the Programme of the Organization in the field of the environment, natural resources and education for sustainable development.

■ Designation, amount and periodicity of the Prize

The Prize shall be entitled the "UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation." The Prize shall be funded by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman through its donations to the special account established by UNESCO for the Prize. The value of the Prize shall be USD 70,000. A higher amount may be determined by the Director-General in consultation with the Government of the Sultanate of Oman on the basis of the contributions received from Government of the Sultanate of Oman, the interest on the sum deposited in the special account, in accordance with the Financial Regulations of UNESCO, and the charges to be borne by the account for the cost of administering the Prize, including Prize medals and diplomas and advertising costs. The Prize shall be awarded every two years, on an initial basis for (three) biennia. A prize amount may be equally divided between up to three winners.

■ Conditions/Qualifications of candidates

Candidates shall have made a significant contribution to the management or preservation of the environment, consistent with the policies, aims and objectives of UNESCO, in relation to the Organization's programmes in this field, i.e. environmental and natural resources research, environmental education and training, creation of environmental awareness through the preparation of environmental information materials and activities aimed at establishing and managing protected areas such as biosphere reserves and natural world heritage sites. Prizes may be conferred upon individuals, institutions, other entities or non-governmental organizations.

■ Designation/Selection of the prize-winner/s

The prize-winner/s (1-3) shall be selected by the Director-General of UNESCO on the basis of the assessments and recommendations made to him/her by a jury. The Jury shall consist of a number of five independent members, being personalities with a recognized reputation in the field covered while also taking into consideration

the need for equitable geographical distribution gender equality and the principle of non-payment of honoraria. They shall be appointed by the Director-General for two year periods for a maximum period of six years. The Jury shall send an assessment on nominations and accompanying recommendations to the Director-General of UNESCO no later than 30 September of each biennium.

■ Nomination of candidates

The Director-General of UNESCO officially invites the submission of nominations to the Secretariat of the Prize, by 15 July every two years, from the governments of Member States, in consultation with their National Commissions, as well as from non-governmental organizations maintaining official partnerships with the Organization and active in relevant fields covered by a prize and shall advertise the submission of nominations in five international specialized media.

Nominations shall be submitted to the Director-General by the governments of Member States, in consultation with their National Commissions, and by non-governmental organizations maintaining official partnerships with UNESCO. A self-nomination cannot be considered.

Each nomination shall be accompanied by a written recommendation, which shall include, in English and French, *inter alia*:

- (a) a description of the candidate's background and achievements;
- (b) a summary of the work or the results of the work, publications and other supporting documents of major importance, submitted for consideration;
- (c) a definition of the candidate's contribution to the Prize's objectives.

■ Procedure for the awarding of the Prize

The Prize shall be awarded by the Director-General at an official ceremony held for that purpose in conjunction with the occasion of the World Science Forum. UNESCO shall present to the prize-winner/s a check for the amount of the prize, as well as diploma and a medal. UNESCO shall officially announce the name/s of the prize-winner/s.

If a work being rewarded has been produced by two or three persons or institutions, the prize shall be awarded to them jointly. In no case may a prize amount be divided between more than three persons and/or institutions.

The prize-winner/s, if possible, shall give a lecture on a subject relevant to the work for which the prize has been awarded. Such a lecture shall be organized during, or in connection with the Prize ceremony.





THE PRIZE WINNERS 1991-2017 AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

2017 UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

The Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) Bureau declared that the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation for 2017 is awarded to:

■ The National Parks Board of Singapore

for its important commitment and work in support of environmental preservation. The National Parks Board (NParks) promotes biodiversity conservation in a highly urbanized and land-scarce landscape, recovery of habitats and species and supports the incorporation of biodiversity into all levels of the educational system. Notably, the NParks manages Singapore's first World Heritage Site - The Singapore Botanic Gardens, together with 350 parks and four nature reserves. The NParks along with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has developed the 'Singapore Index on Cities' Biodiversity' - an important self-assessment tool for the evaluation of biodiversity conservation efforts by cities. NParks has conducted significant conservation biology research that has resulted in the discovery of new endemic plant and terrestrial invertebrate species. These results have been used by the NParks to design better management plans and facilitate science-based decision-making.



View from Jebel Shams - part of the Hajar mountain range

2015

UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize
for Environmental Preservation

- Prof. Fabio A. Kalensnik, Prof. Horacio Sirolli, Prof. Luciano Iribarren;
Wetlands Ecology Group
University of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Through their research the Wetlands Ecology Research Group has designed and conducted studies on a broad range of ecological aspects related to wetland ecosystems at different spatial and temporal scales, as well as on social-environmental issues. They have undertaken critically important environmental education and training initiatives. Notably, the group has focused its work on the unique *Delta del Paraná Biosphere Reserve* and they have been instrumental in the establishment and management of the *Delta del Paraná Biosphere Reserve* designated under the UNESCO Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme.



ESTABLISHED FOR THE BENEFIT
OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

2013

UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize
for Environmental Preservation

- The State Forests National Holding,
Poland;
- The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT),
South Africa

The State Forests National Holding, Poland

Established in 1924, the State Forests National Holding of Poland is in charge of the management of the majority of Poland's forests. It is the largest institution of its kind in Europe and it has a major influence on how important forestry resources are managed sustainably for multiple benefits taking into account ecological, socio-cultural and economic aspects.

**The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT),
South Africa**

Founded in 1973, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) designs and manages a range of innovative environmental protection programs in southern Africa. The EWT develops effective methodologies and best practice guidelines to help reduce negative environmental impacts. The EWT works in close cooperation with local communities for the preservation and sustainable use of threatened species and ecosystems.

2011

UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

- **Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN), Ibadan, Nigeria**

The Institute has played an important role in the establishment and management of nature reserves in Nigeria. FRIN carried out the baseline research activities and the development of innovative process technology to convert wood waste into useful products. The Institute has contributed also to the development of technologies for the stabilization of sand dunes, desertification and erosion control, research for national forestation programmes and development of permanent sample plots for seed orchards. Through its four training colleges, FRIN has contributed over the years to the training of technical manpower needs in the forestry sector, as well as other agro-allied sectors of the economy.

2009

UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

- **Autonomous Authority for National Parks (OAPN) under the Spanish Ministry of Environment, Rural and Marine Areas, Spain**

Within Spain, OAPN works to conserve the country's natural heritage: through efforts to save endangered species and their habitats, elimination of nonnative species, restoration of degraded areas, air and water quality monitoring, as well as through its work to support environmental education, awareness, and training.

Internationally, the OAPN has a leading role in promoting the exchange of experiences on protected areas management, development of research projects, capacity building for park management authorities, technology and resource transfer to support conservation and management, and strengthening of sustainable development.



Avian species abound in Oman's diverse habitats

*2007*UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize
for Environmental Preservation

- Dr Julius Oszlányi, Slovakia;
- Institute of Biodiversity Conservation, Ethiopia

Dr Julius Oszlányi

Mr Oszlányi's devotion to furthering and promoting ecological research and conservation of biological diversity led to strengthening and promoting the World Network of Biosphere Reserve. Furthermore he contributed to developing the Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves and promoting trans boundary biosphere reserves.

Institute of Biodiversity Conservation, Ethiopia

Established in 1976, IBD's objective is to establish systems that ensure the conservation and sustainable use of Ethiopia's biodiversity. In particular with regard to genetic resources conservation and utilization, IBS has conducted several inventories and surveys in order to gather and document information on the types and distribution of the farmers' land races, as well as forest and aquatic resources and medicinal plants.

*2005*UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize
for Environmental Preservation

- Dr Ernesto C. Enkerlin-Hoeflich, Mexico;
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Australia

Dr Ernesto C. Enkerlin-Hoeflich

Dr Ernesto C. Enkerlin-Hoeflich is the President of the National Commission on Natural Protected Areas of Mexico (CONANP). He mobilized unprecedented support to establish the NGO Pronatura Noreste in 1997, which is today one of the Mexico's leading conservation organizations. During his four-year tenure at CONANP, which is responsible for the conservation of all protected areas in Mexico, five new biosphere reserves were successfully incorporated into the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)

GBRMPA has created a framework that, whilst allowing reasonable human use, will ensure the healthy survival of the coastal and marine ecosystems. One important component of this new management framework is the new zoning plan that came into law on 1st July 2004. This plan increased the proportion of the Marine Park's highly protected 'no-take' zones from less than 5% to more than 33%, and now protects representative examples of each of the 70 broad habitat types. The Great Barrier Reef was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1981.

2003

UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

- Mr Peter Johan Schei, Norway;
- Centro de Ecología, Venezuela

Mr Peter Johan Schei

The selection of Mr Schei was in appreciation of his extraordinary contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources. Furthermore, the Prize acknowledges Mr Schei's role as facilitator in the dialogue between developed and developing countries in the international environmental arena, especially in the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Centro de Ecología, Venezuela

In 2003 the Center for Ecology was awarded the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation in recognition of its outstanding contribution in generating a wealth of scientific knowledge in the field of tropical ecology, and successfully disseminating this knowledge to professionals and the general public, through education, training and awareness raising.

