A RAIA profile on: **Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**

Yasmine Salah El-Din Fouad Abdel Aziz

Fifth part of a six-part series on climate leaders ahead of the 2026 United Nations Climate Change Conference

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List of Abbreviations

CAT	Climate Action Tracker
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
EGP	Egyptian Pound
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessments
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographic Information System
GISDS	Global Implementation Initiative for Sand and Dust Storms
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LECZ	Low Elevation Coastal Zones
MSW	Municipal Solid Waste
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SDS	Sand and Dust Storms
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNU	United Nations University
USD	United States Dollar
WML	Waste Management Law
ZCGP	Zero Carbon Green Planet

Yasmine Fouad

Introduction

Yasmine Fouad, PhD, is a leading authority on environmental diplomacy in the Middle East with over 25 years of experience in environmental governance, climate negotiations, and sustainable development.[1] As an Egyptian national, she has served as Egypt's Minister of Environment, which required protective and mitigating work for coastlines, desert, and the Nile Delta. During this time, she led the development of the Climate Change Strategy 2050, the Waste Management Law, and reforms for protected areas and renewable energy.[2] Coming from a region most threatened by desertification and land degradation, Fouad currently serves as the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).[3] Having been a witness to these challenges and the opportunities to lead negotiations with respect to the use of nature-based solutions as Egypt's envoy for COP 27,[4] she has become an important figure in international climate policy. **According to this report, Yasmine Fouad is a climate leader driven by an altruistic commitment to improve the quality of life across Egypt and advance the establishment of renewable energies and green projects.**

Yasmine Fouad's career began with an education in environmental science, which laid the technical groundwork for her future diplomatic career. She was a visiting scholar at Columbia University and holds a doctorate in Euro-Mediterranean studies from the Faculty of Economics and Political Science at Cairo University.[5] These opportunities allowed her to expand her expertise in politics and science while broadening her academic network and credibility. All of this would ultimately shape the framework of governing in the African and Mediterranean regions.[6] Through the years, her rise in prominence is rooted in her reputation in

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[1] *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification* , 'Yasmine Fouad' https://www.unccd.int/convention/who-is-who/yasmine-fouad

[2] *World Bank Live,* 'Yasmine Fouad - Minister of Environment, Arabic Republic of Egypt' https://live.worldbank.org/en/experts/y/yasmine-fouad

[3] *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification* , 'Yasmine Fouad'

[4] Ibid

[5] *United Nations* 'Ms. Yasmine Fouad of Egypt - Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification' 22 May 2025 https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/personnel-appointments/2025-05-22/ms-yasmine-fouad-of-egypt-executive-secretary-of-the-united-nations-convention-combat-desertification

[6] *World Economic Forum,* 'Yasmine Fouad - Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), https://www.weforum.org/people/yasmine-fouad/#:~:text=Dr.%20Yasmine%20Fouad%20is%20Minister,UN%20organizations%2C%20NGOs%20and%20Universities.

academia and global policy, building influence through Africa's multilateral environment, such as the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change and the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment. In the later years of her career, Fouad co-chaired the New Partnership for Africa's Development Regional Flagship Programs steering committee, including Sustainable Land Management, Desertification, Biodiversity, and Ecosystems-based Adaptation to Climate Change.[7] In addition, she served as a lead author for an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land degradation, and Food Security.[8]

Fouad's academic and professional career, with a focus on environmental science, allowed her to interconnect climate and biodiversity processes. Through her work, she demonstrated outstanding leadership across various levels, including national, regional, and global. This approach allowed Fouad to bring a unique perspective and set of tools into her role as minister, bringing the biodiversity and climate Conference of the Parties (COP) to Egypt, setting her up as a pioneer in uplifting the knowledge and capacity to change the trajectory of Egypt's climate reform. Fouad was able to work on sustainability and environmental justice agendas across the three Rio Conventions.[9] Collectively, these experiences paved the path to her appointment as Minister of Environment, a position she held from 2018 to 2025,[10] during which she embedded sustainability into national investment planning and laid the groundwork for her work under the UNCCD.

This report covers the work of Yasmine Fouad through a multifarious approach. Firstly, the study analyses what factors are at stake for Fouad, with a focus on Egypt's climatic challenges and their physical, economic, and social impacts. These include (1) extreme temperatures, (2) sea level rise, and (3) desertification. Next, it dives into her defining moment, the event that inspired her and forced her to take definitive action on climate policy. This led her to her move from participant to being part of the ministry, which ultimately marked the beginning of her environmental career. Following this, the report explores the major climatic and environmental policies that she worked to implement, and the impact they have had on environmental action across Egypt, and across the Middle East. These include the Waste Management Regulation Law, Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast of Egypt & Targeted Integrated Coastal Zone Management, and Decision 25/COP 16, Decision 27/COP 16, Decision

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[7] Ibid
[8] *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,* 'Yasmine Fouad'
[9] *RAEDNETWORK,* 'RAED Network Welcomes the Appointment of Dr. Yasmine Fouad as Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification' 22 May 2025 https://raednetwork.org/en/raed-network-welcomes-the-appointment-of-dr-yasmine-fouad-as-executive-secretary-of-the-united-nations-convention-to-combat-desertification/
[10] *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,* 'Yasmine Fouad'

28/COP 16. The report will conclude with policy recommendations to maximise climate action, taking into account the social and economic factors that both enable and constrain environmental policy in Egypt and the Middle East.

Yasmine Fouad's Environmental Stake

The three major environmental challenges faced by Egypt include desertification, extreme temperatures and irregular precipitation patterns, and sea level rise. These challenges have served as a baseline for the work of Yasmine Fouad across various sectors and continue to be a topic of discussion in the development of policies and green projects to improve the adaptive capacity of Egypt.

Extreme Temperatures

On a global scale, extreme temperatures are characterised by fluctuations in daily temperatures, irregular precipitation patterns, and overall climatic changes. This process has been correlated with a rise in greenhouse gas emissions, derived from the use of fossil fuels, which enhance the greenhouse gas effect and the trapping of the sun's heat in Earth's atmosphere.[11] Ultimately, rising temperatures change weather patterns and lead to drought, increased death rates, increased energy demands, and decreases in food availability.[12]

In recent years, surface temperatures in Egypt and in the Nile River basin have increased by an average of 0.16˚C and 0.4˚C, reaching temperatures of between 40˚C and 44˚C in some governorates.[13] Unfortunately, climate models predict that Egypt's average annual temperatures may rise by 2.1˚C by the middle of the century and 4.4˚C by the end of the century.[14] Some areas, such as South Sinai and Aswan, will be especially vulnerable, experiencing warming of approximately 5.15˚C and 5.49˚C by 2100. Some immediate impacts of these extreme temperatures include heat stress, heat island effects, increased energy consumption, reduced crop yields, and decreased milk and meat production, ultimately threatening Egyptian food supply.[15] In addition, heat-related mortality is

