

- Zoe Haseman: The urgent need for us to tackle the climate crisis. Yeah.
- Jens Nielsen: So it's really a crucial decade.
- Zoe Haseman: Impacts of climate change and the risks that these pose to our society.
- Jens Nielsen: We need specific plans and excellence to drive the CO2 emissions down in the short term.
- Zoe Haseman: The climate crisis is the world's most critical challenge right now.
- Jens Nielsen: Hello and welcome to The Sparks Podcast Series. I'm Jens Nielsen.
- Zoe Haseman: And I'm Zoe Haseman.
- Jens Nielsen: And we'll be your host throughout this special edition podcast series brought to you by The World Climate Foundation and Jacobs. Come with us as we take you on a journey around world to explore how different countries are tackling their climate challenges, sparking ideas and inspiration, from clean energy innovations in Scotland to sustainable buildings in Dubai, we'll be interviewing global green leaders, financiers and entrepreneurs about the policies, investments, and innovations that are accelerating our progress towards a resilient and sustainable world. Our podcast hopes to educate and inspire, sparking real conversations with the intention to collaborate, act, commit to real change.
- Zoe Haseman: Dubai is well known around the world for the dramatic growth of the city. Since the United Arab Emirates was founded in 1971, but what is not as well known is that Dubai is a model for the country's focus on sustainability and the ongoing transition to sustainable and smart cities. This year, the eyes of the world are on the UAE as Dubai is the first world expo in the Middle East Africa and South Asia region.
- Jens Nielsen: In this episode, we talk about how sustainability is a sub theme of Expo 2020 Dubai, which is presenting the opportunity for the global community to share challenges, lessons learned and solutions from around the world. For Expo, the event is an opportunity to advance the UAE sustainability agenda and create a model for sustainable urban development that will live on as district 2020, after the event. Joining us today, a two of the UAE's most influential leaders helping to make the world more sustainable. We are excited to introduce Ayla Bajwa, head of sustainability and impact from DP World and Ahmed Al Khatib, chief delivery officer for Expo 2020 Dubai. Ayla and Ahmed, welcome. Thank you for joining us.
- Ayla Bajwa: Thank you for having us.
- Ahmed Al Khatib: Thank you, Jens.

Jens Nielsen: I'll put this question. The first question to both of you, his Highness, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and the leadership of UAE have outlined an ambitious growth agenda with sustainability at its heart. How has this shaped the Expo 2020 Sustainability and the sustainability strategy for DP World as a corporate in the UAE? Ayla would you like to status us off?

Ayla Bajwa: Yes. So sustainability isn't new to DP World. We developed our sustainability strategy, our first round of it in the early 2000s to the mid 2000s. And we are now at its third iteration. So in 2019, we did a complete refresher of our strategy launching the Our World, Our Future strategy. And for us within that sustainability framework, we position and we approach sustainability as how to run a responsible business. So it's not specific to the green footprint. It is not specific to social performance. It's really how do we run a holistic responsible business and how do we ensure we leave the world behind in a better place? So we have, within that framework also identified three legacy areas, specifically oceans women and education, but we all also have a community strategy within our sustainability framework that looks at multiple issue areas.

We have taken a data driven approach to our sustainability strategy, but what is very important to us to also be aligned with international framework. So we are UN Global compact participants. So we were celebrating yesterday at the UN anniversary and we are aligned with the sustainable development goals and the UN women empowerment principals. So very much engaging in local aspirations under global frameworks. So that's sort of how we have evolved over the years.

Jens Nielsen: Thank you, Ayla. It is over to Ahmed.

Ahmed Al Khatib: Sustainability has always been in the blood of the development of the city of Dubai and the strategy of planning of the entire city since day one. And of course like the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed, he always embraced that through the full support, through creating clear strategies on how the implementation of the sustainability vision should take place. There are so many examples and so many planning strategies that have been announced through the past years. And recently, of course, like the latest one, the zero carbon vision by 2030, which is something extremely in line with the entire planning of the city and the strategy of how to create like a city that is the most sustainable in the region. Expo 2020 of course like expo in general, they are about creating impact after the completion of the expo and hosting the expo and how that impact will continue.

After expo finishes since day one, we had the very clear strategy on how to implement sustainability and the entire city of expo. When I say the city of expo, the site is twice the size of Monaco, it's a little bit less than five square kilometers of everything you can think of that future city can have. We developed very clear strategy, very clear goals, very clear KPIs. We also appointed third parties on how to monitor those KPIs and how to ensure that we are actually walking the talk and implementing every single steps we dreamt

of. And we have achieved an expo that is the most sustainable expo in the history of all expo that extends over the past 170 years. So Expo 2020 Dubai is the most sustainable expo, and we are extremely proud of this. And we have achieved the as well, a lot of objectives on how we are going to continue the KPIs that we have achieved and also how we are going to roll out those strategies across the country.