2001

UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

- Chad Association of Volunteers
for the Protection of the Environment

Since 1997, the Chad Association of Volunteers for the Protection of the Environment (ATVPE) has carried out many significant and highly successful activities in the different regions of Chad, especially in the critical areas of reforestation and soil conservation. Over a period of five years, i.e. 1997–2001, the Association planted almost 20,000 trees across the country and has produced and distributed 70,000 seedlings to the local population. Traditional technologies are used in combating desertification and in minimizing the effects of drought.



UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for
Environmental Preservation
Awards Ceremony in Budapest, Hungary, 2015

1999

UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

■ Charles Darwin Foundation for the Galapagos Islands

Charles Darwin Foundation (CDF) describes its work in the Galapagos Islands as "Science and Education for Conservation". The mission of CDF is to provide the knowledge and support to ensure the conservation of the environment and biodiversity of the Galapagos Archipelago through scientific research and complementary actions. Those complementary actions include educating, training, advising, and forming alliances with local groups as well as other institutions in these related fields.

1997

UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

- The Department of Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Science, University of Alexandria, Egypt;
- The Forest Department of Sri Lanka, Dr. C.V. Savitri Gunatilleke, Dr. I.A.U. Nimal Gunatilleke, Dr. Peter S. Ashton, and Dr. P. Mark Ashton

The Department of Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Science, University of Alexandria, Egypt

The Department was selected for the 1997 UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation in recognition of its excellent work on environmental science education and training to undergraduate and graduate students in general and specialized environmental science courses, monitoring research studies on El-Omayed biosphere Reserves for assessing environmental changes and assessing socio-economic aspects of sustainable development and promoting environmental awareness by holding seminars dealing with contemporary environmental issues.

The Forest Department of Sri Lanka, Dr. C.V. Savitri Gunatilleke, Dr. I.A.U. Nimal Gunatilleke, Dr. Peter S. Ashton, and Dr. P. Mark Ashton

The Forest Department of Sri Lanka and the Sinharaja group (Dr. C.V. Savitri Gunatilleke, Dr. I.A.U. Nimal Gunatilleke, Dr. Peter S. Ashton, and Dr. P. Mark Ashton) have contributed significantly to teaching and moulding young students, both in the university and outside, and also educating the public, especially the local villagers on the benefits of conservation of biological diversity.

1995

UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

■ Lake Malawi National Park

The Man and Biosphere (MAB) Bureau decided to allocate the 1995 UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation to LMNP, based on its ambitious management programme largely carried-out in cooperation with local communities. The management programme for the LMNP not only contributes to the protection of the rich biodiversity in the area, but also promotes the welfare of all the people who live in and around the park.

1993

UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

■ Professor Jan Jeník, the Czech Republic

For more than 40 years Jan Jeník's goal-oriented studies dealt with the structure and function of forests, plant-soil-climate interactions in various landscape systems and biotic communities in tropical and temperate biomes. He served, as an effective link in trans boundary co-operation in the European region, particularly within the Man and Biosphere Programme (UNESCO/MAB). He also participated in the establishment and advisory bodies for trans boundary, bilateral and/or trilateral protected landscapes along the boundaries of Central European countries.

1991

UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

■ The Instituto de Ecología A.C. of Mexico

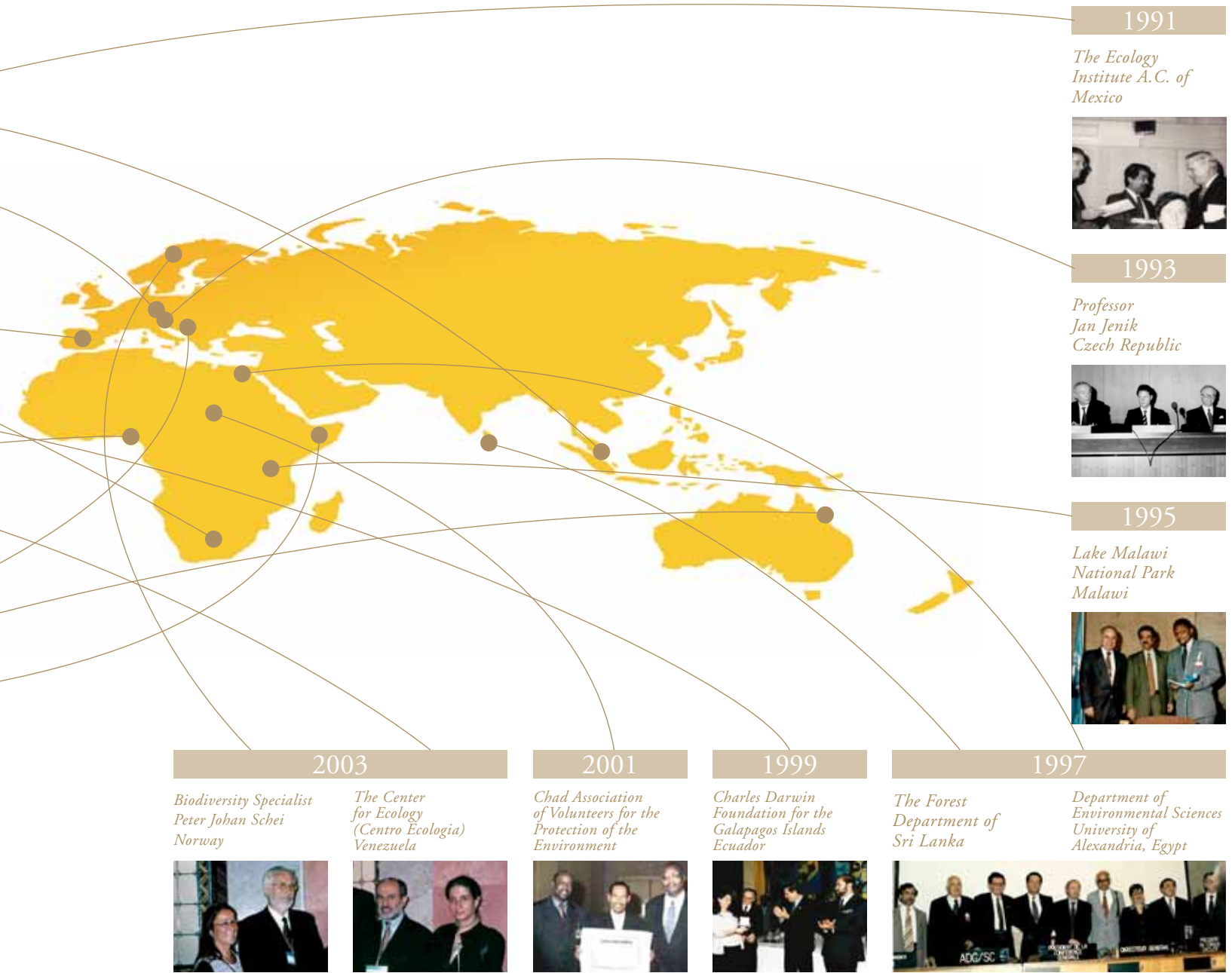
The Instituto de Ecología A.C. of Mexico has made very important contributions to scientific research and training in the field of natural resources. It has furthered progress in the ecological sciences and the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources not only in Mexico but also at regional and interregional levels. The quality of the Institute's research is reflected in the many national and international distinctions it has received.



Reception ceremony with the laureates of 2015

THE WINNERS OF THE UNESCO-SULTAN QABOOS PRIZE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION 1991-2017





ACTIVITIES, RESEARCH PROJECTS AND MOST IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS PERTAINING TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Kalesnik F, Sirolli H, Iribarren L

Wetlands Ecology Research Group (GIEH).

Faculty of Natural and Exact Science (FCEN),
University of Buenos Aires (UBA) and National Scientific
and Technical Research Council (CONICET). Argentina.

Prize laureates 2015

*I*n the year 2000, our research group had the opportunity to contribute to the creation of the Paraná Delta Biosphere Reserve (PDBR). Following its establishment, we have actively participated in the operation of the Biosphere Reserve, attending Management Committee meetings and collaborating as scientific advisors.

Research priorities include the following: conservation and ecological restoration of wetland environments, environmental education with schools and island social movements and generation of productive alternatives for the island community. All activities aim to identify the interaction between the natural and socio-cultural factors that operate in the PDBR and the Lower Paraná Delta region, considering the historical forms of use of the common goods of nature and the relationship with the ecological processes that provide the wetlands, in order to strengthen the island's identity and way of life.

Among the initiatives in conservation of the environment and species of the PDBR are: mapping and description of the last patches of native forest, ex-situ and in-situ seed bank studies, essays of ecology restoration based on plantation of native plants and translocation of



Paraná Delta Biosphere Reserve, Argentina

seed bank, analysis of biological invasions, the study of potential anthropic use of plant species, the development of a succession model of secondary forests and the characterization of new types of environments.