[11] *United Nations,* 'Causes and Effects of Climate Change' https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/causes-effects-climate-change
[12] *NOAA* 'Climate change impacts', https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/climate/climate-change-impacts
[13] S. Mahmoud, T. Gan, R. Allan, J. Li, 'Worsening drought of Nile basin under shift in atmospheric circulation, stronger ENSO and Indian Ocean dipole', 16 May 2022, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-12008-8
[14] *World Bank*, 'Climate Risk Country Profile: Egypt', 2021, https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/15723-WB_Egypt%20Country%20Profile-WEB-2_0.pdf
[15] A. Hamzawy, M. Al-Mailam, and J. Arkeh, 'Climate Change in Egypt: Opportunities and Obstacles', 26 October 2023, https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/10/climate-change-in-egypt-opportunities-and-obstacles

expected to increase by 47 times by 2080,[16] and increased particulate matter and heat stress could result in 2,000 to 5,000 more deaths per year and a loss of 20 to 48 billion Egyptian pounds per year.[17] Further impacts of extreme temperatures include a decline in productivity due to heat stress. By 2030, it is expected that heat stress will result in a deprivation of 134,000 work hours per year.[18]

On the other hand, in regard to agriculture and food supply chains, the continuing rise of temperatures will result in the reshaping of the agricultural terrain as the cultivation of wheat and deciduous fruits will be moved to northern regions where cooler temperatures are found. This will directly impact biodiversity but also result in increases in food prices or food shortages.[19] Additionally, due to increasing temperatures, crops will require more water to grow, approximately between 10.9% and 13.2% by 2100,[20] ultimately putting additional pressure on already vulnerable resources.

Extreme temperatures and climate change could also have direct impacts on Egypt's total annual rainfall, as a decline of approximately 2.9 millimetres annually before the end of the century is estimated.[21] The combination of declining precipitation and rising temperatures will result in increased drought periods. It is estimated that heat waves might be prolonged from 9 to 75 days, and droughts could increase by 15 days by the year 2080.[22]

Some of the impacts of drought include decreased water availability, which leads to reduced dilution capacity and contamination of remaining sources. As surface water sources are dried up, and the remaining water becomes heavily contaminated with animal and human waste, this leads to the proliferation of infectious diseases such as cholera, and skin infections such as scabies and leishmaniasis due to a lack of water for washing.[23] It has also been found that contaminated surface water acts as a breeding ground for mosquitoes, which are directly involved in the transmission of pathogens, as drought results in the loss

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[16] *World Health Organization,* 'Health and climate change: country profile 2015: Egypt', 3 December 2016, https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/health-and-climate-change-country-profile-2015-egypt

[17] *UNDP,* 'Potential Impacts of Climate Change on the Egyptian Economy', 28 February 2013, https://www.undp.org/egypt/publications/potential-impacts-climate-change-egyptian-economy

[18] *International Labour Organization* 'Working on a Warmer Planet: The Impact of Heat Stress on Labour Productivity and Decent Work," 2019, https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40dcomm/%40publ/documents/publication/wcms_711919.pdf

[19] A. Hamzawy, M. Al-Mailam, and J. Arkeh, 'Climate Change in Egypt: Opportunities and Obstacles'

[20] S.Mostafa et al., 'Potential Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources in Egypt,' 21 June 2021, https://doi.org/10.3390/w13121715

[21] World Bank, 'Climate Risk Country Profile: Egypt.'

[22] Ibid

[23] S. Bellizzi, C. Lane, M. Elhakim, and P. Nabeth, 'Health consequences of drought in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region: hotspot areas and needed actions', 12 November 2020, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7659048/

of competitors and predators.[24] Some pathogens transmitted by mosquitoes include malaria, dengue, Zika, and chikungunya.[25]

Sea Level Rise

Sea level rise describes an increase in the level of the ocean due to the effects of global warming. As temperatures rise, the warming of the oceans is enhanced and manifested in rising levels worldwide. Sea level rise poses a threat to coastal ecosystems and communities and can increase the intensity of weather events, flooding, storm surges, damage to the infrastructure of coastal areas, and saltwater intrusion into soil and groundwater found inland.[26] Due to the arid climate, 95% of Egyptians live on less than 6% of the land and mostly around the Nile.[27] The IPCC has identified the Nile Delta as one of the parts of the world most vulnerable to climate change impacts, including sea-level rise and rising temperatures, putting at risk one of the most populated deltas on the planet, with almost 50 million inhabitants.[28]

Between 1993 and 2010, sea levels in the Mediterranean Sea rose by around 2.6 centimetres per decade. Now, it is estimated that by the end of the century, this rate will rise to 22 centimetres.[29] Egypt's northern shore has been described as low-lying and at severe risk of flooding, coastal erosion, and land subsidence, 2.4% of which is defined as low-elevation coastal zones (LECZ), which describes vulnerable coastal regions positioned at altitudes of less than 10 metres above sea level. By 2030, sea level rise would threaten 45 million Egyptians with extreme floods, land loss, and property damage, and by 2060, the number of Egyptians residing in LECZ will reach 63.5 million, representing an increase of 249% in sixty years.

In addition to societal impacts, the rising sea levels would be devastating across Nile Delta cities. It is estimated that in the case of a sea level rise of 0.5 metres, there would be property loss and damage with a value of United States Dollar (USD) 3 billion.[30] Additionally, the sea level rise would result in the loss of beach land with a value of USD 2 billion. Currently, coastal cities contain half of Egypt's

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[24] A. Hamzawy, M. Al-Mailam, and J. Arkeh, 'Climate Change in Egypt: Opportunities and Obstacles'
[25] A. Jackson, 'Explainer: How climate change is amplifying', 22 April 2022, https://www.worldmosquitoprogram.org/en/news-stories/stories/explainer-how-climate-change-amplifying-mosquito-borne-diseases
[26] *National Geographic,* 'Sea Level Rise' https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/sea-level-rise/
[27] A. Hamzawy, M. Al-Mailam, and J. Arkeh, 'Climate Change in Egypt: Opportunities and Obstacles'
[28] F.Bonnefoi, 'Sea-Level Rise in the Nile Delta: Promoting Adaptation Through Circular Migration' 2 May 2024 https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/sea-level-rise-nile-delta-promoting-adaptation-through-circular-migration
[29] M. Shaltout, K. Tonbol, and A. Omstedt, 'Sea-Level Change and Projected Future Flooding along the Egyptian Mediterranean Coast', 2015, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oceano.2015.06.004
[30] M. El Raey, 'Impacts and Implications of Climate Change for the Coastal Zones of Egypt', 1 January 2010, https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10902.9

industrial sector, 40% of the agriculture, and just Alexandria's shoreline is responsible for 13.3% of Egypt's fish production.[31] Due to the sea level rise, a minimum loss of 30% of food production in the Nile Delta Region is estimated, signifying a disruption in national food supply chains and food insecurity.[32]

