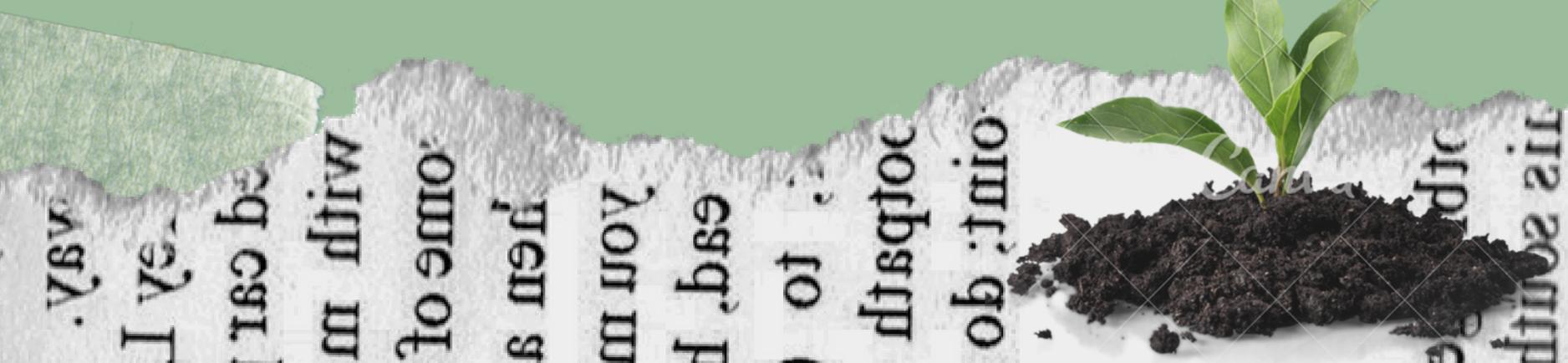


A policy brief on

# Environment Protection Practices in the EU and GCC

Unifying GCC environmental development initiatives for a sustainable future of the region and enhance environmental practices and strategies through joint programs with the EU



## Executive summary

- In recent years, the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council have formed an Energy Dialogue that extends beyond conventional trade ties between energy users and suppliers to include topics such as market convergence, clean energy, energy conservation and gas sustainability.
- To promote and introduce the Energy Dialogue, the EU-GCC Energy Expert Group (EEG) was formed in 2010. At the same time, the EU formed an EU-GCC Renewable Energy Network to promote stronger collaboration between the EU and GCC countries on clean energy policy and technology.
- The main issue addressed in the GCC is the lack of integrated practices in the region regarding environmental development plans and initiatives.

## Introduction

The GCC has contributed to many international agreements regarding environmental protection but has not implemented a specific GCC institute relating to environmental contributions like the EU's EEA, which governs environmental practices of the EU member states and their integrated initiatives of the EU region towards environmental protection and sustainability. The GCC faces many environmental issues that impact global concerns like global warming. Therefore, it is necessary for GCC countries to develop a unified environmental institution that governs environmental practices of member states and ensures they abide by environmental laws for the prosperity of the region.

## EU-GCC Environmental Joint Action Program

In terms of the EU, several collaborative activities were completed during the first phase of the EU-GCC Joint Work Program, including the establishment of a wildlife conservatory in Jubail, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, expert exchanges, joint workshops on oil-polluted sea environments, hazardous waste management, and air pollution. In addition, the EU committed to the advisory report on the establishment of reception centers for shipwrecks in GCC states and the sponsorship of the region's Protocol on Biologic Diversity of Sea Life.

The following are some of the most relevant arrangements that the GCC states have ratified or accepted:

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|--|
| 1. The Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer (Vienna Convention) and the Montreal Protocol (and its amendments) |
| 2. The Basel Convention on Hazardous Materials and their Transnational Migration   |
| 3. The convention on Biological Diversity of the United Nations  |
| 4. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Kyoto Protocol  |
| 5. Kuwait Regional Convention on Maritime Environment Protection and Protocols (1987)  |
| 6. Sea Emissions Regulation Convention (London Convention 1972)  |
| 7. Maritime Law Convention of the United Nations   |
| 8. Mutual consensus on the establishment of an international fund for oil pollution damage compensation                          |

# Technology Network

The action will add to the external dimension of the EU Energy Union by promoting renewable energy technologies and policies, as well as improve the EU's status as a global leader in the "clean energy transformation" and encourage the use of sustainable energy in the GCC.