In relation to initiatives in developing productive alternatives with island residents, we can mention the development of a model that aims to generate a productive activity that benefits both people and their environment. It is based on the rescue of seedlings of native plants that grow in places where the plants are in danger of being cut or crushed (e.g. active forest plantations). There is also a proposal to add value to the activity of beekeeping by ecological restoration of the native forests. This involves planting original native forest species in an area where beekeeping activities are carried out. In this way the floral offering for the bees is diversified and the richness and abundance of plants in the forests of the PDBR is increased.

With regard to environmental education and training initiatives, we can mention: the publication of a book for training in education for the environment and development and a booklet on a botanical garden in schools, the creation of a nursery of native plants in island schools, the development of interpretation paths and educational posters for the PDBR and the production of an short documentary and a didactic card game. Also, more than a hundred teachers have received specific training in courses we have offered since 2003 and who have then put into practice environmental education projects in their respective schools. All the initiatives are aimed at identifying the interaction between natural and socio-cultural factors that operate in the PDBR, considering the historical forms of exploitation of natural resources, and to enhance and rebuild individual and collective identity of the island from the recovery of belonging and understanding of the history of this community.

Contradictions within the global economic system threaten the environmentally valuable territories left on the planet. Failure to act intelligently and decisively, will lead the region into a situation of socio-environmental degradation, including the loss of native plant communities, the abandonment of traditional island productive activities, the development of harmful activities such as mega real-estate projects, and a high rate of emigration of local residents. The projects we develop in our group, are part of this search. We combine conservation and ecological restoration of wetland environments, environmental education projects, productive alternatives to the island community and participation in the management of the Biosphere Reserve.

Benefits of being awarded the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize

To have received this recognition, awarded for our outstanding contribution to the preservation of the environment, is a matter of great pride for us, not only for the effort we devote to our work, but also for having been awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; three concepts that we consider essential in our lives. Recognition is often hard to achieve, so it means a lot for us to have been recognized from other parts of

the world. We believe that this award motivates us to continue on this path and to make the Paraná Delta Biosphere Reserve an increasingly better land management model in social and environmental issues.

We have received two main benefits from being awarded the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize. First, the media impact; since the prize has been disseminated in a large number of local, national and international media. Second, the possibility of being able to cover expenses of our activities mainly related to transport, materials, equipment and diffusion. Within the context of the current problems of loss of environments and biodiversity, we believe that the prize contributes greatly in showing that it is not only individuals who are making efforts to care for nature, but also whole communities are very generously willing to promote such activities for the benefit of all.



Paraná Delta Biosphere Reserve, Argentina

More information:

Audiovisual with our activities, shortened version (4:29):
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=OB6IRAaV4ueAcb1I2QmxTOWtVN1k>

Audiovisual with our activities, extended version (21:22):
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=OB6IRAaV4ueAcNmlDd19fYjVwVnc>

Some photos:
<https://goo.gl/photos/hZb5KsWaJjnBebJS6>



The Arabian Oryx is a remarkable specie of the Omani environment - Jaddat Al Harasis, Al Wusta Governorate

FACING THE CHALLENGE OF MAINTAINING A BALANCE BETWEEN THE DEMANDS OF NATURE AND THE NEEDS OF MAN

The State Forests National Holding, Poland

Prize laureates 2013

*T*he State Forests National Forest Holding (SFNFH) of Poland plays a major role in ensuring the sustainable management of forests, which means that the provision of non-productive functions of forests should go hand in hand with the supply of wood and a variety of other social and environmental services, whenever possible in a balanced way. At the same time the organization dedicates large part of its activities for raising public awareness of environmental concerns. Established in 1924, it currently takes care of over three-fourths of Polish forests (7.6 of 9.3 million hectares) on behalf of the State Treasury. Its main mission is to manage national forests in a way which guarantees their preservation, and protects and grows their resources. In 2013 the State Forests was awarded with the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation, which gave even greater recognition of the multiple values and functions of forests and their essential role in the everyday life of the society.

Managing forests responsibly

SFNFH is a leader in nature protection, forest tourism and education and also the biggest supplier of raw timber in Poland. The organization employs more than 25 thousand people, including forest managers, engineers, forest rangers, educators. Unlike in many other countries, SFNFH is a self-financing entity, independent from state subsidies.

Throughout history, the State Forests have faced many challenges. At the end of the 18th century, forests still covered about 40% of the then area of Poland. Foreign occupiers who overexploited natural resources brought about a fall in forest cover in Poland to less than 21% by 1945. Owing to the effort of foresters this situation was reversed and today the forest area in Poland has increased by 2.5 million hectares and covers 29.5% of the country. Each

year the State Forests renew and afforest an area of 50 thousand hectares planting 500 million trees in the process. The State Forests spend approximately 100 million USD yearly to protect forests from natural disasters, insect pests, game damage and fires.

The majority of nature protection in Poland exists on the area managed by the State Forests. Over 80% of nature reserves in Poland are located in the territory administrated by the State Forests. 40% of all forests under the administration of the State Forests are included in the European Network Natura 2000. The State Forests also run and finance a number of original protection and restitution programmes of threatened species of fauna and flora. The most recognizable symbol of nature conservation on Poland is the bison. At the beginning of the 20th century this species was close to extinction. Mainly due to breeding and reintroduction guided by foresters, the bison population in Poland has grown to 1300 individuals, the majority of which reside in the State Forests.

One of the main tasks of the SFNFH is to make forests accessible to society. Through careful planning and infrastructure development foresters arrange the tourist flow, so as to ensure it does not harm nature. Foresters have provided tourists with 22 thousand km of hiking routes, 4 thousand km of bicycle trails, 7 thousand km of horse-riding trails, 3 thousand forest car parks and parking lots, and 4.5 thousand accommodation options.

Forest education is a vital part of the State Forests' work. For the popularization of knowledge on forest ecosystems the State Forests have created 5.5 thousand objects, such as ecological education centres and didactic trails. Every year 2 million people (children, adults and seniors, including disabled persons) participate in workshops, school lessons, outdoor activities, lectures, picnics, exhibitions, or shows organized by foresters.

Development based on research

In order to broaden knowledge about the forest ecosystems, as well as to evaluate and improve forest management efficiency and the understanding of different forest functions, the State Forests implement new research and development projects.

One of the recent projects is a large-scale inventory and monitoring of the forest areas. The aim of this project planned for subsequent years is to provide detailed knowledge on the natural richness of the forest areas (e.g. protected species, natural habitats, and the biodiversity of forest ecosystems). The project is also particularly important for assessing the environmental impact of various investment projects. It will provide different levels of state administration bodies with quality data important for the decision-making process.

Part of the project activities includes the inventory of the natural resources in the Białowieża Forest. The research activities encompass botanical, ornithological, entomological, herpetological, chiropterological inventories. The

cultural heritage has also been assessed by an archaeological inventory. The most modern methods and technologies are used for collecting data and monitoring changes in the forest ecosystems. The project started with establishing 1400 circular monitoring plots, where scientists and experts from the State Forests carry out a number of studies, such as stand measuring (live and dead trees, wood decay) and phytosociological picture. The data gathered during the project will provide reliable information on the current state of the forest which will subsequently allow for the monitoring of changes in species composition, forest sanitary conditions and state of preservation of forest habitats. It will also help in determining the best way to preserve the natural richness of the Białowieża Forest.

Active response to global climate threats

Another development project promotes the role of forests in climate change mitigation by establishing the Forest Carbon Farms, an unique idea to enhance carbon dioxide sequestration capacity by the forests. Forests are an important carbon sink, since they continuously sequester and store carbon from the atmosphere due to both natural processes and human action. The project aims to enhance this function of the forests without harming biodiversity or other related functions such as water protection. Specific forest management practices are to be employed within the project in order to enhance carbon stock in forests. These include, for example, developing multi-annual programmes for rebuilding a forest stand species composition and silviculture practices aiming at shaping their multi-layer structure. Another part of this project is a programme to rewet drained peatlands, which will not only lead to the reduction of CO₂ emissions but also to the restoration of valuable habitats.

Another important aspect of the project is to develop a trading system for CO₂ units. The State Forests will offer other entities the opportunity to purchase carbon dioxide units through auction and, thereby, make a contribution to climate protection. Buyers will be provided with a special certificate and will be invited to decide on special projects or activities e.g. promoting nature protection or development of touristic infrastructures to be undertaken by the State Forests.

The UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation bestowed on the State Forests in 2013 was widely and well received by the Polish public, helping foresters immensely to promote ideas of sustainable forest management, to popularize knowledge of their projects for biodiversity preservation and to increase general interest in the matters of environmental protection.