In addition, sea level rise, coupled with the removal of natural buffer zones and the development of manmade infrastructures, has left the coastline vulnerable to erosion, which has been found to increase the salinity of the coast. For example, in the Rosetta coast, the salinity has risen from under 27% in 1964 to 29% in 2015.[33] As a result, this intrusion of saltwater has led to the deterioration of cultivated land by making it less fertile and the degradation of groundwater. Certain crops have been identified as particularly threatened, such as mangoes, olives, and tomatoes, as well as alfalfa, pushing farmers to buy dry livestock forage. To cope with the negative effects on agricultural production, farmers must use more fertilisers and pesticides. This increases their production costs and further pollutes the land.[34]

Desertification

According to the UNCCD, desertification is described as land degradation in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas, a process in which soil productivity is lost as human activities and climatic variations strip the land of the topsoil, which takes centuries to recover. Some human activities responsible for this environmental challenge include deforestation, thinning of vegetative cover, overcultivation, and poor irrigation practices.[35]

Major pressures on land resources and causes of desertification in Egypt include population growth and urbanisation, waterlogging, soil salinity, soil fertility degradation, and soil erosion. Population growth causes pressure on limited land and water resources. Waterlogging causes rapid deterioration and negative effects on land quality. Soil fertility and land degradation are due to severe exploitation from intensive agriculture. Soil erosion is a result of intense wind erosion, which best explains the vulnerability of sand dunes, as they are highly

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[31] M. Iskander, 'Stability of the Northern Coast of Egypt under the Effect of Urbanization and Climate Change', December 2020, https://doi.org/10.1080/11104929.2020.1864255
[32] Ibid
[33] Ibid
[34] F. Bonnefoi, 'Sea-Level Rise in the Nile Delta: Promoting Adaptation Through Circular Migration' https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/sea-level-rise-nile-delta-promoting-adaptation-through-circular-migration
[35] *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,* 'UNCCD FAQ' https://www.unccd.int/unccd-faq

vulnerable to wind erosion and severely jeopardise agricultural development and human development.[36]

Desertification has weighed down the agricultural sector of Egypt, as it has been reported that it claims 3.5 feddans[37] an hour in Egypt. Due to these impacts of the worsened climate crisis, farmers have been forced to ration their cultivation and can only plant once a year instead of seasonally. In Egypt, the agricultural sector accounts for one fifth of all jobs,[38] but desertification has led to the migration of farmers due to a lack of resources for profitable agriculture.[39]

Additionally, as one of the most populous countries in the Middle East and North Africa, the productivity of Egypt's agricultural land is important for food security, nutrition, and food access. As a result of the decrease in agricultural land, there has been an increased dependence on international supply chains, which present risks to food security, economic growth, and access for low-income communities.[40] In addition, desertification in the Nile Delta has also caused repercussions on Egypt's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate, agricultural output, socio-political stability, poverty, and inequality.[41]

Desertification in Egypt is typically assessed across four agro-ecological zones. Across the Nile Valley and Delta, the main desertification problems of soil salinity, pollution, urbanisation, and sand encroachment have led to loss of fertile farmland and lower crop yields.[42] In the Northern Coast and Sinai, desertification problems of pasture degradation, intense grain cultivation, water and wind erosion, have led to overall reduced meat, milk, and wool production. In the Eastern Desert and Sinai, desertification problems of soil salinity, erosion, and overuse of vegetation have led to loss of biodiversity and ecosystem degradation. Finally, in the Western Desert and Oases, desertification problems of groundwater depletion, salinity, sand encroachment, and wildlife loss have led to reduced productivity, water deterioration, and habitat destruction.[43]

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[36] A. Ahmed, 'Desertification in Egypt: Current Status and Trends' August 2015 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/300484770_Desertification_in_Egypt_Current_Status_and_Trends

[37] *Merriam-Webster,* A feddan is characterised as an Egyptian unit of area which is approximately equal to 1.038 acres

[38] OECD, 'Policies for the Future of Farming and Food in Egypt', 4 May 2026, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/policies-for-the-future-of-farming-and-food-in-egypt_cabocefd-en/full-report/the-agricultural-policy-context-in-egypt_d3486256.html

[39] E. Mounir, 'Egypt's desertification is ruining fields, cutting crops, and displacing farmers', 8 November 2021, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/egypts-desertification-is-ruining-fields-cutting-crops-and-displacing-farmers/

[40] M. Elhini et al, 'The land degradation and desertification-socioeconomic nexus in Egypt's delta region: A case study on Alexandria and Beheira', 30 May 2024, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2405844024071962

[41] Ibid

[42] A. Ahmed, 'Desertification in Egypt: Current Status and Trends'

[43] Ibid

These environmental challenges have proven to be of importance for various reasons. To begin, extreme temperatures have motivated Fouad on a personal and strategic level as Egypt depends on the Nile for 97% of its water supply, and the rise of temperatures produces high evapotranspiration, which puts additional pressure on an already vulnerable resource.[44] In addition, these extreme temperatures result in droughts, crop failure, wildfires, and soil moisture loss. All of which combined can trap vulnerable populations into poverty and make them more vulnerable to future challenges.

It has also been emphasised that droughts cost the global economy a minimum of USD 300 billion a year and result in many impacts such as an increase in food prices, disruption of transport, migration pressures, and reduced hydropower.[45] Fouad has described droughts as an economic risk that requires management and adequate development of mitigation strategies. In her professional opinion, this refers to the alignment of public finance, development banks, climate funds, and private capital.[46]

Next, as one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change due to sea level rise and rising temperatures, the Nile Delta is of key concern as sea level rise could cause significant property loss and damage, disruption of national food supply chains, and decreased soil fertility. It is a clear priority for Egypt and Yasmine Fouad as it brings catastrophic economic outcomes, especially for fishermen, farmers, and residents in coastal areas.[47] Concerning responses to sea level rise include violence and protests as a result of financial concerns, external migration in the governorates of Damietta and Kafr El-Sheikh, internal migration in the governorates of Beheira and Dakahlia, and the need to search for alternative economic opportunities.[48]

Fouad has highlighted the possible scenarios that the Nile Delta will face with rising sea levels. The first focuses on complete submersion of the Delta while the other focuses on the use of preventative measures such as coastal protection and early warning systems.[49] These concerns have led Fouad to push for major coastal adaptation projects, such as the development of seawalls to protect cities

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[44] *The American University in Cairo,* 'Water Scarcity', https://www.aucegypt.edu/climate-change/water-scarcity

[45] One Earth, 'Q&A with Dr. Yasmine Fouad', 15 May 2026, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2026.101708

[46] Ibid

[47] *IPDC,* 'Egypt Social Disruption and Migration due to Sea Level Rise - Results from Egypt SLR Hackathon', 8 September 2025, https://ipdc-climate-action.org/resources/egypt-social-disruption-and-migration-due-to-sea-level-rise-results-from-egypt-slr-hackathon/