*The Clean Energy Network between the EU and the GCC should continue to run in five areas:*

- 1.alternative energy sources;
- 2.energy efficiency;
- 3.more efficient natural gas use;
4. power interconnections and market integration;
- 5.carbon capture and storage (CCS).

The EU-GCC joint program has laid the foundation for the GCC to initiate an environmental body that aims to establish sustainable development plans, clean energy systems, wildlife conservation, improve energy efficiency and oversees the best practices and contributions of GCC member states in this field. This, in turn, will positively affect the region and enhance its environmental practices within its operations locally and regionally. The main purpose of the GCC-EU joint action program is to find the best practices to enhance green economies, clean energy and promote sustainable operation in both GCC and EU.

## GCC's Environmental Development Plans

**Table 3: Governmental Environmental Institutions and Agencies in GCC Countries**

Countries	Policy institution	Executive agency
<b>Bahrain</b>	Environment and Wildlife Affairs	Public Commission for the Protection of Marine Resources, Environment and Wildlife
<b>Kuwait</b>	Environment Public Authority	Environment Public Authority
<b>Oman</b>	Council of Ministers	Ministry Environment and Climate Change
<b>Qatar</b>	Council of Ministers (Permanent Commission for Environmental Protection)	Supreme Council for the Environment and Natural Reserves
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	Ministerial Committee on Environment	Presidency of Meteorology and Environment (PME)
<b>UAE</b>	Council of Federation	Federal Environment Agency/Ministry of Environment and Water Resources

From the table above, it can be seen that the GCC lacks a unified environmental institution to monitor environmental practices and initiatives among member states. This weakness can negatively impact sustainability practices that the GCC plans to implement. The well-being of society, clean energy initiatives, green economy and a healthier atmosphere cannot be achieved in the GCC without a unified body governing the environmental actions of GCC states. Just like in the EU, there is a unified institution to govern environmental practices of member states which is the European Environmental Agency (EEA). Its purpose is to help the EU and its member states make informed decisions about developing the environment, unifying environmental considerations into economic policies, and gradually achieving sustainability. The GCC can implement a similar strategy by establishing a body that aims at protecting the environment of the region.

# Masdar City - Clean Energy Initiative

Masdar, a carbon-free city in Abu Dhabi, contains green building, desalination, biofuels, sustainable transportation, water storage, waste water treatment, solar conditioning and sustainable agriculture used to create a sustainable living atmosphere. This smart initiative by UAE shows a pleasant movement towards environmental protection and implementation of clean energy. However, such initiative would be more effective if all GCC member states are to implement it and introduce the best practices for such an initiative. Regional agreements can be established by GCC member states to protect the environment of the region, just like the European green deal.

## Recommendations

- A unified regional stance in multilateral environmental treaty agreements, such as those on climate change and global warming, will benefit GCC countries in tackling environmental issues more effectively and bring on the table the best practices and implement them.
- Collaborative mega-environmental programs, such as desalination plants and clean energy campaigns. GCC countries can work together on environmental and sustainable projects in their countries that aim at promoting the purpose of the EU-GCC joint program outcomes.
- Regional strategies for coastal management, fishing, soil loss, and other unified issues will promote environmental awareness within the region and come up with plans to implement those strategies effectively.

## Conclusion

Overall, in achieving a sustainable environment in a region like the GCC there should be a unified system to follow and a transparent approach implemented by a body that governs and facilitates resources in order to bring together a clear vision of a better future for all GCC countries. The acknowledgement of the importance of a healthy environment and working towards that goal as a unified council is the beginning of a greater sustainable change and eventually a hub for clean and renewable energy initiatives and projects.

As part of the GCC member states national vision, its vital to include establishing a regional environmental institute to govern and facilitate all environmental and sustainable actions and plans of the GCC.

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