



FEATURE

## GreenRecovery: a Step Forward to the Sustainable Path

Veolia Middle East contributes to power the circular economy addressing regional climate change issues

**T**his unprecedented time of global crisis and worldwide lockdown made the world experience a decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This decrease was mainly due to the slowdown of industrial production and the reduction of transportation that account for more than 75% of the global emissions.

In the meantime, the world has also seen an increase of disposable plastic, highly damageable for the environment and biodiversity. The Covid-19 crisis has made even more crucial the need for creativity, solidarity and innovation in terms of sustainability.

The science is beyond dispute. If global warming is to be kept to no more than +2°C by the turn of the century, compared to the preindustrial era, then global greenhouse gas emissions must fall 61% by 2050, compared to current trends. To achieve this, we must constantly innovate and strive to reduce and eliminate atmospheric anthropogenic greenhouse gases emissions.

### **The green recovery has already started**

More than ever, after this crisis, governments and economies will focus their efforts and growth strategies on sustainable development and green recovery. This is not a matter of creating a new economy from scratch. We already have all the tools and expertise available to make it happen in the Middle East.

Veolia is paving the way of a circular economy, securing access to water and better utilisation of local resources for more self-sufficient economies.



Through its several on-going renewable energy projects in Dubai, Ajman, and Abu Dhabi, Veolia is helping to mitigate the climate emergency by capturing and converting biogas to electricity as well as by installing solar panels, and other initiatives. In addition to this, Veolia is placing the development of a recycling culture at the heart of their approach.

Veolia also fosters adaptations to the climate emergency and its consequences by towns, cities, and industries, deploying solutions, such as the identification of water stress risks and water recycling to limit pressure on resources. With the implementation of appropriate desalination and water reuse strategies, Veolia contributes to supplying potable water to 1 million people within the region.

By operating optimally wastewater systems of cities in Ajman, Abu Dhabi, and Al Ain, Veolia Middle East ensures the safety of more than 2,8 million residents that are

connected to the emirates' sanitation networks. The optimised management of wastewater systems helps to preserve the natural environment while crisis management and continuity planning ensure that essential services are supplied when extreme events occur.

This moment of recovery will be an opportunity to rethink our society and develop a new growth model which will be more inclusive, resilient, circular, and digital. Indeed, the transition to a climate-neutral economy, the protection of biodiversity, and the transformation of agri-food systems have the potential to rapidly deliver jobs, economic growth, and contribute to building more resilient societies based on a global circular economy approach.

#### **Food security: a challenge that calls for green strategy only**

When we talk about agriculture in the UAE, the country faces many challenges

that include water scarcity, extreme temperatures, intense urbanisation, industrialisation, as well as limited land suitable for agriculture. Despite these issues, however, the UAE continues to flourish, even though its increasing population growth needs to be supported by a steady food supply.

The region is already endowed with the resources required to face this challenge. Untapped potential, for example, lies with the reuse of treated water, which remains largely underutilised in MENA – a total of 82% is not reused, according to the Water Resources Institute (WRI). This water would provide a viable source of clean water, the key to establishing food security programmes in the region. To protect water resources, Veolia is developing irrigation solutions with treated water recycling, including an innovative solution based on “intelligent reuse”. This approach makes it possible to reuse wastewater for agriculture and



conserve the nutrients it contains, such as nitrogen, phosphorus or potassium, thereby limiting the use of chemical fertilisers.

Globally, around one third of all food is wasted and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimated that food waste contributed to nearly 10% of all man-made greenhouse gas emissions between 2010 and 2016. Waste management companies like Veolia have an important role to play in helping to mitigate against this problem through engaging with their client base.

Veolia is able to use sludge and organic waste to produce fertilisers and organic amendments, this achieves the loop of the circular economy. Thanks to their expertise in water and waste, Veolia is able to transform bio-waste into organic fertilisers and recycle wastewater sludge and compost.

### Create the green loop of plastic in the UAE

In Abu Dhabi and Dubai, more than 900,000 metric tonnes of plastic resin are used annually, with consumer packaging representing 45% of plastic used in UAE.

This is a colossal issue because most plastics don't just 'go away', they end up in our waterways and take hundreds of years to degrade.

By enhancing its commitment towards improving sustainable development in UAE and widely across the Middle East, Veolia places all its efforts to play an active role by raising awareness among current and future generations about the environmental challenges, such as decreasing the amount of waste generated in the region by spreading the recycling reflex. Recycling is a cornerstone of circular economy: where others see problems, others see resources.

Initiatives can be taken in order to help citizens limit waste globally and encourage them to segregate the waste in order to ease the recycling. To support this approach, Veolia has signed a partnership with Agthia Group to work on post-consumed PET sustainability initiatives, thereby making recycling easier and accessible through different collection schemes.

Several initiatives about plastic recycling will be deployed which will establish a

circular ecosystem to pave the way towards more recycling in the region.

The launching of a PET water bottles collection programme in the UAE, which includes the use of digital solutions, and various awareness programmes, along with incentive schemes and reward, will be a major step for communities in their sustainable path.

Circular economy has the power to tackle the challenge of the region in the waste, energy and water sectors. Creating local loops of resources and enhancing food security are just a few examples of Veolia's contribution to a greater future.

**“At Veolia Middle East, we are not simply contributing to the more efficient use of resources in MENA but rather discovering new approaches towards creating a truly sustainable and self-sufficient ecosystem. By supporting and helping local public infrastructure and industries to achieve their sustainable journey, by sensitising and helping customers to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle, our company aims to play the role of a key partner in the region to build the green recovery.” Sébastien Chauvin, CEO of Veolia Middle East. 🌱**