[48] Ibid

[49] M. Jangadost, 'Egypt's Environment Minister Warns of Alexandria's Vulnerability to Climate Change, Cites Rising Sea Levels and Extreme Weather', 3 June 2025, https://channel8.com/english/news/39339

in the Nile Delta.[50] In addition, Fouad has also emphasised the use of strategic urban expansion, such as the construction of 16 new cities outside the Delta region for long-term strategies.[51]

Finally, desertification is of direct importance as it is linked to her current role as Executive Secretary, where she focuses on land restoration, drought resilience, ecosystem recovery, climate change, and biodiversity. Fouad has warned that climate change and desertification pose critical threats to Africa's security and stability, urging coordinated regional action and increased investment in sustainable environmental and climate solutions.[52] Fouad has described this degradation as a global security risk as it directly impacts food security, water security, and economic stability.[53] Making it necessary to link the security of food, energy, and water to the development of a climate-resilient agenda.[54]

Fouad has described that "Land is our most ancient inheritance. To protect it is to safeguard life itself". To her, land holds a tie with ancestors, ensures harvests of future generations, and ties the families of the nation together.[55] It is also an important subject as Fouad sees it as an opportunity for the Arab region to lead global sustainability efforts and transform deserts into improved, lush landscapes.[56] Additionally, desertification poses various economic risks, such as Africa losing 3 million hectares of forest each year, resulting in a 3% reduction in its GDP due to soil and nutrient depletion. With the inevitable decline in land productivity, Africa has spent over USD 43 billion annually on food imports. Meanwhile, farmers face growing profit losses due to declining soil fertility. The widening crop yield gap caused by soil degradation is estimated to cost the continent up to USD 68 billion in losses each year.[57]

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[50] *Daily News Egypt,* 'Egypt's Environment Minister calls for stronger action on desertification, climate resilience in Africa', 30 June 2025 https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2025/06/30/egypts-environment-minister-calls-for-stronger-action-on-desertification-climate-resilience-in-africa/

[51] M. Jangadost, 'Egypt's Environment Minister Warns of Alexandria's Vulnerability to Climate Change, Cites Rising Sea Levels and Extreme Weather'

[52] *Daily News Egypt,* 'Egypt's Environment Minister calls for stronger action on desertification, climate resilience in Africa'

[53] Y. Fouad, 'Cairo; Ministers move from dialogue to delivery on drought resilience ahead of COP17', June 2026 https://www.linkedin.com/posts/yasmine-fouad-9b4a70390_unccd-cop17-droughtresilience-activity-7469764246990462976-aOty?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAFX930ABZYYkJzOCX3NtQtbhkpLJOK4s3Rk

[54] Ibid

[55] Y. Fouad, 'The global fight against desertification', 7 November 2025, https://arab.news/mjbnb

[56] Ibid

[57] *Greenpeace Middle East and North Africa,* 'Desertification in North Africa: A Growing Threat to the Environment, Economy and Daily Life', 17 June 2025, https://www.greenpeace.org/mena/en/desertification-in-north-africa/

Yasmine Fouad's Defining Moment

A defining moment is a particular point in a leader's life that determines the course of their career and focus on environmental policies, ultimately leading them to become a climate leader. In a way, it is a turning point that influences their view about the climate and the approach that should be taken to tackle climate issues.

As a result, this report considers Fouad's defining moment to be her participation at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Expert Group Meeting on the Harmonization of Environmental Standards, organised jointly by the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and the Egyptian Electricity Authority, held in Cairo from 29 June to 1 July 1999.[58]

During the conference participants discussed the integration and exchange of climate policies to tackle global environmental challenges, as well as the challenges that Egypt was facing at the moment, in particular those related to the power sector, such as atmospheric emissions, air pollution, solid waste management, solid hazardous waste management or health and safety of population.[59] These challenges were later connected to her contributions to climate policies, like the Waste Management Law (WML). The conference gave the chance to the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency to present the climatic milestones that they had achieved since its establishment in 1982, as well as its progress since Law No.4 of 1994 on the Environment,[60] where they set their mandate.

Further, while the conference was taking place, Egypt was drafting its National Environmental Action Plan, a moment that Fouad felt the urge to become part of. In fact, after the conference, she changed from being a participant and volunteer to being part of the ministry herself, becoming Assistant Minister of Environment for Sustainable Development in 2014. Years later, in 2018, she would be named Minister of Environment for the Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly's government. She held this position until 2025, when she was appointed Executive Secretary of the UNCCD.

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[58] United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, '100 Days of Leadership: Dr. Yasmine Fouad on land, resilience & our universal mission', YouTube, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91sierd_LC0&t=46s .

[59] Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency and Egyptian Electricity Authority, 'Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency: Egyptian Electricity Authority: Country Paper' (Expert Group Meeting on the Harmonization of Environmental Standards in the Energy Sector of the ESCWA Member States, Cairo, 18 June 1999) UN Doc E/ESCWA/ENR/1999/WG.3/CP.7 https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/409668/files/E_ESCWA_ENR_1999_WG.3_CP.7-EN.pdf

[60] *General Authority for Free Zones and Investment*, 'Environmental Law' (GAFI) https://www.gafi.gov.eg/English/StartaBusiness/Laws-and-Regulations/PublishingImages/Pages/BusinessLaws/enviromental.pdf

Previously, Fouad had already been engaged with the United Nations, specifically with the United Nations Development Programme as project manager of the National Capacity Self-Assessment and capacity building. Notably, according to the interview with the UNCCD, Yasmine Fouad explains that her professional aspirations regarding the environment are deeply shaped by her faith, as she sees nature as God's creation.[61] Therefore, after the conference, driven by her faith, she was determined to work towards this goal.

Yasmine Fouad's Climate Solutions

Waste Management Regulation Law

In 2020, Egypt published in its Official Gazette the Egyptian Law No.202 of 2020, promulgating the Waste Management Regulation Law. The legislation is divided into six books: the General Provisions, the Body (Waste Management Regulatory Body), General Policies and Obligations, Non-hazardous waste, Hazardous materials and waste, and Penalties.

In Book One the Law established the meaning of 44 terms, including the definition of waste as damaged materials, objects or movables abandoned by their holder, whether they can be recycled or must be disposed of. Further, it establishes the definition for Integrated Municipal Waste Management Units, an entity established through this Law, made responsible for the integrated management of municipal waste, among other terms.

One of the main achievements of this law is the establishment of the Waste Management Body, developed in Book Two, which aims *to "regulate, follow up, monitor, evaluate, and develop everything relating to integrated waste management activities"* as well as to monitor their implementation in cooperation with diverse state and non-state actors (Article 4, Law No. 202).