Zoe Haseman: Great. Thank you, Ahmed. And you got to this a little bit already in your answer, but you've essentially with Dubai Expo developed a city within a city at that expos site, how has sustainability influenced the planning and design of the built environment for will be event? And just as importantly, how is it implement the plans for district 2020 year permanent mixed use development after the event?

Ahmed Al Khatib: That's a very good question. And to answer it, we need hours and hours and hours to really finish the answer and it won't even be enough. Our journey when sustainability started since putting the bit documents of, to host the expo at Dubai, of course like sustainability is extremely important. Hence, it's one of our main three sub themes, sustainability mobility, and opportunity. We developed a very clear strategy and KPIs. We had the more than 40 KPIs in terms of implementing sustainability throughout our design, throughout our construction, and throughout our operation. Throughout the design, we have developed design guidelines for our consultants that sets clear KPIs in terms of design. In terms of construction, we've done the same for our contractors, we development material guidelines and how to source the materials and where to source the materials from, and in terms of distances, carbon emissions, and all of items relevant to sustainability.

And in terms of operation, of course, we have similar KPIs to guide the efficiency on operation, to minimize the use of power, use of water and et cetera. Great examples and highlights of those achievements in terms of sustainability. Of course, like in the design implementation, we relied a lot on passive elements of design. So we have shaded walkways, self shaded walkways without using shades. Our buildings, all of them are lead gold as a minimum, and we have lead platinum buildings across the Expo site. Some things that we have achieved, of course, like to achieve and to change regulations within authorities, it takes a lot of efforts and a lot of convincing and a lot of trials and testings. We've went through all of this. And for example, our roads in Expo, 30% of the asphalt mix comes from recycled tires, and this is something extremely new for the region.

And we have actually been approached by different organizations on how we've done that and asked us for that recipe. And of course we provided them. And again, this is what Expo all about to create impact and to come up with new initiatives and technologies on how to improve the way of livings. And of course, in terms of construction in 2018, for example, we diverted more than 300,000 tons of construction waste away from landfill, which is a big achievement in the region to divert that much of waste away from landfill. Of course, like this was through reuse of the material and recycling of the construction waste towards

other directions to help and serve the project itself. In terms of concrete, our concrete uses 30% less water than business as usual, power we are using across the site, 50% comes from renewable energy. This is through the solar panels on the buildings, as well as the connecting to Sheikh Mohammed's solar farm through the grid.

Sustainability examples are so many across the site. You can see it and feel it and live it. Of course, the most obvious one is the sustainability Pavilion, which talks sustainability in every corner. When you look at it and you visit the building itself, generates four gigawatts of power through solar energy on the canopy of the building, as well as the energy trees that are surrounding the buildings and they actually follow the path of the sun. So they move along with the sun path to maximize the exposure to the solar energy and feed it to the grid and to the building.

Two thirds of the building is underground, which helps a lot in insulating the building and keeping the temperature down. We actually use the new technology for the region, which is called geothermal, and we managed to drop the temperature by one degree of the building without using power, which is again, a great success in this type of heat and environment in Dubai to drop the building by one degree, without using power. There are a lot of things and a lot of amazing, beautiful examples across the site that showcases sustainability and responsibility, to take care of the future generation. And it's extremely important for everyone to ensure that they pay at least one visit to the Expo, because it's once in a lifetime opportunity to see all of this hard work, how it was translated to reality.

Zoe Haseman: Amazing. That's fascinating. Thank you Ahmed and I think really sort of standing out as a model for not only Dubai, but the rest of the world to learn from some of these sort of new leading edge technologies and things that you've been able to incorporate into the designs, so thank you.

Jens Nielsen: And how important are the lessons learned from Expo going to be to the future development of Dubai and the UAE in terms of sustainable urban development?

Ahmed Al Khatib: It's extremely important. And we really paid the strong attention to how to keep those lessons and how to record them and how to share them with the rest of the stakeholders. It's so important that you realize that with minor changes, with small changes and how the world have used to build cities, you can actually achieve a lot of when it comes to cost, a lot of cost saving. When it comes to operation, it's a lot of operational cost. When it comes to way of living, it's a much healthier way of living, which is the most important thing. When it comes of reserving the natural resources.

