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Green Entrepreneurship: A Pathway to Sustainable Development and Peace in MENA

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The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is characterized by its unique blend of environmental vulnerabilities and geopolitical complexities. It is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change, experiencing rising temperatures, water scarcity, and extreme weather events that threaten both its economy and society. There is also significant political instability and conflict, which both exacerbate the impacts of climate change and hinder efforts to address it.

As climate change intensifies, the MENA region faces escalating risks from rising temperatures, water scarcity, and extreme weather events,

which collectively threaten the region's economic stability and societal fabric. This convergence of ecological and geopolitical pressures can potentially exacerbate the drivers of conflict and fragility, and could possibly lead to an increase in uprisings and conflict over resources within the region.

Yet, paradoxically, climate change also offers opportunities for cooperation, innovation, and transformation, especially if it is framed as the common enemy or threat¹ that conflict states must partner to combat. Green entrepreneurship has the potential to offer a multifaceted response to the region's challenges, serving



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as both a climate change solution and as a pathway towards sustainable development and peace.

Investing in climate adaptation, resilience and mitigation entrepreneurial projects can offset some of the impacts of both climate change and interstate conflict. Green entrepreneurship encourages states and their citizens to harness these opportunities, and also address the nexus between climate, peace, and security. By filling gaps in government response and creating sustainable solutions that reduce environmental impact and enhance social and economic benefits, green entrepreneurs contribute to climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation, as well as to peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and human security.

Amidst the multifaceted dynamics of climate and politics, green entrepreneurship also emerges as a practical and transformative approach. Green entrepreneurs are innovators and catalysts of change who develop solutions that not only tackle environmental predicaments, but also create economic opportunities. This approach can navigate climate-related adversities, generate employment, and stimulate sustainable growth simultaneously—and it holds the potential to foster collaboration among nations, transcending political tensions and promoting peace. By fostering shared interests and cross-border collaboration, green entrepreneurship has the potential to bridge divides and build trust among countries grappling with conflicts such as the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine.²

Within this dynamic landscape, the potential of green entrepreneurship as a tool for climate resilience and peace in the MENA region is worth

exploring. Achieving both goals is pivotal for the MENA region's stability. Therefore, supporting green entrepreneurship partnerships across conflict countries is a vital strategy to advance the global goals of sustainable development and climate action.

In this inquiry, I will provide insights into the role of green entrepreneurship in fostering regional stability by examining how green entrepreneurs innovate to address environmental challenges, create economic prospects, and foster cross-border collaboration. I will also offer recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders interested in promoting green entrepreneurship as a pathway to address climate change and contribute to peace in the MENA region.

Green Entrepreneurship: Building Resilience and Peace:

Green entrepreneurship denotes a paradigm shift in business practices, emphasizing sustainability and environmental responsibility. Its practitioners provide a multifaceted response to the pressing challenges posed by climate change, harnessing innovation, technology, and sustainable business models to address its complexities. Their endeavors span diverse sub-fields, including but not limited to renewable energy, waste reduction, waste water treatment, and eco-friendly products among others.

Such initiatives collectively contribute to both climate mitigation and adaptation by curbing carbon footprints, conserving resources, and fostering green innovation. Importantly, the achievements of these green enterprises demonstrates the viability of business-driven approaches in tackling ecological dilemmas.

The intricate relationship between climate change and peace within the MENA region merits careful consideration. As a risk multiplier, climate change amplifies existing vulnerabilities, inequalities, and conflicts within fragile and conflict-affected regions.^{3,4} While environmental factors have been linked to conflicts in the MENA region, there is growing recognition that addressing climate change also can contribute to peace.

A refusal to address these concerns could potentially negatively impact the region's political "stability and security."⁵ Climate-related cooperation has the potential to transcend political differences and instigate the resolution of long-standing political disputes.⁶ Green entrepreneurship, with its ability to bridge environmental aspirations and peace-building objectives, emerges as a potential mediator in this context.

The intrinsic connection between these distinct goals underlines the importance of a holistic and integrated approach. Tackling climate change demands a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the intricate interplay between climate, peace, and security.⁷ This means promoting climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation, as well as addressing the root causes and drivers of conflict and insecurity, as often they are resource based.