This body, as set in Article 5, is in charge of undertaking all necessary actions and works to achieve its objectives. Some of the concrete actions the Law provides are the establishment of a national system for managing waste information data (Article 5.2), the determination of the geographical scope of integrated municipal waste management service areas (Article 5.4) and the oversight of integrated waste management activities.[62]

Book Three makes substantial progress, particularly in Article 27, which requires that the manufacturing, importing and exporting of single-use plastic bags

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[61] *UNCCD*, 'Yasmine Fouad, '100 Days of Leadership: Land, Resilience & Our Universal Mission', 22 November, 2025 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91sierd_LC0

[62] Law No. 202 of 2020 Promulgating the Waste Management Regulation Law (Official Gazette Egypt, Issue No. 41 bis (B), 13 October 2020).

should be in accordance with the requirements established by the Law, as well as the power to prohibit them if they do not comply with the controls.[63]

In the sections from Book Four and Book Five, the Law sets the standards and controls for Non-Hazardous Waste and Hazardous Materials. Book Six establishes the penalties for the breach of the regulations imposed by the Law, which aim to ensure that the requirements are met.

Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast of Egypt

This initiative implements the construction of 69 km of sand dune dikes across priority hot spots most severely affected by and vulnerable to sea-level rise and extreme storms in Egypt.[64] The project targets the densely populated low-lying lands of the Nile Delta which is a large river delta situated in northern Egypt surrounded by some of the driest deserts in the world.[65] The Nile Delta is about 175 km long, spanning from Cairo to the Mediterranean Sea, with about 260 km of width along the coast.[66] The low-lying lands of the Mediterranean-facing Nile Delta consists of a 50-km-wide strip that sits not even 2 metres above sea level.[67]

Although this strip only covers about 2% of Egypt's total landmass, roughly 41% of Egypt's population lives in this zone and over 60% of its agricultural land is hosted here. This policy therefore will expand the low-cost dike system, which are a type of nature-based coastal defence that combines natural or engineered sand dunes with rigid, man-made dikes usually consisting of the natural dunes as the first line of defence absorbing energy from storms and high sea levels and engineered dikes which provide additional support for inland areas to remain safe.[68] Dune-dike systems are increasingly recognised for their potential but remain rare at large scales.[69]

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[63] Ibid
[64] *UNDP Climate Change Adaptation*, 'Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast of Egypt' https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/enhancing-climate-change-adaptation-north-coast-egypt
[65] E. Peck and M. Thieme, 'Nile Delta', https://feow.org/ecoregions/details/524
[66] Ibid
[67] Eldeberky Y, 'Coastal Adaptation to Sea Level Rise along the Nile Delta, Egypt' (2011) 1 WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment 41, https://research.fit.edu/media/site-specific/researchfitedu/coast-climate-adaptation-library/africa/egypt-amp-libya/Eldeberky.--2011.--Coastal-Adaptation-to-SLR-Along-the-Nile-Delta.pdf
[68] DuneFront, Innovative Dune-Dike Solutions: Safeguarding Coastal Regions amidst Climate Change', https://dunefront.eu/innovative-dune-dike-solutions-safeguarding-coastal-regions-amidst-climate-change
[69] Jan De Nul, 'Dune-Dike Solutions: A New Generation of Coastal Protection, 23 March 2026, https://www.jandenul.com/news/dune-dike-solutions-new-generation-coastal-protection-systems

Dikes can protect shorelines from severe flooding but are prone to erosion, whereas sand dunes absorb wave energy and offer ecological and aesthetic benefits, a nature-based solution that functions to preserve coastal areas.[70] Sea-level rise still threatens traditional, rigid structures, but the combined dune-dike system can naturally adapt to changing environmental conditions since dunes are made of sand, as well as providing essential habitats for animal and plant life.[71] The 7-year project from 2018-2025 functions to expand the use of these dune-dike systems to prevent flooding of vulnerable low-lying lands from sea surges during extreme weather. The project remains in progress, with a planned completion date of 30 November 2026.[72]

The system was initially tested under the Global Environment Facility Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) project and will also support developing the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan (ICZM) in order to link the national development plan of coastal zones with the plan for shore protection. The ICZM will establish an observation system to monitor changes in the climate using oceanographic parameters and the impact of different shore protection scenarios, shifting from a reactive to proactive approach to coastal protection.[73] The hot spots this policy will address include Kafr El-Sheikh, Beheira, Port Said, Dakahlia, and Damietta.[74]

This policy has been implemented by blending nature-based engineering with multi-ministerial planning, aiming to protect the densely populated low-lying lands in the Nile Delta identified as highly vulnerable to sea level rise.[75] A GCF grant of USD 31.4 million, plus USD 73.8 million in co-financing from the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation allows for implementation.[76]

Sea-level rise will have devastating impacts on Egypt's infrastructure and development along low coastal lands.[77] The Nile Delta is among the top three most vulnerable regions in the world; a one metre rise in sea level is expected to submerge 20% of the area by the end of the 21st century, making this policy particularly relevant to the climatic challenge of sea level rise and coastal

[70] Ibid
[71] Ibid
[72] *Green Climate Fund*, 'Annual Performance Report for FP053: Enhancing climate change adaptation in the North Coast and Nile Delta Regions in Egypt', 10 September, 2025, 'https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/fp053-50763-annual-performance-report-cy2024-v3.pdf
[73] UNDP Climate Change Adaptation, 'Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast of Egypt
https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/enhancing-climate-change-adaptation-north-coast-egyp
[74] Ibid
[75] UNDP Climate Change Adaptation, 'Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast of Egypt'
[76] Ibid
[77] Ibid

erosion.[78] Agriculture contributes to one-fifth of the workforce in Egypt, 12% of its GDP, and much of its food supply, putting it at the forefront of Egypt's climate priorities.[79]

The low-cost natural dikes that have been constructed as a result of this policy have had direct economic effects on communities at risk; fisherman Aziz Lasheen from Kafr El-Sheikh reported that his income would drop by 70% every winter out of fear of going to work due to the rising water. Since then, surging waters have been kept away from his village during the more frequently occurring violent storms across the coast. Although extreme events continued to occur during the winters between 2016-2018, water has not penetrated the sand fences and no erosion has been seen where the dikes have been placed. The dikes passed the test during one of the most severe wind and rain storms in December 2020.[80]

On the other hand, sea levels continue to rise and although this project has been effective in mitigating the effects, the root cause remains unsolved. Environmentally, the project has supported re-vegetation, wetland restoration, and establishing conservation zones to protect habitats along the coast. Since the dikes are made of a combination of reed fences and local vegetation, materials that would normally be discarded are reused. This project has immense social effects, generating local jobs and strengthening the institutional capacity to expand projects like these as this is the first strategic plan to target the entire coastline.[81]

Leading this policy and the ICZM has boosted Fouad's domestic standing by securing the Green Climate Fund (GCF) funding in order, supporting her image as an effective policymaker as well as using her technical expertise and positioning to push forth an effective and transformative project. This project was launched prior to her transition to the UNCCD, therefore this project likely boosted her reputation as Minister to transition her to her current role. Her role in translating coastal management theory into nature based solutions gave Fouad visibility on the global stage as well as recognition for food security as a climate priority, in climate damage financing, and for science-driven policy and crisis preparedness. She has been recognised under the Top 50 Women Forum for these achievements, making her work for this policy beneficial to her political capital.[82]