This is, again, this is the extreme, important objectives. It's extremely important to use Expo as the... It is actually the catalyst of the future cities, whether it's in terms of urban developed sustainable urban development, or whether it's in

terms of technology, in terms of how cities should actually be designed around human, rather than, around how much my building will generate traffic, how much commercial space I need to maximize, how much... Of course it's important, but it's not all about how much money I should generate.

It's really just, you can, if you come Expo and walk around, it's a human-centric development. What are the closest services to me? How can I walk and enjoy a nice, healthy environment of shades, of plants, of good percentage of oxygen, of great amount of sunlight that goes into my buildings of everything? So the only way actually to know it, it is just to come and experience it yourself, because we've heard so many times about sustainable urban development and future cities, but actually I would say like Expo 2020, which is also District 2020 and legacy, this is the real future city that is actually built and is here on ground.

Zoe Haseman: Excellent. Well, I'm certainly looking forward to coming. You may do a good pitch. One of the things that I'd be interested in there, is how has your personal perspective as sustainability changed? As you've moved through this process, you know right from day zero, as you said earlier, all the way through to now seeing it, full of people and in operation mode. So how has that journey for you change your perspective as you've moved, delivered on a sustainable urban development?

Ahmed Al Khatib: In fact, it wasn't an easy journey at all. Of course, like we had to change perspectives. We had to change some of the way of things, how they are designed and built in the region through improving that we had to go through a lot of testing, a lot of mock-ups, a lot of trials, a lot of numbers, a lot of calculations, a lot of convincing and so on. It's been really, really difficult at the beginning. And then it got even more and more difficult through the built, because we are building the future city at the same time, we are KPIs. And the bar was always an exponentially being raised by the leadership. We get all the support from the leadership and the stakeholders. And we had all the great minds from all over the world to make this happen.

So in a short sentence, we had no excuse to make this not the most sustainable city in the world. I would call it and sustainable development in the world. So we all put all the elements together, all the ingredients together and worked hard on achieving those. And just seeing the final results. Now, once we opened the Expo and the amazing feedback we've been getting from everywhere in the world, like since even the opening ceremony and it never stopped, and it's still ongoing, this is the best thing that we actually manage to deliver this in such a very short time with this amazing deliverables that makes the world a better place. And hopefully we will continue pushing this even beyond District 2020 after the event is over.

Jens Nielsen: Thank you, Ahmed. It's super impressive. Then a question for you, Ayla, DP World are one of the Expo partners that have their own Pavilion. Can you tell us

how you have incorporated sustainability into your Pavilion design and your business experience?

Ayla Bajwa:

Yes. We very much took the task and that Expo prioritized for us. So we have developed a complete sustainability gallery in our Expo DP World Pavilion, and we have used that space to promote our economic, social, environmental sustainability practices around the world. So it gives you an insight in our commitment globally. We've also used the area to celebrate our partnerships. So we have created this beautiful Pavilion and we want to ensure that our network uses it, that our partners use it as a space to share the beautiful stories that they are creating around the world. Some of our notable partners related to wildlife, children education. So for example, we have a legacy table within our gallery that showcases the work that we're doing with UNICEF, with the Earthshot Prize, with United for Wildlife, to just name a few. And we have been very keen to create a space that would be interesting and would engage the next generation.

So we have created something called the Flow Lab within the sustainability gallery, where students or young children between the ages of 11 and 13 can come in and engage in interactive workshops, learning more about the technologies and the projects that DP World is adopting from a sustainability point of view.

And that's really important for us. So there is, legacy is a big part of the ambition of this event, and we very much take that to heart. And we see a big part of that being communicating, and creating and engaging the awareness amongst the next generation. We also have plans for this large Pavilion to then be used as an Institute, again, build the future talent of the country. And so all of this is very important to us to allow this space, to be a place to convene thought around sustainability, and you will feel it. So when you walk into the Pavilion, when you walk into the sustainability gallery within the Pavilion, you will feel it, you will feel the authenticity, of the aspirations and the projects that are being propelled by the group. And so we are very much focused on continuing that mission.

Zoe Haseman:

Excellent. Thanks, Ayla. You talked about your partnerships and how important they are to you at Expo and as part of your Pavilion, and you talked about your DP World's sustainability strategy, our world, our future. What role do partnerships have in delivering that sustainability strategy for DP World?

