

Bahrain and EU Relations: Climate Change and Sustainable Development Goals

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Climate Change Measures and Deficits in Bahrain

The Kingdom of Bahrain has several organisations dealing with climate change problems. The most central is the Supreme Council for the Environment.¹ Formed in 2012, it is the most central since it is the government organisation responsible to establish this state's forthcoming strategy about sustainable development and the environment.² The implementation of these strategies is accompanied by other organisations, ministries, and agencies. The organisation also safeguards the human environment, and natural habitat, protects and guarantees the sustainability of its elements, and safeguards and evolves its resorts for future generations.³ There is a division that is part of the Department of Environmental Policies and Planning, which specializes in climate change and sustainable development.

From 2007 onwards, the Joint National Commission on Climate Change is responsible for supervising Bahrain's climate affairs, such as reduction and adjustment measures.⁴

¹ "Implementation of the 2030 agenda of Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals," Social Watch, accessed July 11, 2020, <https://www.socialwatch.org/node/18504>.

² "Institutional Organisation of the Environment Sector," Kingdom of Bahrain Supreme Council for the Environment, accessed September 18, 2022, <https://www.sce.gov.bh/en/InstitutionalOrganisationoftheEnvironmentSector?cms=iQRpheuphYtJ6pyXUGiNgjHuy0Jhci7m#:~:text=In%202012%2C%20a%20Royal%20Decree,them%20for%20the%20coming%20generations.>

³ "Supreme Council for the Environment," Kingdom of Bahrain Supreme Council for Environment, accessed September 18, 2022, [https://www.sce.gov.bh/en/#:~:text=The%20Supreme%20Council%20for%20Environment%20\(SCE\)%20in%20Bahrain%20is%20a,relevant%20ministries%2C%20agencies%20and%20institutions.](https://www.sce.gov.bh/en/#:~:text=The%20Supreme%20Council%20for%20Environment%20(SCE)%20in%20Bahrain%20is%20a,relevant%20ministries%2C%20agencies%20and%20institutions.)

⁴ "Implementation of the 2030 agenda of Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals" ; "The Gulf Arab States' Mixed Record on Climate Action," The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, accessed September 18, 2022, <https://agsiw.org/the-gulf-arab-states-mixed-record-on-climateaction/#:~:text=In%202007%2C%20Bahrain%20established%20a,communicating%20reports%20>

It is supervised by the Supreme Council of the Environment. The Supreme Council of the Environment has members from several government organisations. For instance, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the National Oil and Gas Authority, the Ministry of Communications and Communications, the Ministry of Electricity and Water, the Economic Development Board, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵

Over the last two decades, Bahrain has experienced an increase in urbanization due to the availability open and agricultural land. This process involves the settlement of infrastructure, manufacturing, and real estate office complexes, among others. This enlargement was not designed to accompany the growth of the number of people. The reasons for this are Bahrain's open-door plans for expatriate employees in which this state population is three times larger than it was twenty years ago and its real estate speculation.⁶ The rise of material and human actions are consequences of this urban boom. However, it has also triggered higher levels of pollution.

With climate change, this is causing a reduction of seasonal rains and an increase in the average air temperature. In addition, since the 1970s, the Bahraini government has been creating new territory from the sea via dredging. From 1971 to 2019, Bahraini's land area increased from 650 square meters to 7890 square meters.⁷ Conversely, the Green Belt that surrounds the capital of Manama has decreased. It lacks green areas set in a way of compensation. It has generated a perturbation and worsening of the climate. This Bahraini government, which is responsible for a set of islands, has a pollution issue. Bahrain is a flat state and is threatened by Arabian waters being inundated. The main

[to%20the%20U.N](https://agsiw.org/the-gulf-arab-states-mixed-recordonclimateaction/#:~:text=In%202007%2C%20Bahrain%20established%20a,communicating%20re-ports%20to%20the%20U.N.) ; "The Gulf Arab States' Mixed Record on Climate Action," The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, accessed September 18, 2022, <https://agsiw.org/the-gulf-arab-states-mixed-recordonclimateaction/#:~:text=In%202007%2C%20Bahrain%20established%20a,communicating%20re-ports%20to%20the%20U.N.>

⁵ "Implementation of the 2030 agenda of Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals."