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[78] UNDP Climate Change Adaptation, 'Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast of Egypt'
https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/enhancing-climate-change-adaptation-north-coast-egypt
[79] OECD, 'Policies for the Future of Farming and Food in Egypt', 4 May 2026,
https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/policies-for-the-future-of-farming-and-food-in-egypt_cab0cefd-en/full-report/the-agricultural-policy-context-in-egypt_d3486256.html
[80] UNDP, 'Protecting the Nile Delta', 13 June 2021,
https://www.undp.org/egypt/blog/protecting-nile-delta
[81] Ibid.
[82] United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification , 'Yasmine Fouad'

Decision 25/COP 16, Decision 27/COP 16, Decision 28/COP 16

Shortly before Fouad joined the UNCCD, the parties to the UN agency adopted three key Decisions tackling gender data gap, sand and dust storm mitigation and land tenure. Even though Fouad was not yet the Executive Secretary, she has been part of the implementation and monitoring plan of these decisions. Furthermore, looking at the UNCCD COP 17 (17 to 28 August 2026), Fouad has already visited the host country, Mongolia, which has established the theme for this year's conference: "Restoring Land, Restoring Hope". As announced by the UN, Fouad has met with multiple senior government officials and international stakeholders to strengthen cooperation as well as monitor whether the proposals are being implemented.[83]

During the 16th UNCCD Conference of Parties, the Parties adopted Decision 25 which recognises that the active involvement of women in land management is essential for addressing desertification, land degradation and drought, and achieving land degradation neutrality; Decision 27, where they highlighted that desertification, land degradation and drought have increased the frequency, intensity, and duration of sand and dust storms over the last decade; and Decision 28, which recognises that tenure insecurity remains a significant development challenge for many countries.

Decision 25[84] encourages parties to tackle the gender data gap by collecting sex-disaggregated data through their national statistics on income, poverty levels, land ownership, migration, school enrolment, prevalence of illnesses, and other types of relevant data. It also encourages the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, to address the discrimination that women face when planning, designing, and implementing gender-responsive policies in relation to desertification.

Furthermore, this Decision requests the Global Mechanism to identify and apply means of further facilitating the capacity-building and effective participation of women delegates, including from Indigenous Peoples, local communities and civil society organisations, with the purpose of increasing the number of women delegates attending and effectively participating in the meetings and processes of the UNCCD.

Decision 27 urges parties to enhance the integration of sand and dust storm mitigation measures linked to desertification, land degradation, and drought, with

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[83] United Nations Mongolia, 'Restoring Land, Restoring Hope': UNCCD COP17 Theme Announced During Executive Secretary Yasmin Fouad's Visit to Mongolia , 10 February 2026, https://mongolia.un.org/en/309760-"restoring-land-restoring-hope"-unccd-cop17-theme-announced-during-executive-secretary

[84] *UNCCD*, 'Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: gender, land tenure, and sand and dust storms', 5 May, 2026 https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2026-05/cop9-advance.pdf

a particular focus on minorities. Moreover, it requests the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue actively participating in the UN Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms to enhance cooperation between the multiple UN agencies; to develop a comprehensive inventory of existing sand and dust-related tools and technologies, in order to make information available to member states and parties; as well as continue supporting countries, regions and subregions to develop strategies and financial projects. This decision also invites the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, the regional and multilateral financial institutions, technical agencies and organisations to provide affected parties with the technical and financial support to design and implement policies and actions plans to cope with sand and dust storms linked to desertification, land degradation and drought, and achieve their voluntary land degradation neutrality targets.[85]

Thirdly, Decision 28 encourages parties to continue integrating land tenure security. Notably, it requests Parties to build on the business case and implement the tenure checklist to identify financing opportunities through public and private investments; conduct awareness-raising action on responsible land governance for combating desertification, land degradation, and drought in order to reach stakeholders from global to local levels and improve the livelihood of vulnerable groups.

The three decisions were published in December 2024, and all of them requested a report on policy issues relevant to this decision and to be presented at COP 17. An advanced copy of this report has already been published, which is discussed in the Impact section.

Yasmine Fouad's Impact

The impact of the implemented policies have portrayed various social, environmental, and economic benefits.

Waste Management Regulation Law

The development of this policy led to international and national praise, including Committee Chair Ahmed El-Signini, who congratulated Fouad on her leadership in tackling Egypt's longstanding waste challenges. This policy allowed for improvement of the country's solid waste management system under her leadership and it became a cornerstone for introducing circular economy practices and expanding private sector involvement.[86]

[85] Ibid

[86] Daily News Egypt, 'Waste management reform expands with private sector involvement: Environment Minister', 18 June, 2025

Before 2020, the country generated an estimated 100 million tonnes of waste annually, including approximately 20-26 million tonnes of municipal solid waste (MSW).[87] However, since the approval of the WML, the Waste Management Regulatory Agency has provided licenses for professional waste management activities and encouraged businesses to utilise compostable materials and alternative fuels.[88]

Forty-eight mechanical biological treatment lines have been developed, which treat 8.5 million tonnes of waste annually and produce 4.3 million tonnes of compost and 1.7 million tonnes of refuse-derived fuel. Six uncontrolled dumpsites have been closed and replaced with 21 operational sanitary landfills.[89] In addition, the government has introduced policies that support feed-in tariffs, required partial substitution of fossil fuels with refuse-derived fuels, and set a carbon tax of 1%.

The WML also prohibits the following activities involving hazardous materials without a licence: handling of hazardous materials/waste, exporting and importing of hazardous materials, establishing facilities for the circulation of hazardous materials, and passage of ships carrying hazardous materials or wastes through the territorial sea or exclusive economic zones.[90] Compliance with the policy has been ensured through the implementation of fines and legal penalties. These include prison sentences of up to five years and financial penalties ranging from Egyptian Pound (EGP) 1,000 to EGP 25 million. Open burning of waste is punishable by a punishment of one-year imprisonment and a fine ranging from EGP 50,000 to EGP 1 million.[91]

Fouad has stated that, since the WML came into force, the country's solid waste management system has witnessed significant progress, driven by close coordination between the government and the private sector.[92] In the recycling sector, the number of contracts increased from two to 36, and Egypt's recycling

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https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2025/06/18/waste-management-reform-expands-with-private-sector-involvement-environment-minister/

[87] Climate Action Tracker, 'Egypt' https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/egypt/policies-action/

[88] Shalakany, 'New Waste-management law brings Egypt closer to going green' https://shalakany.com/new-waste-management-law-brings-egypt-closer-to-going-green/

[89] Climate Action Tracker, 'Egypt'.