Ayla Bajwa:

Yeah, so within the sustainability strategy, as I mentioned earlier, it's too pronged in its approach. So it's our world and our future and our world is how we approach our business and a big material topic, or issue area within that is community engagement. So how do we engage with our communities? And so we have created a community strategy that focuses on particular issue areas. So emergency relief, wildlife protection, health education, and then we have applied to gender lens to all of these areas. So for us, it's very important to approach everything with a gender lens based on our legacy pillar, which is

women empowerment. So for each one of these issue areas, we have identified under our community strategy. We have identified anchor partnerships and so that is the connection. So we have our large sustainability framework, within that the community strategy, within the community strategy, our focus areas, and each focus area being anchored in a critical and strategic partnership.

And this very much is the ethos of how we approach sustainable development. Being very clear that we have a platform, we have a value chain and we are not necessarily experts on the ground for these issue areas. So in the case of wildlife protection, this is why we have partnered with United for Wildlife, with space for giants, with the task trust, because we leave it to them with ZSL. So the Zoological London Society, also a key partner for us and also a partner for an event we will be having later on in the year for Worldwide Life Day. And so what we want to ensure is that we provide a platform for our partners so that they can propel the work that they're doing on the ground. So for example, if you visit our Pavilion today, you will see these two large, very beautiful lions that are actually going to be up for auction.

And when I say lions, I mean, sculpture, not real lions but lion sculptures, and we are borrowed from the task trust so that we can create awareness for the important work that they're doing in the space of wildlife protection. Further to that. And this is what's been beautiful about having a Pavilion at the Expo is to drive those thought leadership conversations. So again, inviting our partner to events very much focused on particular sustainable development challenges and having them co-curate provocative and thought provoking conversations in our space next to the sustainability gallery within our atrium. So we really see ourselves as a connector.

Another example of the way we like to do partnerships is our partnership with UNICEF. When COVID hit the world, we took stock of where we can bring value within our operational setting. And so we partnered with UNICEF and offered pro bono space within our warehouses and within our infrastructures so that they can distribute the vaccines and the world's [hardest] areas. And so this is how we like to approach partnerships, where do we exist? Where can our business bring value? How can we ensure that we're taking a shared value approach and creating spaces for our partners to then expose the important work that they are doing on the ground?

Jens Nielsen: Ayla, you mentioned the Earthshot Prize before. What is the Earthshot Prize and what inspired you to join the prize? And [is it] as a founding partner with Expo 2020?

Ayla Bajwa: Yeah, so we are a global alliance founding partner of the Earthshot Prize, which was launched by Prince William to celebrate innovations that are addressing sustainability challenges. So the name arch shot has been inspired by moonshot, which is JF Kennedy's reference to achieving that visit to the moon. And so this is the ambition idea, ambition behind the Earthshot Prize. How can we ensure

that we address the world's largest challenges within this decade of action? So we have 10 years, so also aligned with the sustainable development goals, 2030 marks the end of achieving the sustainable development goals. And so we referenced it as the decade of action. And so the Earthshot Prize also views this decade of action as critical to sparking innovation, to address sustainability challenges. And so it is an awards scheme, like no other, it's really an unprecedented award scheme for innovators from across the globe to present these mind blowing ideas that can scale to achieve these challenges and cognizant that we are working towards this decade of action.

And so for us, it was very, again, aligned with also our business value system. We believe, and we are passionate about innovation and business transformation. And so is a complete synergy between the Earthshot Prize values and DP World's approach to sustainability in the way that it does business. And it's was a complete pleasure to be able to partner with Expo on this. So for us to be a premier partner of the Expo and for both entities to then support the Earthshot Prize was exactly the kind of things we want to achieve through this global platform and exactly the way we want to set up the legacy of Expo and the work and the conversations that we are undergoing.

We don't want it to end after six months. We actually want it to pivot after six months. And these are the kind of partnerships that we are looking to solidify, taking an active approach in these partnerships, having dialogue and really planning together, how are we going to really make the next 10 years in a space where sustainable development challenges are addressed and our targets are achievable.

Zoe Haseman: Excellent. And Ayla, the first winners were recently announced in an inaugural event ceremony in London, which are tuned into, on the TV on Sunday evening. What has your role been through that selection process and how do you support the winners to help them scale their Earthshots over the next decade?

Ayla Bajwa: Yes, so we work... So we take the lead of the Earthshot Prize and so we work with the team and we look to them to provide guidance on how we can propel the excellent work that is being carried out by the winners that have been identified. It's truly inspirational. I urge everyone to watch the ceremony that took place a couple of days ago. The innovations are quite inspirational, we are planning to meet with the winners at COP26 and have bilaterals and have collective conversations about what to do next, how DP World can support, how can we leverage our business where we are very privileged as DP World is that we are a Dubai company operating globally. So we work in over 60 countries and we have relationships on the ground in those countries via from a civil society organization perspective. So we work directly with the communities there, we have partners there, but also with the governments.

