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FEATURED

SustainableQATAR: ‘Building a Sustainable Culture Takes Effort on All Levels’

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Glaciers have shrunk, ice on rivers, lakes are breaking up earlier, plant and animal ranges have shifted, trees are flowering sooner, wildfires are more frequent, droughts are taking place for longer periods, and the number, duration and intensity of

extreme weather events such as heat waves, dust storms and tropical storms have increased. Today, the world is calling for action on climate change and a more sustainable way of life.

Qatar with its very hot and dry climate, fragile ecosystems and high dependence on energy intensive livelihood is more vulnerable to any adverse impacts of climate change. So is Qatar becoming more sustainable? Yes, says SustainableQATAR, an independent action-based think-and-do-tank founded in 2008.

‘The opening of the metro as a form of public transportation is definitely a milestone for Qatar. When HH the Amir came by metro to the Amir’s Cup and the opening of the Al Wakrah stadium, he set an important example for the country; and the red line from Al Wakrah to West Bay has since become an accepted commuter transit option. That’s a new development for Qatar,’ said Katrin Scholz-Barth, President of SustainableQATAR.



SustainableQATAR President Katrin Scholz-Barth offering thank you remarks before the award ceremony during the SustainableQATAR Young Ambassador academy at the Qatar Finland International School (QFIS). Photo credit: SustainableQatar

‘The establishment of an impressive display of public parks in Doha over the past years underscores the importance of public green spaces. We can now enjoy Aspire Park, Al Bidda Park, Hotel Park, the Park at the Museum of Islamic Art, as well as the Parks in Lusail, Katara, and more. We all know that trees filter the air and have a number of great benefits for mental and physical well-being,’ she added, saying there are new and bigger parks in the making.

Doha will host the International Garden Exhibition (IGA) under the theme ‘*Green Desert. Better Environment*’ from 21 October 2021 to 22 March 2022. The focus of the exhibition is very much on

sustainability, smart agriculture for food security and fighting back desertification, the expansion of the desert. To make this truly sustainable requires fundamental shifts in re-thinking traditional landscape design and construction, irrigation and soil amendment and can truly become a path toward a more sustainable Qatar.'

Qatar will also hosting the first-ever carbon-neutral 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar™.



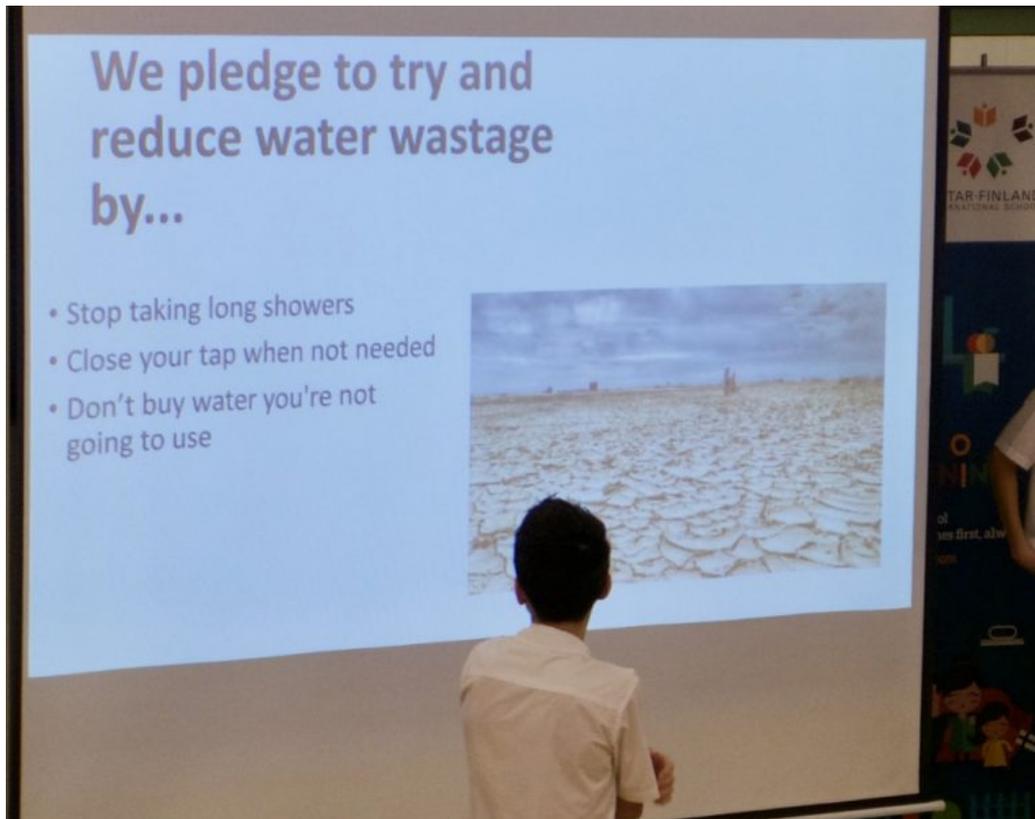
SustainableQATAR relaunched on 26 February 2019 on Qatar National Environment Day, after a period of online operation. Right on the heels of the 2019 United Nations Global Climate Summit in New York, SustainableQATAR released its logo and launched its new brand as one of Qatar's active volunteer organisations offering concrete and realistic steps towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions on the grassroots level.