[90] Shehata & Partners, 'The New Waste Management Law | A New Environmental Frontier in Egypt', 10 December, 2020, https://shehatalaw.com/ru/law-update/the-new-waste-management-law-a-new-environmental-frontier-in-egypt/

[91] Egypt Today Staff, 'Egypt punishes open burning of waste by 1 year in prison, fine', 28 December, 2020, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/95834/Egypt-punishes-open-burning-of-waste-by-1-year-in

[92] *Daily News Egypt, 'Waste management reform expands with private sector involvement: Environment Minister', 18 June, 2025*

rates have risen from 10% in 2018 to 37% in 2024.[93] Beyond recycling, there has also been an increase in collection efficiency, with a rise from 60% to 74%.[94] In addition, Fouad highlighted the growing role of the private sector in waste-to-energy projects, including investment for innovative projects such as landfill gas-to-energy, with investments of USD 40 million in Al-Salam and Hammam landfills.[95]

In addition to these innovative landfill gas projects, various projects have been developed across the wastewater treatment and waste recycling sectors. The Abu Rawash wastewater treatment plant has been enhanced with a focus on sludge reuse across agricultural and industrial sectors.[96] On the other hand, in Assiut, a new waste recycling plant project was launched and is set to be completed in 2026. This new plant will include German-Dutch technology and be able to process 60 tonnes per hour.[97]

Additionally, the Emirati low-carbon solutions provider Zero Carbon Ventures and Egyptian company Green Planet have launched a new project called Zero Carbon Green Planet (ZCGP) focused on waste-to-energy transformations.[98] The project is set to be completed in 2027 and will be able to process 400 tonnes of organic waste per day into fertiliser, hydrogen, and graphene, but plans exist to eventually increase this capacity to 10,000 tonnes a day.[99] Beyond their environmental benefits, these projects have had several economic benefits. Amongst these, the creation of 250 jobs at the ZCGP and employment growth in logistics, recycling, technology, and operations.[100]

Additional WML impacts include the launch of Egypt's first extended producer responsibility (EPR) scheme, which requires companies to manage collection, recycling, and safe disposal of products. The EPR will begin with a target on single-use plastic bags but will extend to packaging materials and metal products. This policy will help support government efforts in enhancing recycling and waste management at a national scale in order to better align with global environmental standards.[101]

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[93] *CIO Bulletin, 'Egypt Accelerates Recycling and Waste Management Reforms', 12 August 2025,* https://ciobulletin.com/recycling-and-waste-management/egypt-accelerates-recycling-and-waste-management

[94] Egyptian Streets, 'Egypt Accelerates Waste Reforms and Targets 60 Percent Recycling by 2027', 11 August 2025, https://egyptianstreets.com/2025/08/11/egypt-accelerates-waste-reforms-and-targets-60-percent-recycling-by-2027/

[95] Ibid

[96] Ibid

[97] Ibid

[98] Ibid

[99] CIO Bulletin, 'Egypt Accelerates Recycling and Waste Management Reforms', 12 August 2025

[100] Egyptian Streets, 'Egypt Accelerates Waste Reforms and Targets 60 Percent Recycling by 2027', 11 August 2025

[101] CIO Bulletin, "Egypt Accelerates Recycling and Waste Management Reforms', 12 August 2025

Finally, one of the most beneficial social approaches under the WML focuses on El Zabaleen. This is an informal network of waste collectors made up of 50,000 waste processors, 150,000 sorters, drivers, and collectors.[102] They have worked for over 70 years and they are essential due to their ability to recycle 80% of the garbage they collect and gather 60% of Greater Cairo's waste.[103] Unfortunately, the existing markets fail to reward their labour which leaves a gap in paid recycling efforts.[104] Under the WML and the EPR scheme, the Zabaleen will receive protection to El Zabaleen as it assigns them official recycler titles that appear on their ID papers. This will allow for direct payment from companies responsible for producing waste to the recyclers through the use of e-wallets, ultimately rewarding their work and promoting a cleaner environment.[105]

Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast of Egypt

As of 2024, the progress of this policy included the implementation of coastal protection measures across five governorates: Port Said, Damietta, Dakahlia, Kafr El-Sheikh, and Beheira, with a length of 69 km. Additional implementation began in 2025 covering 6 km in two additional governorates.[106] The work of this implementation has been conducted by a consortium of international and national consulting firms, but it has been severely limited due to work delays and requests for additional time beyond the project lifetime. Nonetheless, in the time given, the consortium portrayed progress across various activities.[107]

Progress within the policy implementation included completion of the design for the National Observation System for the North Coast of Egypt, completion of the climate risk assessment for Sea Level Rise Impacts on North Coast of Egypt based on modelling exercises, and a capacity building program focused on improving skills regarding modelling, Geographic Information System (GIS) training, and risk assessment.[108] Additional progress within this policy included the construction of two new infrastructures[109] reported to withstand climate variability, two kilometres of vulnerable hotspots were protected, five environmental and social impact assessments (ESIA) were completed, the

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[102] *World Economic Forum,* 'How tech is helping Egypt's informal recyclers build a circular economy', 14 June, 2021, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2021/06/technology-egypt-recycling-circular-economy/
[103] Ibid
[104] Ibid
[105] Ibid
[106] *Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation,* 'Protection of Egyptian Beaches', https://www.mwri.gov.eg/?page_id=33320&lang=en
[107] *Green Climate Fund*, 'Annual Performance Report for FP053: Enhancing climate change adaptation in the North Coast and Nile Delta Regions in Egypt', 10 September, 2025, 'https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/fp053-50763-annual-performance-report-cy2024-v3.pdf
[108] Ibid
[109] Further infrastructure details are not publicly available due to confidentiality restrictions.

completion of modelling of the North Coast of Egypt to better assess sea level rise, installation of two tide gauges in Damietta and Brulus, and 66% completion in the development and implementation of soft protection measures.[110]

Beyond this, additional progress has been monitored through reports highlighting numbers of people impacted by its implementation. Firstly, 6 million people reportedly benefited from the adoption of climate resilient livelihoods, 4,500 were reportedly reached by climate related early warning systems and additional risk reduction, 4,500 residents reported to benefit from soft coastal protection measures, and 179 men and women trained on modelling skills in relation to ICZM.[111]

It is important to note that despite the progress, the complete benefits have been constrained by the lack of ability of the international consultancy firm[112] to complete commitments on time and as a result they were replaced by new team[113] of international and national consultants to finalise plans by 2025.[114] These new consultants will be expected to continue the work implementation and will be responsible for aiding the completion for the rest of the expected impacts.

Amongst these benefits, it is expected that further project implementation will benefit 750,000 inhabitants across the Nile Delta and 16.9 million people in urban and rural areas are expected to be indirectly benefited as well. Therefore, this project will have immense social effects, generating local jobs and strengthening institutional capacity to expand projects like these as this is the first strategic plan to target the entire coastline.[115] Projected impacts will include addressing sea level rise, protecting citizens, agricultural villages, and low-lying areas from risk of inundation by sea water. Additional impacts will also include tracking changes in waves, sea level, wind, and preserving natural resources in coastal areas.[116]

In the long term, through the project lifespan of seven years and the work of the newly selected international and national consultants, these projects are expected to decrease the vulnerability of coastal communities, protect villages, and develop a strengthened integrated coastal zone management system for the North Coast of Egypt.