CONTRIBUTION FROM THE FORESTRY RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF NIGERIA (FRIN)

Prize laureates 2011

1. Brief on the Scientific Research Activities of the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN).

- 1.1 The UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation, 2011, was won by the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN) at the 4th World Science Forum held at Budapest, Hungary on 17th November, 2011. This was a landmark achievement in the history of the Institute.
- 1.2 The award was won by FRIN on the strength of its important contributions to forest and environmental management, biodiversity conservation, sustainable food production for food security and provision of industrial raw materials and employment opportunities.
- 1.3 The environmental management-related research activities of the Institute resulted in significant achievements in the adoption of different tree species (indigenous and exotic) in the establishment of plantations in different parts of the country for a variety of management objectives. Also, the Institute's biodiversity conservation and ecological activities, including the establishment of the Forest Herbarium at its Headquarters in Ibadan, Oyo State, with well over 150,000 plant collections, are some of the highlights of the Institute's research activities.
- 1.4 Another key scientific work of FRIN is the role played by the Institute in the establishment and management of Strict Nature Reserves (SNR) and Permanent Sample Plots (PSP) in different parts of the country including the Omo Biosphere Reserve which is the only Biosphere Reserve in Nigeria recognized by UNESCO. Similarly, FRIN's valuable contributions to research through its work on bio-diesel plant materials (notably *Jatropha curcas*) have contributed to the development of appropriate nursery and plantation establishment practices, management techniques and seed quality assessment of this important bio diesel plant which is gradually being adopted for planting by stakeholders and entrepreneurs nationwide.

- 1.5 The Institute's research focus on provenance trials, nursery and Permanent Sample Plots (PSP) with a variety of indigenous and exotic trees such as *Triplochiton scleroxylon*, *Terminalia* species, Eucalyptus, Pines, Neem, Gmelina, Teak, enabled them to be successfully adopted in areas of desert encroachment control, sand dune fixation, erosion control and general climate change mitigation. These species were subsequently adopted by stakeholders such as federal, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations and private individuals. The PSPs have served as seed orchards around the country.
- 1.6 The Institute's research focus on wood waste utilization, including the use of bamboo for a variety of value-added wood product manufacturing, some of which have been perfected on a pilot commercial basis, were all aimed at reducing the exploitation of timber from the standing trees in the country's forests in order to meet the government's biodiversity conservation policy.
- 1.7 The agro-forestry research programmes have contributed to successful plantation developments and increased food production in rural settlements in the country, especially in southern Nigeria. Simply put, agro-forestry is the establishment of arable food crops and forest tree crops on the same piece of land. Farmers are free to plant their fruit crops for a period of 2 to 5 years while tending to the growing trees on the farmland. Through these activities, research has successfully incorporated the



Dhofar region habitat, Southern Oman



Alflaj irrigation system that services farms across different topographic elevations in Oman

growth of tubers such as yam, and grains such as maize and millet, as well as different kinds of vegetables within these agro-forestry set-ups.

- 1.8 Through its four training colleges, located at four different ecological zones in Nigeria, FRIN has turned out thousands of middle level graduates (National Diploma and Higher National Diploma certificate holders) to help develop forestry activities and other agro-allied related sectors of the Nigerian economy. A sizeable number of these trainees have become part of the pool of lecturers and professors in Nigerian Universities to teach forestry, environment and environmental related courses.

2. Benefits of the Award

- 2.1 The award has brought global recognition unto the Institute. It has enhanced the image of the Institute as a vision and mission focused research agency within Nigeria, Africa and the world at large.
- 2.2 The award has also attracted research/workshop and academic sponsorship from donor agencies within Africa, Europe, Asia, and USA. Many of the Institute's staff have accessed financial grants to attend workshops, conferences and training programmes in different parts of the world. While some secured long-term academic grants to study for PhDs and Masters Degree programmes, some were granted fully sponsored short training programmes within the purview of the Institute's mandates.

3. Utilization of the Award Prize

- 3.1 The \$30,000 prize won by FRIN for the 2011 UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation, was used to upgrade the Forest Herbarium, Ibadan (FHI) situated within the Institute's Headquarters in Ibadan, Oyo State.
- 3.2. The FHI has over 150,000 plant collections, the largest in West Africa, and plays the role as the National Herbarium. FHI's collections are the result of the pioneering and exploration phase of taxonomy in Nigeria. The collections are also a representative sample of Nigeria's vegetation types.
- 3.3. The FHI has trained para-taxonomists by offering the ordinary and Advance Courses in Herbarium Management and Techniques to Universities and Research Institutes, herbarium workers, for example, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria; University of Ilorin; National Institute for Stored Products Research, Ilorin; National Horticultural Research Institute, Ibadan; International Institute for Tropical Agriculture, Ibadan, and many more.
- 3.4. The FHI also serves as the National Herbarium and as a reference centre for plant identification, classification, collection and distribution for all that has to do with Nigerian plants, both for national and international research.



INTERVIEW WITH HIS EXCELLENCY MOHAMMED AL TOBI THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE AFFAIRS SULTANATE OF OMAN



“We pursue the principle of reinforcement of environmental awareness, support of principles of sustainable development and improvement of relationships with others in the fields of environment and climate”.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs emphasizes the importance of taking care of environment affairs and environmental preservation requirements within the framework of the main objectives of sustainable development.

Taking care of the environment affairs and requirements of environmental preservation is the core of the work of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs follows up the implementation of laws, regulations, bylaws, decisions and the programs of the national strategy to preserve Omani environment as well as to develop plans and programs of preservation of the environment. This process is in accordance with national objectives and policies and

in conformity with the commitments of the Sultanate of Oman with international environmental agreements within the framework of the main objectives of sustainable development. The Ministry is also responsible of following up the development, updating and implementation of the national strategy of the management of chemical materials as well as restricting control over such materials. The Ministry also conducts studies on checking radiation in different environmental locations and products. In addition, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs reviews the studies of assessment of environmental impacts of different projects, issues licenses and approvals of environment projects, establishes and operates national networks to observe pollution, such as stations of observation of air quality. It also implements regular programs of field inspection visits to projects and establishments to follow them up and to ensure that they are implementing environmental regulations, by-laws and conditions, as well as to find

out violations and to issue notices to projects which are not compliant with environment requirements and provisions. The Ministry also develops data and indicators on environment and sustainable development and includes such data and indicators in national reports in accordance with terms and provisions of relevant international environment agreements.

Plans and programs of environment control

In this regard, HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs said:

The Ministry makes endeavors to ensure that industrial projects and activities are consistent with laws and by-laws as well as international and local provisions and conditions of environment through inspections plans and programs and environment control procedures which it applies all over the Sultanate of Oman. This includes projects within the industrial areas to ensure that these projects are in accord with international and local environment laws and regulations. Some projects that have environmental impacts, such as oil refineries, petrochemical factories and electricity producing units, are obliged to conduct studies to assess impacts on environment. These studies should be developed by these agencies specialized in environmental consultation and registered at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs. The parties that intends to establish such projects should obtain the approval of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs before they start construction. After operation of such projects takes place, inspection programs and processes of environment control are or-



One of the many different species of dragonflies in Oman

ganized to ensure that these projects are consistent with environment terms and criteria which are mentioned in the letters of Approval issued by the Ministry. Other environmental provisions and terms can be added to the approval letters if such addition deems necessary following operation of these projects.

Licenses

As for the licenses of environment projects issued by the Ministry, HE the Minister said:

Licenses of environment projects are considered as one of the important mechanisms to secure safety of the environment and the sustainability of the environmental, climate and ecological systems and to ensure that these projects and factories are operated in a safe way and they do not negatively affect human health and the environment. Before the issuing of licenses and the planning of establishment of projects and factories, concerned parties of the Ministry conduct field studies of locations to ensure their suitability for the proposed projects and factories. Reviews of studies on environmental impacts of these projects and factories are carried out. Necessary environmental conditions, terms and criteria to operate such projects are set to protect the surrounding environment from any damages.

Environmental Monitoring

HE the Minister, with regard to environmental monitoring and inspection, said that the monitoring and inspection programs in the environmental field include visits of the specialists of the Ministry to follow up and check sources of pollution and emissions of projects and industries that may have environmental impacts to ensure that they meet required criteria and conditions. The Ministry also works towards establishments of monitoring stations to monitor air pollution at all times in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. There are seven permanent stations at Mina Al Fahal, Rusayl Industrial Estate , Sohar Industrial Estate, Raysut Industrial Estate, Sur Industrial Estate, Suspended Particulates PM10 monitoring station at Al Misfah in the Wilayat of Bawshar. In addition, there are four mobile stations which are moved from one place to another according to environmental requirements and conditions at different governorates of Oman. There are also eight air quality monitoring stations in the area of Sohar Industrial Port.

Controlling radioactive materials

As for controlling radioactive materials, HE the Minister said:

The Ministry issues permits of importing, storing and using of radioactive materials. The Ministry staff makes regular field visits to the locations where these materials are stored and used to ensure that safety procedures are adhered to at work sites according to the provisions of the bylaw of the control and management of radioactive materials.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs is implementing a project of establishment of the national network of monitoring radioactivity. This project includes nine early warning stations of radioactivity in different governorates of Oman. The Ministry is continuously monitoring and controlling the stages of producing, importing, storing, handling, using and getting rid of chemicals in accordance with provisions and terms of environmental legislations and laws regulating such processes, especially the regulations which control the handling and usage of chemicals issued by the Royal Decree No. 46/95 and the bylaw of registration of dangerous chemicals and their relevant permits as per the Ministerial Decree No. 248/97. Continuous assessment of risks is carried out by the Ministry and other chemical alternatives which are more safe for the environment are sought after.