'With our rebranding, SustainableQATAR is determined and dedicated as ever to be a positive force in the service of the country, for all Qatar residents, who are excited about and take pride in contributing to a regenerative development of the country,' said Schulz-Barth.

Building a sustainable culture takes effort on all levels – from policy makers to an active participatory society. Exponentially scaling sustainable action is what we envision with the SustainableQATAR logo, which symbolises ‘Qatar to the Power of Sustainability’. As Qatar is transitioning to a knowledge-based economy inspired by the examples of Norway, Indonesia and Singapore, Qatar can emulate these countries further by becoming more sustainable through public awareness campaigns, engaging everyone and making everyone feel invested in the process.’

One of SustainableQATAR’s flagship projects are the **52-Weekly Challenges** where there is one challenge per week for a whole year with a different theme every month. The challenges are Qatar-specific and Qatar-relevant opportunities for all residents to take actions in their personal life, work and within communities.

‘We know we have work to do! And there are many small things that can be changed quickly, meaning big strides are possible rather easily. We all need to ACT AS IF THE HOUSE WAS ON FIRE, BECAUSE IT IS, borrowing words from Greta Thunberg, the 16-year old Swedish youth activist who started the powerful surge in individual climate action in education via *FridaysForFuture*. When it comes to the use of water, energy, plastic bags – quick improvements are possible. New alternative products are available and everyone makes choices of how they spend their money,’ she said.



Students of the Qatar Finland International School presenting their pledges during the SustainableQATAR Young Ambassador academy. Photo credit: SustainableQatar

Raising the bar on youth climate action, SustainableQATAR recently launched the **SustainableQATAR Young Ambassadors®**, a peer-to-peer learning programme for students eight to 15 years old to raise environmental sustainability awareness and to spread their example throughout the country. During the one day programme, academy students learn from certified SustainableQATAR Young Ambassadors on how to reduce carbon emissions, make a personal sustainability pledge, and thereby create a sustainable future for all. Interested schools can apply through sustainableqatar.com.

SustainableOMAN also recently launched in Oman, which is an off-spring of SustainableQATAR. 'One of our former executive members

moved to Oman and started our sister organisation there,' Schulz-Barth explained.

SustainableQATAR reaches, serves, and represents the broad spectrum of Qatar society indiscriminate of nationality and status. We believe that the achievement isn't necessarily in the limited encounters at SustainableQATAR, but in knowing that inspired members leaving Qatar want and do continue to invest time and effort into urgent global climate issues that matter, within families and workplaces and thus amplify the impact for climate resilience. SustainableOman is a direct result of expanding SustainableQATAR's efforts regionally.'

*If you wish to volunteer at SustainableQATAR, visit their website and fill out their **volunteer application**.*

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