

Panel two: Mobilizing private capital & enhancing innovation capabilities in the renewables sector of the Middle East and North Africa region

Saturday, December 9th, 2023
11:30 am GST – 12:15 pm GST
Public Event
COP28 in Dubai

Speaker bios



H.E. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi

Minister of State for Foreign Trade, The United Arab Emirates

HE Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi was appointed the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade, following the new UAE Government structure in July 2020, and has been assigned a file to attract the best talents and competencies to serve the strategic direction of the UAE. HE also oversees the development of non-oil foreign trade sectors and the expansion of global partnerships, in addition to enhancing the investment climate in the country, in order to cement its position as a major business destination at the regional and global levels. He had held the position of Minister of Climate Change and Environment previously, during which he supervised the implementation of the UAE's strategies locally, advancing environment and climate actions. He also led the country's efforts in limiting and adapting to the repercussions of climate change at the global level, while also focusing on the preservation of the UAE's biodiversity through the development and implementation of a set of effective policies and measures. Prior to assuming his ministerial position, HE Al Zeyoudi served as the permanent representative of the UAE to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and Director of the Department of Energy Affairs and Climate Change at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. He began his career as a petroleum engineer at the Abu Dhabi Marine Area Operating Company (ADMA-OPCO) before moving to the Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (Masdar), where he worked on the development of renewable energy technologies and solutions. He has played a major role in the UAE's successful diplomatic campaign in 2009 to host the headquarters of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) in the capital, Abu Dhabi. HE Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al-Zeyoudi holds a bachelor's degree in petroleum engineering from the University of Tulsa; a Master's degree in Business Administration from the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT); a Master's degree in Project Management from the British University in Dubai; and a PhD in Strategy, Program and Project Management from SKEMA Business School in France.



Jay Collins

Vice Chairman of Public Sector & Banking, Citi

Jay Collins is Vice Chairman of Public Sector and Banking at Citigroup and is the firm's senior banker for global governments. Over the course of his 36-year career, he has advised governments, corporations and banks on complex large-scale financings and M&A on every continent and across every sector. Jay has executed transactions for over 50 governments, including privatizations, liability management and funding solutions, infrastructure finance, structured products and derivatives, as well as electronic banking services and digital payment solutions. He has had the privilege of advising governments at times of financial duress, including Egypt, Argentina, Greece, Ukraine, Iraq, Ecuador, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Jamaica, working on many of the largest sovereign debt restructurings in the world. During the Covid crisis, Jay led a team of 27 Citi bankers as sole financial advisor to Gavi's COVAX Facility, advising on financial and risk issues related to just and equitable global distribution of Covid-19 vaccines. Throughout his career Jay has maintained an ongoing focus on sustainability and development finance and has advised multilateral financial institutions since the early 1990s. He has acted as the senior advisor for Citi to the Government of Egypt on climate finance structures and solutions for COP 27. He is

also an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University where he teaches “Sustainability, Innovation and Technology” at the graduate level. He co-chaired Citi’s Sustainable Banking Committee and is asked to speak regularly on climate finance and sustainability policies. He recently Chaired the Report Committee for the UN Secretary General’s Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance. Jay served as Global Head of Citi’s Public Sector Group from 2005 – 2011. From 2006 – 2007, Jay was also Global Head of Infrastructure Finance. From 2001 – 2005, Jay was Citi’s Head of Global Banking for Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa (CEEMEA). Prior to his CEEMEA position, Jay was Deputy Head and the senior foreigner in Nikko Citigroup’s Investment Banking Division in Tokyo, Japan. He has also served as Chief Operating Officer for the Latin America Region. He has been a Senior Credit Officer of the firm since 2006. Before joining Citi in 1997, Jay worked for Merrill Lynch on the “NY1” team, (the US large-cap Investment Banking team) and subsequently in Merrill’s Direct Investment Group. Jay has a Master of Science in Foreign Service from Georgetown University where he graduated with Honors in International Business Finance in 1989. He is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Colorado College. He also studied at Waseda University in Japan.



Dr. Mahmoud Mohieldin

Special Envoy on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations

Mahmoud Mohieldin, born on 15 January 1965 in Egypt, is the World Bank Group’s Senior Vice President for the 2030 Development Agenda, UN Relations, and Partnerships. He previously served as Corporate Secretary, President’s Special Envoy and Managing Director. Prior to joining the World Bank, he was Minister of Investment of Egypt from 2004 until 2010. Dr. Mohieldin also served on several Boards of Directors in the Central Bank of Egypt and the corporate sector. He was a member of the Commission on Growth and Development and selected a Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum in 2005. His professional experience extends into the academic arena as a Professor of Economics at Cairo University and as a Visiting

Professor at renowned Universities. He also served as Member of the Board of several universities in Egypt and held senior positions in national and regional research centers and think tanks. He has authored numerous publications and articles in leading journals in the fields of economics, finance and development in English and Arabic.



May Nasrallah

Founder and Executive Chairwoman, deNovo Partners

May Nasrallah is the Founder and Executive Chairwoman of deNovo Partners, an Independent, Middle-East focused, corporate finance advisory firm, offering international bulge bracket expertise to MENA-wide and centric corporates and institutions. deNovo Partners under May’s leadership has over the past 13 years established its reputation and track record as the pre-eminent independent, regionally-headquartered boutique advisory firm. deNovo has successfully executed numerous sellsides, buysides, stake sales, restructurings, valuations, fundings, capital structure and strategic reviews on behalf of its continuously growing client base. May and deNovo’s advice is consistently sought by the region’s leading family groups, corporates and sovereign wealth funds as well as global firms seeking regional

acquisitions. deNovo entered a Strategic Alliance to enhance global coverage with PJT Partners in 2020, and with Bank Itau in 2019. May has also served as a non-Executive Chairman and Senior Advisor to BlackRock across the Middle East region, between 2020 and 2022, supporting development of BlackRock’s strategy in the region and fostering relationships with key regional stakeholders, including clients, regulators and governmental bodies. Prior to founding deNovo, May spent over 15 years at Morgan Stanley in numerous Investment Banking roles and geographies including New York, Hong Kong, London and Dubai. Most recently, she was Head of Investment Banking for the Middle East and North Africa region, where in 2005 she established, led and grew Morgan Stanley’s inaugural investment banking presence in the Middle East, based in the DIFC, Dubai. She retired from the firm in late 2009. May graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (“MIT”) with Dual Degrees: a Bachelor

of Science in Economics and a Bachelor of Science in Political Science. May further received her Masters in Management and Finance from MIT's Sloan School of Management.

Moderator bio



Dr. Racha Helwa

Director, empowerME, Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, Atlantic Council

Racha Helwa is the Director of the empowerME Initiative at the Atlantic Council’s Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East. Helwa is a senior economist with twenty-two years of professional experience in economic-and financial-policy analysis and implementation. She has held roles in the private sector, government, and academia in the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Egypt. She specializes in public-policy design and implementation, sustainable development, impact investing, and private-sector development. Helwa holds a PhD in economic policy from the University of Cambridge, an MSc in international political economics from the London School of Economics, and an MSc in banking, finance, and risk management from the University of Paris. She was formerly an assistant professor of public policy at the American University in Cairo, senior researcher at the University of Cambridge, and senior economist in the Office of Egypt’s Minister of Investment. Helwa also has collaborated with various international institutions including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and Development Programme, and the US Agency for Development. She is fully fluent in English, French, and Arabic.