Caring for environmental issues

HE the Minister said as for regard of caring for environmental issues:

The care that the Sultanate of Oman pays much care for the Omani environment, its preservation and maintaining its resources as a natural heritage and as a renewable stockpile for development plans and projects. This care of the Ministry is based on the directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and his wise thought with regard to the importance of the optimum usage of natural resources of the country since these resources belong to all generations. The directives of His Majesty the Sultan are considered as the main pillar of the national strategy of preservation of the Omani environment. The national strategy has achieved many achievements at the level of environment inside the Sultanate of Oman. These achievements are represented in making establishments and factories subject to laws that regulate environment preservation and the safekeeping of natural resources and wildlife. The requirements of preserving environment are considered as a cornerstone and a correlated mechanism of development plans that include environmental considerations in all stages of planning and implementation of the state's development projects. The Ministry also adopts the approach of reinforcement of the principle of environmental awareness and provision of support to principles of sustainable development. It also makes efforts to develop and improve interrelations with other countries in the fields of environment and climate affairs. Broad and ample aspects of cooperation with specialized agencies and organizations are also being found. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs is making sure of the safety of environment. It combats pollution and works towards preserving environmental balance within the framework of the objectives of sustainable development. It also makes endeavors to infuse the concepts and requirements of dealing with environment and climate affairs at all levels. The Ministry is representing the Sultanate of Oman at regional and international conferences.

Biodiversity

As with regard to the issue of biodiversity, HE the Minister said:

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs assumes the responsibility of setting plans and programs to preserve environment and its natural resources. In this regard, it implements laws and legislations to combat pollution and to keep safe different ecosystems within the framework of the main objectives of sustainable development. The Ministry also protects wildlife and preserves nature and renewable resources as well as makes effort to grant the use of these resources in a sustainable manner. In addition, the Ministry controls and assesses changes in ecosystems, and develops and implements national strategies, plans and projects that aim at protecting biodiversity. He added: "As part of the endeavors made by the government of Oman to protect and preserve items of wildlife, many important legal procedures were taken to prevent damage that may occur to natural sanctuaries and shelters and to protect wildlife. One of these legal procedures is the issuing of the law of protecting the environment and controlling pollution which was issued by the Royal Decree No. 114/2001 to ensure protection of environmental balance and to prevent damage to wildlife. The law of natural reserves and preservation of wildlife issued by the Royal Decree No. 6/2003 was also issued. Other ministerial decrees were issued to prevent killing of wild animals and birds or damaging natural environment. Royal Decrees were also issued to establish a well integrated system of natural reserves and to develop detailed plans of management of areas of protection of wildlife and nature such as Jebel Samhan which was established in 1997 to preserve the Arabian leopard, the Organisms and Fungal Reserve in 1994 and the Turtle Reserve which was established in 1996. The latest natural reserves, which were announced in 2014, are the Wetland Reserve and Jebel Qahwan Reserve. In addition, plant nurseries were established to propagate wild plants, collect their seeds, distribute their cuttings and plant them in areas that suffer from damage to preserve plantation biodiversity.

Sustainability

HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs said on the need to preserve biodiversity and its related ecosystems in a way that ensures their sustainability at the international level:

The Sultanate of Oman has signed the Convention on Biological Diversity which has been authenticated by the Royal Decree No. 119/94 to take necessary actions to join the Biosafety Protocol. This protocol aims at contributing to ensuring a suitable level of protection in the field of safety, transportation, handling and usage of modified organisms resulting from modern biological technology. These modified organisms may cause harmful results on the preservation and sustainability of biodiversity, taking into account the risks that may occur to human health and the environment. The Sultanate of Oman has also joined, at the regional level, through the issuance of the Royal Decree No. 67/2002, the Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and their Natural Habitats in the Countries of the Gulf Cooperation



Gazelle in the protected Jiddat al-Harasis region, Wilayat Hayama, Governorate of Al Wusta

Council. The objective of joining this convention is to reinforce regional efforts made to support biological diversity and to combat challenges that may face wildlife in the Arabian Gulf region.

Reducing negative effects of climate changes

As for reducing the intensity of negative effects of climate change, HE the Minister said:

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change has adopted since 2008 an environmental strategy to incorporate issues and requirements of climate affairs into national plans and procedures. In the field of legislations and laws, the Ministry has issued the bylaw of management of climate affairs by the ministerial decree No. 18/2012 issued on 4th of March 2012. This bylaw entrusts the Directorate General of Climate Affairs with several assignments including preparation of national lists to identify emissions of greenhouse gases caused by human, development of national programs that include procedures to reduce negative effects of climate change through tackling emissions of greenhouse gases caused by humans. This Directorate General is also entrusted with taking actions and procedures to facilitate adaptation with climate change in an appropriate way, taking into consideration that these actions and procedures are consistent with sustainable development programs and plans in the Sultanate of Oman. Furthermore, the Ministry issues climate affairs licenses of projects stated in this bylaw. The duration of such licenses lasts for two years that can be renewed for similar periods as from the date of expiry. The Ministry also updated the regulations controlling issuance of approval of projects of The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), under the Kyoto Protocol issued by the Ministerial Decree No. 30/2010 dated 21st of August 2010 and followed by the Ministerial Decree No 53/2013 issued on 7th of April 2013. The Climate management regulations were also updated by the Ministerial Decree No. 20/2016 issued on 29th of March 2016 after they were revised by concerned government departments. These arrangements and actions were taken to consolidate and reinforce the efforts made by the Sultanate of Oman within the framework of its solidarity with the international community with regard to facing negative features of the greenhouse effect phenomenon and the challenges resulting from climate changes. These actions were also taken by the Sultanate of Oman to fulfill its obligations and commitments stipulated in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol attached to it as well as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

HE the Minister added that the National Committee of Climate Changes was re-formed according to the Ministerial Decree No. 23/2016 issued on 14th of April 2016. The aim of re-forming this committee was to enable it to make proposals of national policies and action plans to cope with negative effects of climate changes such as reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. The Ministry also conducted a comprehensive reform in the organizational structure of the Directorate General of Climate Change. This reform was made according to the Ministerial Decree No. 54/2016 issued on 15th of August 2016. The terms of reference, jurisdictions, titles and names of departments and sections

have been modified to meet national and international requirements. The idea was to add more efficiency, flexibility and competence to the running of the administrative work and to the implementation of related projects.

National Efforts

As for the national efforts standing up to the negative effects of greenhouse gases and challenges of climate change, He the Minister said:

The Ministry of Environment has signed an agreement with Sultan Qaboos University to implement the national strategy to preserve Omani environment in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Program. The objective of the agreement is to develop and improve the institutional and legislative work, strengthen the capabilities of administrative units in Oman to combat negative effects of climate changes and identify the impacts of these changes on some sectors of comprehensive development in the Sultanate of Oman. It also aims at assessing these effects and risks according to international criteria in this respect, setting up policies, programs, plans and procedures to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases as well as to adapt to climate changes risks and negative effects, especially aspects related to the implementation of some studies, projects and programs in this field. The agreement also aims at transferring technologies and reinforcing capacity building in dealing with climate changes. It is hoped that the implementation of the components of the strategy shall finish by the end of 2017.

Improvement of technical assessment

In the field of development and improvement of technical assessment and field inspection, HE the Minister said:

The Ministry has developed a guidebook for the companies and parties which own projects. These guidebooks specify types of data and information related to sections on climate affairs in studies of assessment of environmental effects according to international approaches in this regard. Since 2008 and which was updated many times thereafter when the latest updating took place in 2015. The specialists of different departments and sections of the Directorate General of Climate Affairs developed a form to be filled as report on field visits. This procedures aims at getting acquainted with the files of projects that they visit. It also helps in preparing themes and topics that they are supposed to follow up and concentrate on during their field visits. Among these issues is to make sure that these projects are committed to the provisions and conditions regarding climate affairs stipulated in the environmental approvals and climate affairs licenses. In addition, regulations of electronic data bases related to emission of greenhouse gases from projects as stated by the method identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).



*Rocky beaches in Oman
- rich habitat for marine life*

The Climate Initiative

HE the Minister said with regard to the Climate Initiative: In coincidence with the celebrations of the Sultanate of Oman of the World Environment Day, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs has launched the first round of the initiative "Better Climate for Green Future" on June 5th, 2016. The objective of the initiative was to identify and document green projects and applications as well as ideas that are dealing with adaptation with the negative effects of climate changes and reduction of the emissions of greenhouse gases. The Ministry has also launched the initiative titled "The Ozone protects the future of our children" in concurrence with the celebration of the Sultanate of Oman of the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer in 2016. The initiative aims at enlightening the community on the importance of the Ozone layer and how to preserve it. It also aims at reinforcing partnership and cooperation between the Ministry and other government sectors as well as scientific organizations, research centers, private sector companies and individuals.