And so if these are places that can benefit from the innovations that have come out of Earthshot Prize, then we are very keen to be the conduit between these



innovations and these entrepreneurs and these winners to these locations. And then also sharing our business operations with these innovators and saying, these are our business services. And can we leverage these business services to support the excellent work that you are doing? And can we connect the technologies that we are using in then also propelling the work that these innovators are looking to achieve? So for us, it's really connecting the dots.

And again, I will always go back to the same point, providing a platform to propel the messages and the work that these innovators are achieving and pushing. So this is extremely important for us. So we'll have more informational, concrete, next steps, particularly how can we use the Pavilion to expose their wonderful work after we have these dialogues at COP26, which will be a very inspirational environment to have these discussions at.

Zoe Haseman: Indeed. Yeah, great stuff, and very exciting to be involved in something so inspiring that will make such an impact. Thanks Ayla.

Jens Nielsen: Ahmed, one of Expo objectives was to be one of the most sustainable world expos in history. We often see the term sustainable development used without clarity of what this means. What have you done to ensure that what you've delivered is understood by the average visitor and how have those achievements been verified?

Ahmed Al Khatib: Of course, again, the journey on the built of the Expo started like since day one, when we put the vision and started like by breaking ground with the Expo built, and we shared those objectives and dreams, and it's a long journey that we've always kept our audience from community with our, their local or residents, because they've been part of the entire journey of winning the expo preparation for the Expo. We kept them updated throughout the entire journey to, until we are here now, enjoying this event. In terms of course like our Expo is we are very proud. It's the most sustainable expo through the history. The first thing, when it comes to sustainability in relation to previous expos, usually the previous expos leaves like a landmark or an icon that reminds people of the expo. For us, we actually leaving a future city and entire city behind after the expo is finished.

When we look at the investment that we put in the expo, we actually didn't build an expo. We built the future city and then we are hosting the expo inside the future city. And we are leaving this future city behind. This can be seen through of course, like the physical infrastructure. We built the physical structures. We built the achievements. We achieved through the built of this expo. Again, our buildings, all of them are lead gold as minimal standards. We have a lot of lead platinum as well. Our infrastructure, we have achieved eight SQL recognition for the most sustainable infrastructure.

And in terms of size, this is the biggest and the history of SQL to give that many and of this scale of SQL recognition in terms of infrastructure. We also achieved like ISO 20121 recently, which adds to the civil achievements that we have built

the site of expo on all of this is just a very small, honestly there are so many others, like again, you need to come and experience it yourself by visiting the Expo. And also maybe if you don't have the opportunity, you can come always after Expo, because we are leaving the entire city with the great plans. So the city will remain as the city of the future.

Jens Nielsen: Thank you Ahmed. I would love to go over and see the Expo.

Zoe Haseman: What would be the one thing that you hope most visitors that come to DP World Pavilion and just Expo as a whole? What would be the one thing that you would wish for them to take away with them after experiencing Expo that will go on to create impact for society?

Ahmed Al Khatib: It's very difficult to pick one. There are so many here, but in general it is just like we demonstrated sustainability in so many places and areas and whether it's through the physical structures, or through the programming, or through the exhibitions, it's just like, I would love for the visitors when they come to Expo just to pick five out of those many offers and just to start like implementing them in their daily lives, just to create this impact and change and for the entire world.

Ayla Bajwa: Yeah. I mean, the word possibilities comes into mind. So whether it's the Expo site or the DP World Pavilion, what I hope for anyone to feel as they're walking out of both these spaces is a world of possibilities and responsible possibilities. And so to concretely back that intention is you walk through a flow of history, see how you can grow as a business, how you can be a successful entity and do it in a responsible way where you are leaving the world behind in a better way. This is what we hope visitors will be touched by.

Jens Nielsen: Unfortunately, that's all we have time for on this episode. Ayla and Ahmed, thank you for joining us today. It's a very exciting time for Dubai and the UAE, and we really appreciate your unique insights into Dubai Sustainable Efforts. And we wish you all the best as you continue your sustainable journeys. As always thank you to you, our wonderful listeners for joining us for another exciting episode. We hope you enjoyed the podcast and we look forward to next week's not to be missed episode, when we head to the main event [inaudible] and come to you, live from COP26, sparking real conversations with the intention to collaborate, act, commit to real change. See you then.