

PRESS RELEASE

Al Basama Al Beeiya (Ecological Footprint) Initiative

Focus on UAE issues as over 150 attend Ecological Footprint workshop

Abu Dhabi, October 25 2007: The UAE's Al Basama Al Beeiya (Ecological Footprint) Initiative got off the ground with a technical workshop for over 150 attendees from government, municipalities, corporate organizations, and NGOs, as well as researchers from educational institutions and staff from foreign embassies.

The highly interactive workshop that was conducted on Tuesday focused on collective steps that need to be undertaken to verify the UAE's Ecological Footprint and the process involved in its calculation.

The UAE launched Al Basama Al Beeiya (Ecological Footprint) Initiative last week as a first step towards measuring and understanding the country's Ecological Footprint. The initiative involving multiple stakeholders across the nation is a combined effort to develop important guidelines for a more resource-conscious and resource-efficient government and society.

The four core partners in the Al Basama Al Beeiya initiative are the UAE Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW), the Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative (AGEDI), the Emirates Wildlife Society – World Wide Fund for Nature (EWS-WWF) and the Global Footprint Network (GFN), an international non-profit organization that promotes the Ecological Footprint as a sustainability metric worldwide.

The technical workshop conducted by Dr. Mathis Wackernagel, Executive Director of the Global Footprint Network and co-creator of the Ecological Footprint methodology, was organized by the project partners to engage multiple stakeholders from across the country who would need to be directly involved in the development and success of the initiative.

With the help of a participant at the workshop who volunteered to get her Ecological Footprint calculated via an online footprint calculator, attendees were able to gain a preliminary understanding of the parameters that went into the calculation of the Ecological Footprint. The workshop went on to introduce the audience to the concept, the methods and typical data points used in the calculation of National Footprint Accounts and to introduce the UAE's research agenda in the context of Al Basama Al Beeiya.



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Attendees at the workshop included representatives from the ministries of Energy, Economy, Finance, Justice, Interior, Federal National Council Affairs and Social Affairs, the Executive Affairs Authority, the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, the Department of Planning, Federal Customs Authority, Federal Environment Agency, Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority, Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, Department of Transportation, UAE Chamber of Commerce & Industry, the municipalities of Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Dubai, Fujairah and Al Ain, leading utilities such as ADWEA, SEWA and DEWA, Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi and Emirates Foundation.

Leading public and private sector companies such as the Abu Dhabi Airport Company, ADCO, ADMA-OPCO, ADNOC, National Drilling Company, ZADCO, Takreer, ADGAS, Dolphin Energy, MASDAR, Dubai World, Sorouh Real Estate and Emaar also participated in the workshop. The academic and research sector participants came from the Zayed International Prize for the Environment, Zayed University and Gulf Research Centre.

“On behalf of the Al Basama Al Beeiya partners I would like to thank all participants for their keen interest and support. Their willingness to contribute to this national project was obvious at the workshop at which participants raised several pertinent issues relevant to UAE”, said Razan Al Mubarak, Managing Director of EWS- WWF, the national NGO partner in Al Basama Al Beeiya.

“The workshop was conceived as an essential first step that will help us in the larger task of nation-wide data gathering. We are sure that the workshop participants will act as ambassadors for Al Basama Al Beeiya within their organizations and help facilitate the data gathering exercise,” she added.

Commending the UAE for being only the third country in the world after Switzerland and Japan to undertake such a detailed national Footprint calculation program, Dr. Mathis said that support from across multiple sectors and strong backing from the government were critical to the success of the initiative.

“Governments are realizing that ecological assets are becoming ever more significant for a country's well-being and for maintaining its competitiveness. Ecological Footprint accounting is being viewed as a way to secure people's quality of life for years to come”, he said.

The multi-stakeholder national effort under Al Basama Al Beeiya will involve data collection, quantitative and qualitative analysis, re-assessment of UAE data currently used nationally and internationally, and research into the methodology of measuring the ecological footprint taking into consideration the country's climatic and regional resonance. Once the calculation of the UAE's footprint and analysis of the footprint are completed, Al Basama Al Beeiya will make policy recommendations in two areas: natural resource use and data management.



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Editors' Notes:

Al Basama Al Beeiya

The Al Basama Al Beeiya (Ecological Footprint) Initiative is the UAE's national effort to ensure a sustainable future by measuring and understanding the impact of our way of living on planet earth. It is a historic initiative to collect vital national data according to uniform and proven standards. Al Basama Al Beeiya will be a major tool for the government to make informed policy decisions and to uphold Sheikh Zayed's environmental legacy. The national partners in the Al Basama Al Beeiya believe that the initiative is the UAE's need of the hour, considering the country's rising consumption levels and the rapid pace of development.

Background

The Ecological Footprint is a sustainability indicator that measures the use of natural resources by the population of a country. According to the Living Planet Report 2006, the UAE has the highest ecological footprint in the world at 11.9 gha (global hectares) per person. However, a review and analysis of the sources of the data used to calculate the UAE's ecological footprint has indicated that there is a considerable gap between the knowledge and data that existed in the international records and the ground data collected by local organizations. The Al Basama Al Beeiya initiative will not only close that gap, but will provide the country's leadership and government with reliable and much needed *information* that will then be used as a policy-guiding tool.

Partners

MoEW: The Ministry of Environment and Water in the UAE is part of the federal government and oversees the country's environmental policies and programmes. The ministry's mission is to achieve balanced and sustainable development in the country.

AGEDI: AGEDI was launched in 2002, as the UAE's response to a direly felt need for a formal body in Abu Dhabi to provide comprehensive and relevant data that would improve environmental policies and their role in the decision-making process. AGEDI's efforts led to the publication of the first State of Environment (SoE) report for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in March this year.

EWS – WWF: The Emirates Wildlife Society (EWS) was established as a public interest society in February 2001 by a ministerial resolution under the Societies of Public Interest Law of 1974. The environmental NGO is registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Its mission is to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable living through education and conservation initiatives in the UAE. EWS works in partnership with the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature), one of the world's most well-known global conservation organizations.

GFN: Global Footprint Network is a charitable social-benefit organization with the mission of making ecological limits central to decision-making everywhere. Together with over 70 partner organizations around the world, GFN coordinates research, develops methodological standards, and promotes innovative applications to provide decision makers



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with tools that will help the human economy operate within the Earth's ecological limits. GFN serves as the steward for the National Footprint Accounts, which calculate the Ecological Footprint and bio-capacity of 150 nations from 1961 through the present. These accounts have helped the Ecological Footprint become one of the most globally successful and widely applied sustainability communication and education tools.

For further information:

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