The Commitment of the Sultanate of Oman to International Conventions and Charters

As for the extent to which the Sultanate of Oman is committed to international conventions and charters concerning the protection and preservation of the environment, HE the Minister said:

The Sultanate of Oman considered the importance of unifying its efforts with other efforts of the international community to limit different risks and dangers facing the environment and to realize the balance required between environment and development to achieve sustainable development in all sectors. Accordingly, the Sultanate of Oman joined many international and regional conventions and protocols in different aspects of environment and climate as well as in protecting regional seawater from pollution and preserve natural resources. Among these important conventions the most important are: The Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol attached to it, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Cartagena Protocol on Bio-safety, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and their Natural Habitats in the Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, other international treaties and conventions regarding marine environment and the Protocol of the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment.

The stand of the Sultanate of Oman with regard to the results and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Marrakech

(the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 22))

As for this issue HE the Minister said:

Through issuing Royal Decrees, the Sultanate of Oman has endorsed the agreements on climate changes such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol attached to it, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its amendments. This endorsement was made to meet the commitment of the Sultanate of Oman to international charters and conventions on climate affairs. The Sultanate has also actively participated in the meetings, studies and projects related to this issue. Representatives of the Sultanate of Oman occupy many international positions in the above-mentioned international agreements. In addition, the Sultanate of Oman signed the Paris Agreement on climate change in April 2016. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs is cooperating with many regional and international environmental organizations in the field of climate such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol attached to it, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Arab League, United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The First National Report of the Sultanate of Oman on Climate Change

HE the Minister said in this regard that the Sultanate of Oman has endorsed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by the Royal Decree No. 119/94. To fulfill its obligations towards development of the first national report on climate change, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, has cooperated in 2012 with Sultan Qaboos University, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to develop the first national report on climate change. Data regarding the said report were collected and analyzed according to data and information provided by concerned parties and in accordance with criteria and approaches specified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and decisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The First National Report of the Sultanate of Oman on Climate Change includes main four chapters. They are: national conditions, inventory of emission of greenhouse gases from different sectors taking 1994 as base year and study of impacts of climate change on the Sultanate of Oman. This study is based on assessment of fragility of some sectors of comprehensive development as well as environmental systems, climate systems and ecosystems.

The Second National Report of the Sultanate of Oman on Climate Change & updating reports for two years

HE the Minister said: The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and Sultan Qaboos University, started in 2014 developing the Second National Report of the Sultanate of Oman on climate change and updating reports for two years. Three working sessions were organized by many experts and specialist from international institutions and organizations specialized in the field of climate change.

The First Report on National Voluntary Contributions of the Sultanate of Oman regarding adaptation to climate change and reduction of its direct effects

HE the Minister said: There was coordination between the Ministry, Sultan Qaboos University and other concerned government parties to develop the first report on national voluntary contributions of the Sultanate of Oman regarding adaptation to climate change and reduction of its direct effects. The report was presented on October 15th, 2015 to the Secretariat General of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change just like other countries which are part of the convention. The report shows the efforts made by the Sultanate of Oman in the field of adaptation and reduction of negative effects of climate changes.

As for the extent to which the plans of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change are taking into considerations Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, especially goals 13, 14 and 15, HE the Minister said:

Since the approval of the plan of the sustainable development goals for 2030 in Paris Summit of Climate Change in September 2015, the Ministry, in cooperation with specialists of the Supreme Council for Planning who are members of the national team, have followed up the implementation of these goals. The Ministry has positively participated in all meetings and made remarkable contributions in implementation of all goals, including goals 13, 14 and 15.



INTERVIEW WITH HIS EXCELLENCY AHMED AL MAHRAZI THE MINISTER OF TOURISM SULTANATE OF OMAN



On the vision of the Ministry of Tourism on ecotourism and its role in preserving environmental diversity and biodiversity

HE the Minister:

“The main objective of the Ministry in the ninth five-year plan (2016 - 2020) is to provide employment opportunities and offer to the world tourism practices and experiences that are enriched with an Omani flavor.

One of the initiatives of the national program of economic diversification “TANFEETH” is to encourage private investment in natural sites and reserves. The initiative aims to reinforce the use of natural reserves as tourism sites”.

The Ministry of Tourism is committed to the sustainable development of natural and environmental resources and to protecting them from being lost, misused, polluted and affected by climate change. The Ministry also makes efforts to protect and develop tourist sites, to make them attractive and sustainable, and to provide them with infrastructural services and environmentally friendly facilities. HE Ahmed bin Nasir Al Mahrazi spoke to us about the efforts of the Ministry of Tourism and its roles at the national and international levels. He said:

Ecotourism is part of the extended concept of sustainable tourism. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as 'Tourism which takes into consideration current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, and which meets the needs of tourists, the environment and the hosting communities'. The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as 'Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education'.

Objectives of ecotourism

HE the Minister explained that:

Among the objectives of ecotourism is the development of the areas in which tourism sites are located and to promote public awareness of the importance of protecting the environment. Ecotourism aims to offer employment opportunities and partnerships to local communities and to provide safe and enjoyable experiences to tourists. It aims to encourage respect of the culture of host countries and educating people of environmental and social characteristics of the sites visited by tourists, as well as allocating some of the revenues of tourism to preserving natural life in tourism areas. Other objectives include visiting natural reserves and places of ecotourism, using renewable energy resources such as solar, wind and bio-fuel, using green houses built of environmentally friendly materials and which conserve energy and water consumption, using water management systems (water recycling and rainwater harvesting) and waste management (handling of toxic waste).

The vision of the Ministry with regard to ecotourism

HE the Minister said:

The Ministry of Tourism's principles of sustainable tourism follow the example set by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and are included in the Ministry's development plans. The main objective of the Ministry's ninth five-year plan (2016-2020) is to reinforce the opportunities of sustainable tourism to achieve economic and social development while preserving the environment and its natural resources and protecting the cultural and natural heritage. Efforts must be exerted to develop internal tourism through provision of tourism services and reinforcing promotion of tourism inside and outside Oman, especially in neighboring countries. Tourism promotion should also be extended to cover new growing markets and to ensure high quality products capable of competing in the international tourism market.

Detailed objectives of sustainable tourism

HE the Minister added: to achieve the objective of sustainable tourism, the concept was described through detailed objectives highlighting the relationship between tourism development and preservation of national resources and the cultural heritage. Local communities should benefit from tourism development, living standards of individuals should be raised, and new projects should be developed in all governorates of Oman in order to provide employment opportunities and encourage and develop internal tourism. Development of internal tourism is one of the most important indicators to measure sustainable tourism development. Therefore, the ninth five-year plan endeavors to create mechanisms to encourage and develop internal tourism across the governorates of Oman. Organizing events and developing appropriate conditions to attract private sector investment will help to achieve sustainable tourism development. The Ministry of Tourism is coordinating with concerned government bodies to help attract and encourage the private sector to invest in the tourism sector. Such investment will help to provide safe and satisfying experiences for tourists and employment opportunities for Omani nationals. It will also help to diversify the tourism product, make use of natural and cultural tourism resources and infrastructure facilities built by the government. During the ninth five-year plan, the Ministry of Tourism intends to further diversify the tourism so as to achieve sustainable tourism, to involve local communities in tourism development activities, and to reinforce the quality of products and services. Achieving high quality tourism services, including competitive pricing, is a principal objective of the Ministry. The Ministry is also committed to developing small and medium enterprises in the tourism sector through providing support to these enterprises and offering incentives to improve their performance and provide employment opportunities for local communities.

Contributions of tourism sites in the development of tourism sector

HE the Minister explained:

Natural and environmental sites are the main pillar of tourism in the Sultanate of Oman and the development of tourism is based on these sites. (Figure 1 shows tourism sites in Oman). The Ministry of Tourism has plans to develop these sites, provide services to make them attractive to tourists and to put them on Oman's tourism map. One of the initiatives of the national economic diversification program, "TANFEETH", is to encourage private investment to encourage tourism at natural sites and reserves. The management of natural reserves and sites may be entrusted to private sector investors specialized in this field and who comply with regulations set by a committee comprising of members from the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs. Natural reserves will help to attract tourists, contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Oman and provide new employment opportunities for Omanis. Three locations have been proposed to implement this initiative; Qurum Natural Park, As Saleel Nature Park

and the Geologic Park in Al Wusta Governorate. The team working on this initiative is presently studying these sites and will make proposals on how best to introduce them to the private sector for investment.

The role of the Ministry of Tourism in preserving environmental diversity and biodiversity

The Ministry of Tourism coordinates with other parties concerned with preserving the environment for sustainable development of tourist sites. The Omani strategic plans for tourism 2040 takes into account the United Nations objectives for sustainable development 2030.

HE the Minister said:

The Ministry is committed to providing biodiversity. A form was designed to evaluate and assess tourism sites before they are opened for investment. The form includes a set of criteria related to the concept of sustainable tourism. In addition, investors must agree to their continuous commitment to the projects they are awarded. The most important approval is the one issued by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs which aims at preserving the environment and achieving sustainable development at tourism sites. At some sites and for special types of projects, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs requests investors to submit a study on the environmental impact of their projects.