Green entrepreneurship is a promising avenue for addressing climate change and fostering peace and security in conflict countries. Such partnerships can facilitate cross-border cooperation, knowledge exchange, and capacity building among stakeholders in conflict countries. They can also create opportunities for dialogue, trust-building, and conflict resolution among different groups and sectors.

The collective impact of green entrepreneurs can also attract investment and support from governments, donors, and international organizations that are committed to advancing the SDGs and regional cooperation. Initiatives such as the Jordan, Israel, and UAE Water-for-Energy Deal present themselves as an opportunity for regional conflict mediation and establish a platform for communication.⁸ They can leverage existing initiatives, policies, and frameworks that promote green transformation and adaptation in fragile and conflict-affected regions.

Within the peacebuilding domain, the practice of seamlessly incorporating green entrepreneurial endeavors into diverse sectors has been less than optimal. The process of integrating climate change considerations into the peacebuilding endeavor necessitates a departure from isolated technical approaches, shifting towards a comprehensive systems-oriented perspective in both policy strategies and holistic programming.

The journey towards harmony between climate concerns and peacebuilding demands breaking from conventional silos, and instead embracing interdisciplinary contemplation. This dynamic shift requires us to step outside conventional boundaries of thought and action. The adoption of such unconventional pathways will pave the way for fresh collaborations, facilitating innovative ways of working together.⁹ Thus, it is crucial to argue for the integration of cross-border partnership under green entrepreneurship in the systemic programming of peacebuilding.

A Plan for Green Entrepreneurial Action

Green entrepreneurship's potential to drive climate resilience and peace necessitates a strategic approach to harnessing its benefits.

Adopting the following policy recommendations will optimize the impact of this powerful tool.¹⁰

Invest in Green Entrepreneurship Initiatives within MENA:

To unlock the full potential of green entrepreneurs, policymakers must allocate substantial resources to support and empower them. Financial incentives, streamlined access to funding, and comprehensive business development programs can significantly accelerate the growth of green startups and innovation in their sectors. Such measures will foster innovation and drive the development of climate-resilient solutions that address pressing environmental challenges.

Promote Regional Cooperation and Collaboration:

Strengthening interregional collaboration is paramount in addressing climate change and promoting peace within the MENA region. Initiatives such as cross-border energy cooperation exemplify a model that provides mutual benefits and fosters a spirit of collaboration. Policymakers should actively champion and promote initiatives that align economic interests with climate objectives. Doing so will facilitate productive partnerships that transcend political barriers and create a shared platform for addressing common challenges. By nurturing initiatives that align economic interests with climate objectives, governments can foster cross-border collaboration. Models like the Israel-Jordan-UAE energy and water cooperation exemplify how shared gains can drive engagement.

Establish Policies and Regulations to Support Green Entrepreneurship:

Creating a favorable ecosystem for green entrepreneurship requires enacting targeted policies and regulations. By incentivizing sustainable busi-

ness practices, governments can empower green entrepreneurs to drive positive change. These initiatives should include implementing cross-border tax incentives, streamlining permitting processes, and facilitating market access. This will enable green entrepreneurs to scale up their ventures and partner with counterparts in neighboring countries, ultimately contributing to regional stability and sustainable development.

Strengthen Research and Innovation Networks:

Governments and institutions should invest in research and innovation networks focused on green entrepreneurship. Collaborative platforms can facilitate knowledge exchange, technical advancements, and best practice sharing among entrepreneurs, researchers, and policymakers. By fostering a culture of innovation and cross-sector collaboration, these networks can catalyze the development of novel solutions addressing both climate challenges and conflict-related issues.

Integrate Green Entrepreneurship into Education and Training:

Educational institutions can play a pivotal role in nurturing a generation of green entrepreneurs. Integrating green entrepreneurship into curricula and training programs equips young minds with the necessary skills and knowledge to drive sustainable innovation. Additionally, mentorship programs and incubators can provide guidance and resources to budding entrepreneurs, fostering an ecosystem of support and growth.

Enhance Cross-Border Partnerships through Incentives:

Governments can foster cross-border collaborations by introducing grants, awards, and recognition for successful collaborative green entrepreneurship initiatives. Such incentives will encourage entrepreneurs and

businesses to engage in sustainable ventures across political boundaries, fostering regional cooperation and development. By showcasing exemplary projects, governments can inspire others to contribute to sustainability and peace, attracting investment and promoting innovation.