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

originators of this issue are the significant stations that produce electricity. These are powered by hydrocarbon gas. They are situated in nearby urban zones. Hence, these exacerbate climate change and pollution.⁸

Bahrain currently lacks substantive plans to tackle its progressively worsening environment and support a solution for climate change. It lacks progressive strategies to change from hydrocarbon fuels that have gas emissions to renewable originators of energy such as solar power, despite Bahrain having sun during the entire year. They also lack significant plantation strategies for green areas. However, there are sterile areas. These could be watered through treated water from sewers. Yet, for Bahrain, it is counted as the Crimean farming plan situated in Tubli Bay.⁹ It contributes to safeguarding the ecosystem and can be applied both as a way of toughness and supplies carbon decrease from the pool Basin.

For a small state, the people of Bahrain are highly reliant on cars.¹⁰ The government itself has claimed that Bahrain lacks street life, with limited socializing, due to social and cultural norms. In addition, Bahrain is a desert island, where temperatures can surpass 45 degrees Celsius. It can be physically dangerous for people to be outdoors during the hottest months. These factors make driving practical, along with providing a degree of freedom and independence. Car dependency means that people tend not to be physically active during the day, thus depending on cars for movement. Presently Bahrain has two alternative modes of transport. These are private taxis service and a bus network, the latter being modern. However, busing lacks fundamental elements,

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Implementation of the 2030 agenda of Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals."

these include renewable timetables, air conditioning at bus stops and it shares space with other vehicles on Bahrain's crowded roads.¹¹

Bahrain needs to decrease the utilization of private vehicles to reduce pollution and congestion. Bahrain authorities wish to develop a metro in a near future in the absence of a particular deadline, but this is a demanding assignment. Presently, electric vehicles are not being encouraged. The Bahraini government has established the Alternative Energy Institute, but its effectiveness has not been measured.¹²

Bahrain currently has several paths to change to renewable energies and augment green areas to tackle environmental concerns and climate change, according to Bahrain's worldwide and national compromises. Being a country with a sizable population for its small size, it should invest in a metro public transportation structure, create a network of public buses, and decrease private vehicles. It should also invest in sources of renewable energy, for instance, given its climate. This plan will be expensive, and it demands supportive elements of institutions, finance, and policies of legislation, among others. And requires the partnership of the society, state, and private sector. This could be accomplished via a national agreement, as a pre-condition, which could boost civic participation and public support, giving the people a voice in a new approach to governance in Bahrain.¹³

¹¹ Mohammed Al-Khalifa, "Rethinking Transportation and the Built Environmental Development"; Examining The Impacts of Path Dependence On Car Infrastructure in Bahrain" (Master's Thesis, Columbia University, 2018), 8-23.

¹² "Implementation of the 2030 agenda of Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals."

¹³ Ibid.

EU Measures and Fighting Climate Change in Bahrain

Analysis of the economic pressures that the EU could potentially exert over Bahrain will focus on realising two of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals: fighting Climate Change, and Decent Work and Economic Growth.

With the war in Ukraine and growing sanctions on Russia and its fossil fuels, the EU is becoming more reliant on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) for energy. Thus, attempts to put pressure on the government of Bahrain (GoB) may require more of a 'carrot' than 'stick' approach. Meanwhile, the GoB needs to present itself as modern, stable, and well-equipped to attract vital foreign investment to diversify its economy. These are areas where the EU could offer support from which Bahrain would benefit greatly, possibly giving the EU more leverage over Bahrain and lessening Bahrain's reliance on its GCC neighbours. Moreover, it could place the EU in a stronger position to hold the GoB to account on its human rights record and democratic deficits.

The EU could provide support to Bahrain in establishing more climate-friendly modes of transport such as investment in infrastructure like railways, or less polluting road options like buses or electric cars. This could be achieved through direct investment, and/or offering more favourable trading terms for resources. There are several reasons why this could prove successful. Geographically, Bahrain is small, making the creation of developed public transportation systems more feasible. If the GoB is keen to pursue a 'charm offensive' and enhance its global reputation, the opportunity to pursue climate-friendly policies may be agreeable to them. Moreover, improved transportation may also aid their goal of reducing unemployment by making commutes easier and by attracting further foreign investment.

Decent work and growth: concerns on employment in Bahrain include a need to diversify from a few key industries, a lack of jobs for graduates, and an overreliance on migrant labour. The EU would be able to assist Bahrain in expanding its tourism sector by making



short-term travel from the EU to Bahrain easier; it may also be able to mitigate the problem of unemployed graduates by offering more favourable immigration terms to Bahrain, allowing more Bahraini graduates to seek employment in EU countries and thus easing the pressure on Bahrain's own economy. Once again, a Bahraini 'charm offensive' such as through tourism may also help attract more foreign investment to diversify the economy. Finally, there is also the option of direct financial investment in Bahrain itself targeted at creating jobs.