Figure 1



The Ministry of Tourism is making other efforts to preserve biodiversity, such as adopting the model of green buildings in Oman. Alila Jabal Akhdar Resort, constructed by Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran), is a good example of a successful project for green buildings in Oman. In March 2015 the property received the LEED Silver certification in the Building Design and Construction rating system for New Construction by the U.S. Green Building Council. Among the issues considered when constructing the resort included choice of the most suitable location, the use of traditional Omani construction techniques, the use of Omani styles of furniture including sanitary materials, air conditioning systems, and the use of solar panels. Open spaces and courtyards are well utilized, and the surrounding plantation was unaffected by the construction of pedestrian pathways. Drip irrigation is used at the site and an innovative method is used to manage the drainage system to get rid of wastewater. Materials from local markets or from neighboring countries were used in constructing the resort.

HE the Minister confirmed that the Ministry of Tourism played an important role in the construction of the Alila project. The idea was completely new so the Ministry provided Omran with all the required assistance to the success of the project and to encourage future development projects.

The Ministry of Tourism developed a framework of regulations to control environmentally sensitive sites such as the area of Bandar Al Khayran in the Governorate of Muscat which, under Royal Decree No. 47/2007, was afforded the status of a public tourism environmental area. The Ministry developed a framework to develop a full layout for the site with a management plan. A meeting was held to discuss this project with dignitaries in the area in the presence of the Deputy Wali of Muscat at the governorate headquarters. The Ministry of Tourism coordinated with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to develop a detailed study and a referential framework for the site. It also signed contracts with specialized offices to conduct environmental, social and geological studies on the area. Several meetings were held with local communities aiming at coordinating different stages of development and identifying their development needs. A workshop on the implementation of indicators for sustainable tourism was organized in cooperation with the World Tourism Organization on 11-13 May 2015. The objectives of the workshop were to facilitate discussion on how to achieve sustainable development and to provide participants with information on environmental indicators and practices used by the World Tourism Organization. One of the outcomes of the workshop was the submission of proposed indicators appropriate to the feasibility study for the establishment of an experimental observatory for sustainable tourism at Bandar Al Khayran.

The Omani tourism strategy 2040 and its appropriateness to the principles of sustainable tourism

HE the Minister added:

The Ministry of Tourism is making extensive efforts as part of the Omani tourism strategy 2040 on sustainable tourism. The principles of this strategy are to increase the contribution of the tourism sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Oman, to conform with the sustainable development processes witnessed in other sectors, to raise the living standards of Omani citizens through increased employment opportunities, to maintain Omani traditions, customs, and identity and to open new horizons for small and medium enterprises.

The message of Omani tourism

HE the Minister said that the message of Omani tourism stipulated in the Strategy reads “diversification of the Omani economy and provision of employment opportunities and offering to the world tourism practices and experiences that are enriched with an Omani flavor.” He added that the guiding principles of the strategy to develop tourism are a call for the raising of living standards for Omani citizens, protecting the Omani culture, heritage and traditions, and the preservation of natural resources and maintaining their sustainability.

As for the other benefits, he added: The strategy adopted the approach of sustainable tourism. One of the benefits of this approach is to generate economic benefits for local communities and to contribute to protecting, strengthening and developing the natural and cultural heritage as well as to increase visitor satisfaction levels through providing authentic Omani practices and experiences to help them to understand the local culture.

The Omani tourism strategy 2040 and its appropriateness to the principles of ecotourism

The Minister of Tourism said: the strategy was written in a way that corresponds with the principles of ecotourism. Among these principles is the involvement of local communities and other concerned parties in the development process. Workshops were organized in 10 governorates in Oman. Representatives from both the public and private sectors attended these workshops as well as representatives from local communities such as governors, Walis, members of both the State and Shura Councils, Shaikhs and dignitaries. Five hundred persons were also interviewed and the most important tourism sites in each governorate were visited. These events lasted for three weeks. Thirty-two interviews were held with 61 persons from both the public and private sectors and 8 specialized training courses were



Green meadows during fall season in Dhofar



Camel riding in the desert dunes



Traditional Folklore in Oman

organized. More than 200 people from a range of concerned parties participated in these courses. The objective of these training sessions was to increase public awareness of the tourism activities included in the strategy and to enable participants to get involved in the implementation of the strategy.

HE Excellency the Minister explained that one of the most important principles of ecotourism is to achieve consistency with the sustainable development efforts in other sectors. The Ministry has written to all concerned bodies to request copies of their studies and sustainable development strategies to ensure they are taken into account when the ecotourism strategy is implemented. Nine dialogue sessions were held with concerned sectors, such as tourism education and training, small and medium enterprises, the environment sector, national heritage, transport, hotels, tourism agencies and aviation. A total of 92 people were involved in these sessions.

Initiatives

As for the initiatives based on the principles of ecotourism outlined in the Omani strategy of tourism, HE the Minister of Tourism said:

The Omani strategy of tourism includes a number of initiatives that are based on the principles of ecotourism. The first initiative was to “Develop a program of environmental and cultural sustainability”. The main performance indicator will be internationally recognized for environmental sustainability. The initiative will include the following:

1. Launching an awareness campaign titled “Our environment is our future”.
2. Organizing specialized training programs on sustainable tourism.
3. Developing a long-term program to improve the planning and management of tourism on reserved areas and cultural and archeological locations aiming at the provision of appropriate services in these sensitive areas.

The second initiative was to “Develop a specialized body of social responsibility in the tourism sector”. The main performance indicator of this initiative will relate to the satisfaction of the concerned parties. The initiative will include the following paths:

1. Establishing the body to be responsible for social responsibility in the tourism sector.
2. Establishing the Oman Observatory for Sustainable Tourism.
3. Developing a national program to be responsible for the issuing of sustainable tourism certificates to establishments and companies committed to the conditions, terms and criteria of sustainable tourism.
4. Developing criteria for environmental, social and cultural sustainability in new tourism projects.

Competitive advantage

HE the Minister of Tourism explained that:

the strategy identified nine different tourism types in which the Sultanate of Oman can compete with other countries by targeting international and local markets. All nine types will encourage ecotourism in the Sultanate of Oman. (Figure 2: Nine different tourism types).

Specialized Environmental Studies and Assessment of Environmental Impact

As for conducting specialized environmental studies on the natural sites which the Ministry intends to develop as well as assessing the environmental impact of tourism locations and products, HE the Minister said:

Three studies have been conducted by the Ministry. The first study, conducted in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University, is titled 'A study on the comprehensive impact of tourism complexes, 2017'. It aimed at assessing the environmental, social and economic impact of tourism complexes. The second study, conducted in cooperation with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), is titled 'The development of Wadi Dirbat, 2012'. The study aimed at developing a general plan for this site taking into consideration the environmental and social aspects and achieving the principles of sustainable tourism by conserving the nature of the area and its resources through involving the local community. The third study, conducted in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University, is titled 'The social and economic dimensions of tourism development at Al Jabal Al Akhdar, 2011'. It aimed at organizing tourism at Al Jabal Al Akhdar in a balanced a responsible manner to ensure that it brought economic benefits to the community without damaging its basic values.

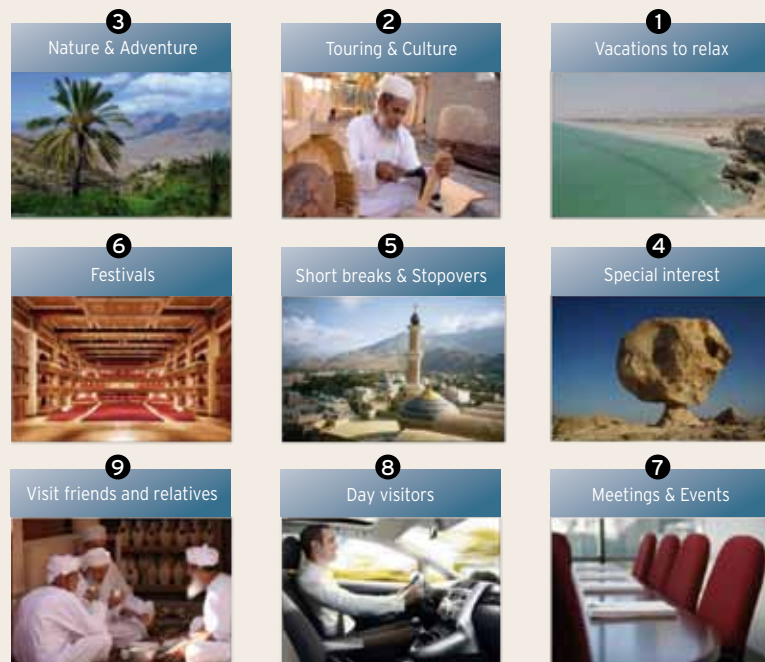


Figure 2



Asphodelaceae - specie restricted to a single locality on Jabal Qamar, Southern Oman