Collaborative efforts among governments, international organizations, and local communities will be essential in designing inclusive and transparent incentive frameworks. Doing so also will amplify the impact of green entrepreneurship on both climate resilience and regional stability. This approach aligns closely with the broader goal of creating an environment where entrepreneurship becomes a driving force for positive change in the MENA region.

Align Green Entrepreneurship with National and Regional Climate Goals and Peacebuilding Strategies:

As governments address the intertwined challenges of climate change and regional conflicts, aligning green entrepreneurship with national and regional climate goals takes on a critical role. Incorporating green solutions into their climate action plans, policies, and strategies means that governments can forge a clear and purposeful direction for green entrepreneurship, advance climate objectives and contribute to peacebuilding strategies in the MENA region. This alignment will also create a structured platform for monitoring, evaluating, and fine-tuning the impact of green entrepreneurship. Data-driven insights can be synergized with peacebuilding objectives and make tangible contributions to both climate resilience and regional stability.

Building peacebuilding strategies into green entrepreneurship initiatives also underscores a holistic approach to sustainable development. This approach acknowledges that success is

intertwined with fostering trust, dialogue, and collaboration among stakeholders within conflict-affected nations. It also reflects a commitment to holistic progress by actively integrating peace as a co-benefit of green initiatives, and demonstrating a dedication to addressing multifaceted challenges. Thus, the threads of environmental stewardship, economic growth, and regional peace can be woven together.

Conclusion

The transformative potential of green entrepreneurship as a catalyst for climate resilience and peace in the MENA region is clear. Assessing social and policy factors and entrepreneurship dynamics also provides valuable insights into the multifaceted impact of green initiatives on climate adaptation, economic growth, and conflict mitigation. Green entrepreneurship can address challenges contributing to conflict in the MENA region.

These insights have far-reaching implications for policymakers, stakeholders, and researchers. By understanding the synergies between entrepreneurship, climate resilience, and peace-building, nations and citizens can craft informed policies and strategies. Future research could delve deeper into specific case studies, explore additional sectors, and assess the scalability of green entrepreneurship initiatives in diverse contexts.

The MENA region's vulnerability to climate change intersects with its historical conflicts, which offers a unique context in which green entrepreneurship can bridge divides and foster collaboration. By fostering economic growth, creating jobs, and promoting self-reliance, green entrepreneurship offers a powerful mechanism to address challenges and build bridges between communities in spite of conflict.

Drawing from observations by Gidon Bromberg,¹¹ Co-Director of EcoPeace Middle East, it is essential to recognize the importance of practicality, persistence, and mutual self-interest in driving green entrepreneurship initiatives. His example of Israel-Jordan-UAE energy and water cooperation—and the opportunities for Jordan’s political and economic advancement through that effort—highlight the power of aligning environmental goals with economic benefits. These cases illustrate that green entrepreneurship is not merely an environmental endeavor, but a strategic approach to fostering cooperation and peace.

The analysis of green entrepreneurship ecosystems highlights the pivotal role that the policy environment plays in enhancing the transformative potential of green entrepreneurship. Specifically, it emphasizes the significance of policy frameworks, incentives, and regulatory structures in shaping the effectiveness of green entrepreneurship. Recognizing this also underscores the need for governments to actively

shape an ecosystem that nurtures and supports green entrepreneurs. Policies and public discourse should be framed in a way to allow for cross-border initiatives, particularly given their potential as catalysts for positive change. By promoting engagement and dialogue instead of boycotts, these initiatives can significantly contribute to regional stability and sustainable development.

The potential of green entrepreneurship to address climate challenges, stimulate economic growth, and promote peacebuilding cannot be overstated. The arguments presented in this research illuminate a path forward for the MENA region—one where entrepreneurship emerges as a catalyst for transformative change and enhanced cooperation. Adopting the proposed recommendations and establishing an ecosystem that empowers green entrepreneurs could help the MENA region combat climate change and pave the way for achieving a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Endnotes

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- 10 *Note: Due to the complexity of the challenges in the MENA region, the implementation of these recommendation will require careful consideration, dialogue, and collaboration among governments, stakeholders, and local communities.*
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