

# S'pore, Gulf nations can work together in climate fight: Minister

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Rising sea levels, higher temperatures and threats to water and food security are some of the climate change challenges faced by Singapore and Qatar as well as other countries in the Middle East.

They can thus work together particularly in the areas of climate mitigation, clean energy and green growth, said Minister for Sustainability and the Environment Grace Fu yesterday.

She was delivering the opening remarks for an online panel discussion jointly organised by the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute and the Doha Forum, a global dialogue platform.

Ms Fu pointed to three opportunities for partnership between Singapore and the Gulf countries towards a more sustainable future.

First, they should exchange expertise and best practices. "For instance, Singapore and Qatar have invested in solar energy as part of our energy mix. Singapore is building

one of the world's biggest floating solar farms and Qatar is working on the Al Kharsaah project, which will be one of the world's largest solar plants," she said. "At the same time, Qatar's electric bus project could offer useful lessons as Singapore moves towards greener public transport networks."

Second, they could work together in transitioning to a low-carbon future. Ms Fu observed that Gulf nations had been actively investing in what she dubbed as "needle-moving" clean energy solutions such as hydrogen and carbon capture, utilisation and sequestration technologies.

Qatar commissioned a carbon storage plant in 2019 – the largest of its kind in the region – which aims to capture over five million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year from the emirate's liquefied natural gas industry by 2025.

"In Singapore, clean energy research is a core part of our investment of US\$18 billion (S\$23.8 billion) in the next five years to strengthen the research and inno-

vation capabilities of our companies," said Ms Fu.

A third and prime area for cooperation lies in green growth and resilience, she said while praising Gulf countries for making "great strides" in renewable energy, circular economy, green cities and other aspects.

"On our end, we aim to develop Singapore as a carbon trading and services hub, and a leading centre for green finance to facilitate Asia's transition," said Ms Fu. "As a founding member of the One Planet Sovereign Wealth Fund initiative, which builds climate change into financial decision-making, the Qatar Investment Authority would boost green finance as it explores opportunities in Asia."

She also noted that Singapore and Qatar share similar concerns around food security.

"We would be keen to learn more about Qatar's strategies and share best practices. Singapore's economic ties and relationship with the Middle East, and particularly the Gulf region, are on the up-

swing," she said. "Green growth and resilience have the potential to be new pillars of cooperation to deepen our ties further."

Earlier, Ms Fu noted that Singapore has been an active member of international efforts to tackle climate change – by taking part in key negotiations, co-facilitating ministerial discussions, showing strong support for the Paris Agreement, and collaborating with global partners like the United Nations.

The Paris Agreement, reached in 2015, is a historic legally binding treaty which saw nearly 200 countries pledge to fight global warming and greenhouse-gas emissions.

Permanent Secretary for Sustainability and the Environment Albert Chua said Singapore would be involved in "some of the more delicate diplomatic manoeuvres" at the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November.

Asked by panel moderator and former diplomat Bilahari Kausikan what he expected from COP26, Mr Chua said there were outstanding

issues to be resolved, including on Article 6 under the Paris pact – which revolves around how countries can reduce emissions using global carbon markets.

"In the case of countries like Singapore, where we have no natural resources, the ability to secure carbon credits from elsewhere becomes very important," he said.

Indonesia's former special envoy on climate change, Mr Rachmat Witoelar, said he hoped the landmark COP26 summit would lead to funds being distributed to states making an effort to tackle climate change.

Fellow panellist and Nikkei senior staff writer Kiyoshi Ando said he expected more ambitious targets from the world's biggest source of carbon dioxide – China.

"What I fear is that all the countries are raising targets... and in the next couple of years, most will find that these are unrealistic," he added. "I hope the Paris Agreement is not going to break up."

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