OMAN ON THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNESCO

*I*n November 2015, H.E Dr. Samira Al Moosa, the Sultanate's Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, was elected to the Executive Board of UNESCO for a period of four years by the 38th session of the General Conference. As one of the two governing bodies of the organization - alongside the General Conference - the Executive Board ensures that the decisions of the General Conference are carried out effectively. Composed of 58 members and meeting twice a year, the board is tasked to "ensure the overall management of UNESCO". However, it also provides an opportunity for member states to advocate national and regional positions, while advancing the interest of the Organization. It is thus a platform for exchange and negotiation that can bring views together and enhance dialogue at a multilateral level. As an active member of the Board, Oman is fully utilizing this platform to advocate the Sultanate's values and to collaborate with other member states for an effective UNESCO, particularly within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2015 was also the year when the 2030 Development Agenda was set, and being a board member provides an excellent opportunity to follow up the work of UNESCO on the 2030 Agenda and to advocate further action to achieve sustainable development. That is precisely what Oman has been doing for the past two years, since the Sultanate is fully dedicated to the achievement of sustainable development not only nationally, but also at the global level, and the Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation is a testimony of that commitment. Such commitment is also reflected through the environmental policies of Oman, its engagement in sustainable tourism, in the protection of its cultural and natural heritage, its interest in water-related issues, and in wider aspects of sustainable development such as gender equality and global citizenship education, which will help to ensure that future generations acquire the necessary values and tools to build a sustainable future.

This strong engagement for sustainable development is illustrated through Oman's interventions and proposals at the Executive Board meetings. The Sultanate's national statements have strongly advocated the use of the SDGs as a roadmap for the UNESCO program in the coming years. With regards to Environmental Preservation and Natural



Date harvesting

Sciences, Oman has supported the fight against climate change, encouraging sector cooperation and advocating for UNESCO to carry out transformative action on climate change, as laid out in the Common Core Principles for a UN system-wide approach to climate change. The Sultanate has also co-signed the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) action plan in recognition of their vulnerabilities regarding climate change. Oman has consistently promoted the role of science as a catalyst for peace and sustainable development at Board meetings. Moreover, Oman has promoted the relevance of data collection for sustainable development, and has supported the work of the UNESCO Institute of Statistics and data exchange platforms such as the newly launched UNESCO-IHP-WINS which provides open water-related data. Finally, given its leadership role in sustainable tourism, Oman has collaborated with other member states in ensuring that this dimension is included in the Man And Biosphere (MAB) strategy for 2015-2025, and to emphasize the importance of responsible tourism in relation to UNESCO designated sites (Biosphere Reserves, Geoparks and World Heritage Sites).

However, sustainable development is not limited to environmental protection and climate change, it also encompasses a number of values such as global citizenship education, gender equality, social inclusion, youth involvement, and intercultural dialogue, all of which are essential for building a sustainable future. Oman has been a strong advocate for these principles during its interventions at UNESCO. Oman has followed up on the work of UNESCO in global citizenship education, namely with regards to the measurement indicators. It has



Wadi Shab, Wilayat of Sur - one of Oman's most scenic wadis

advocated a comprehensive and holistic approach to inclusion - in its economic, social and cultural dimensions - and has argued that the full participation of youth is required for the successful achievement the SDGs. Oman has been chairing an informal group - Friends of Gender Equality - within UNESCO and, on behalf of this group, it has presented Draft Decisions along with SMART performance indicators, to encourage UNESCO to adopt a transformative approach to gender.

The support of Oman to sustainable development is also reflected indirectly through its interventions and proposals related to UNESCO's finances and management. It is important to maintain the Organization's efficiency in order to maximize its impact within the framework of the SDGs. In this respect, Oman has modified and presented draft decisions to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of UNESCO's work in the field, while insisting on the need for locally adapted responses to encourage enhanced ownership. It has also insisted on the importance of research and evidence-based programs, and of qualitative evaluations to ensure good monitoring of the impact of its programs.

Membership in the Executive Board of UNESCO is thus a good opportunity to further enhance the work of the Organization in its fields of competence, including sustainable development. This has to be complemented, however, by fully engaging in other platforms of exchange within UNESCO, such as the General Conference where the Programme and Budget is adopted. Active participation in information meetings, seminars and intergovernmental meetings is yet another effective


way to add value and support the work of the Organization for sustainable development, and the Sultanate is fully committed to actively pursue its efforts in all of these regards.



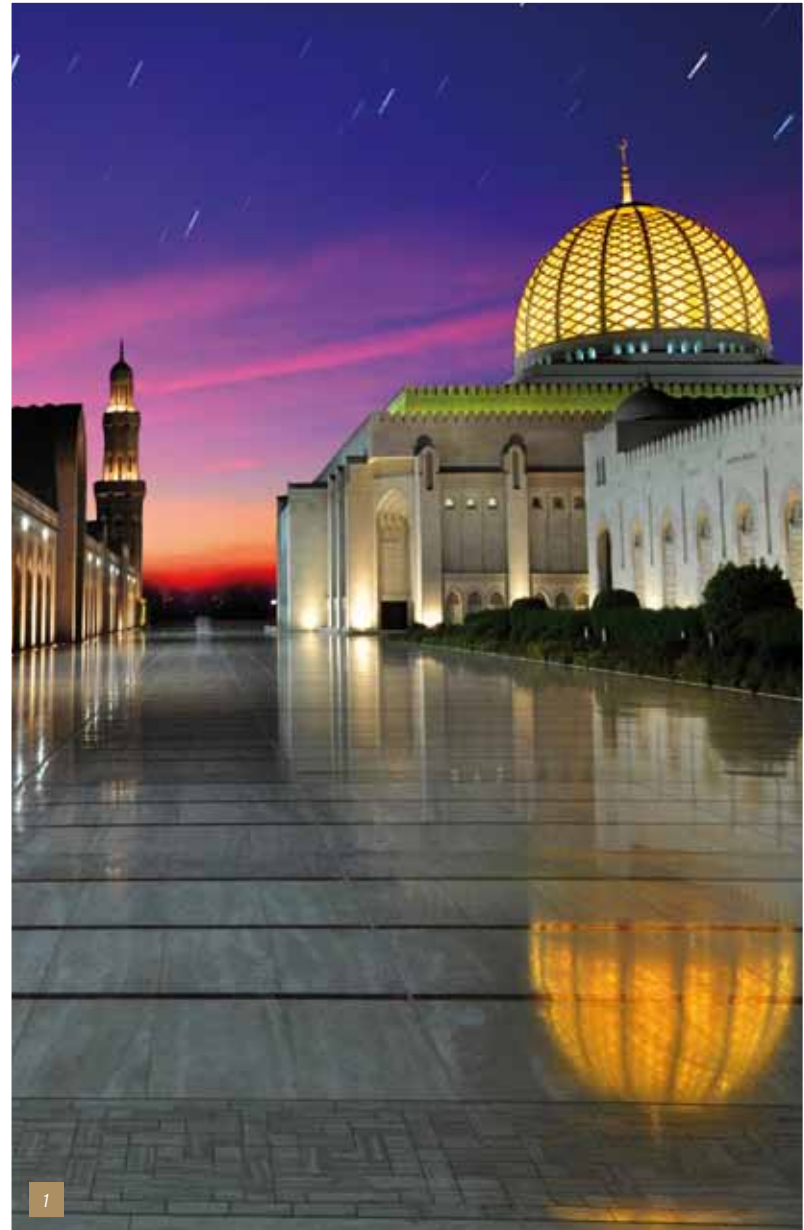
ESTABLISHED FOR THE BENEFIT
OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

The Sultanate of Oman is one of the oldest states in the Arab world. It lies on the Tropic of Cancer in the south-east corner of the Arabian Peninsula.

It has 3,165 kilometres of coastline stretching from the Arabian Sea and the entrance to the Indian Ocean at its south-western extremity, to the Sea of Oman in the north. It borders on three countries - Yemen to the south, Saudi Arabia to the west and the United Arab Emirates to the north. To the east, the Sea of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz separates the Sultanate from Iran. As a gateway between the Indian Ocean, East Africa and the Arabian Gulf, Oman occupies a vitally important strategic location. 

- 1 *The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is the third largest mosque in the world. The main building can accommodate up to 20,000 worshippers and has the largest hand-woven Persian carpet in the world.*
- 2 *Muttrah has always been the commercial centre of the capital. It has a fairy-tale appearance at night and always lively.*
- 3 *The Royal Opera House Muscat is Oman's premier venue for musical arts and culture.*
- 4 *Date processing.*





OMAN AT A GLANCE

Land area:	309,500 km ²
Population:	4,558,847 (June 2017)
Capital:	Muscat
Official language:	Arabic (English spoken widely)
Religion:	Islam
Time:	GMT +4 hours
Currency:	Omani Rial. OMR 1 = US\$ 2.58
Length of Coast:	3,165 KM
Highest Mountain:	Jabal Shams 3,004 m (10,000 ft)
Weather:	Hot and humid in summer and moderate in winter
National day:	18 November