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[110] *Green Climate Fund*, 'Annual Performance Report for FP053: Enhancing climate change adaptation in the North Coast and Nile Delta Regions in Egypt', 10 September, 2025
[111] Ibid
[112] Further details of the firm are not publicly available due to confidentiality restrictions.
[113] Further details of new international and national consultants are not publicly available due to confidentiality restrictions.
[114] *Green Climate Fund*, 'Annual Performance Report for FP053: Enhancing climate change adaptation in the North Coast and Nile Delta Regions in Egypt', 10 September, 2025,
[115] *UNDP,* 'Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast of Egypt' https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/enhancing-climate-change-adaptation-north-coast-egypt#:~:text=Connect%20with%20%40UNDPplanet
[116] *Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation,* 'Protection of Egyptian Beaches',

Decision 25/COP 16, Decision 27/COP 16, Decision 28/COP 16

The impact of these decisions agreed on at UNCCD COP 16 (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) in 2024 remains limited because implementation is at an early stage. Firstly, in regards to Decision25/COP 16 regarding gender, the implementation progress that has been made includes the development of a gender-responsive sustainable land management assessment tool by World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies.[117] This tool was later integrated into the global sustainable land management (SLM) database. Next, United Nations University (UNU) students developed three case studies. These laid the groundwork for gender dimensions examinations by identifying key gaps and priority areas, which helps inform future policy development and decision making.[118]

Additional impacts included the development of workshops for women's empowerment and with the WeCaN platform events on gender-responsive land management planning. Furthermore, the UNCCD and GIZ enabled the participation of female delegates in CRIC 23, which allowed them to engage effectively in UNCCD multilateral negotiations and decision making processes. Finally, further implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) road map was led by Ms. Tarja Halonen, UNCCD land ambassador and former president of Finland, through the use of thematic sessions. These sessions focused on sex-disaggregated data and gender responsive indicators in addition to women-led solutions for drought resilience.[119]

The decision is also expected to monitor and fully promote gender parity and data reporting at sessions of the COP, collect sex-disaggregated data on income, poverty levels, land ownership, and others to provide a basis of indicators explaining how men and women are affected by drought and land degradation.[120] Next, it aims to focus on the implementation of the gender action plan and submission of reports regarding discrimination faced by women in the planning and implementation of programs relating to desertification and land degradation. To do this, it seeks to develop gender-specific indicators in order to assess the strategic framework of the UNCCD. Additionally, it aims to establish stronger initiatives to promote and integrate gender equality and women empowerment while addressing land tenure and desertification.[121]

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[117] *UNCCD,* 'Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: gender, land tenure, and sand and dust storms'*, 5 May, 2026*
[118] Ibid
[119] Ibid
[120] UNCCD, 'Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Gender', https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2025-03/25-cop16.pdf
[121] Ibid

With regard to Decision27/COP 16, which addresses sand and dust storms (SDS) progress includes the development of the SDS toolbox, which consists of detection strategies, inventory for tools, technologies, and good practices for SDS source management. This was further reinforced by the development of the GISDS to better manage anthropogenic SDS sources and serve as a basis for interventions on the ground.[122]

The GISDS is unique in that it focuses on four pillars including land-focused monitoring and assessment, source area stabilisation and restoration, science-policy integration for source mitigation, and coordinated response and capacity building. This initiative aims to stabilise dust source areas with measures such as enhanced soil health and restored vegetation in order to prevent annual losses from sectors such as health, energy, and transportation. Additionally, it strives to reduce health concerns regarding dust exposure, and aims to improve the connection between modelling technologies and source mitigation.[123]

Beyond the progress made and implementation progress, this decision proves to have various expected impacts. Amongst these, the implementation of SDS management responses that address natural sources and anthropogenic sources while enhancing international cooperation to combat the negative impacts of SDS, aiming to advance integrated land use. It also focuses on the integration of various SDS tools into key policy areas. These tools include the SDS compendium, the SDS toolbox, the global sand and dust storm source basemap, and visualisation tool. Finally, this decision aims to complete the implementation of national and regional policies with action plans for SDS, early warning, risk and vulnerability assessments.[124]

Finally, in regards to Decision 28/COP 16 on land tenure, the implementation progress that has been made includes the development of the land tenure toolbox with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). This toolbox aims to provide access to official documents, practical tools, and guides for sustainable land management (SLM) and land restoration activities. Additionally, this toolbox covers principles and guidelines, knowledge and awareness, women's land rights, grievance mechanisms, finance and monitoring, and partner resources.[125]

In addition to this, since the creation of this decision, the UNCCD continues to explore opportunities for land tenure consultations, now expanding support to

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[122] *UNCCD,* 'Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: gender, land tenure, and sand and dust storms'*, 5 May, 2026*
[123] Ibid
[124] *UNCCD,* 'Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Sand and dust storms' https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2025-03/27-cop16.pdf
[125] *UNCCD,* 'Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: gender, land tenure, and sand and dust storms'*, 5 May, 2026.*

Kyrgyzstan, Paraguay, South Sudan, and Sri Lanka. In addition, the UNCCD and FAO organised a side event at CRIC 23 to inform development on the toolbox and related awareness-raising actions. Finally, with various partners, the UNCCD and FAO participated in events having to do with sustainable agriculture and responsible governance.[126]

Beyond this, this decision proves to have various expected impacts. Amongst these, the integration of land tenure security into plans and activity to combat desertification, land degradation, and drought followed by the promotion of inclusive and participatory national-level dialogues while including land tenure plans and activities into national legislation.[127] Additional impacts include the identification of financing opportunities and sustainable investments to strengthen land governance and land tenure, integration of land tenure into development efforts to support land degradation neutrality, and overall raised awareness on responsible land governance and improvement in the livelihoods of people in vulnerable situations.[128]

Recommendations for Yasmine Fouad

Yasmine Fouad has come far in her career to implement impactful policies that have pushed national standards within Egypt as well as driven her expertise to uplift international organisations like the UNCCD. Fouad can further scale the positive environmental effects of her policies through the implementation of three policy recommendations: Modernisation of Waste Infrastructure for Climate Resilience, Expansion of Ecosystem-Based Coastal Adaptation Systems, and Performance-Based Accountability Frameworks. These recommendations target sector investment and domestic legislative and government reform by improving the current functioning of these policies.

Egypt has faced criticism from The Climate Action Tracker (CAT), an independent scientific project that monitors government climate action across various administrations, since, even as Egypt was due to host the global summit in November 2022, its climate strategy was still deemed as insufficient.[129] According to the CAT Climate Governance Series of Egypt 2022, Egypt's climate action has faced pushback and complaints regarding political commitment, policy processes, stakeholder engagement, and effective coordination within the

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[126] Ibid
[127] *UNCCD,* 'Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Land tenure' https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2025-03/28-cop16.pdf
[128] Ibid
[129] Davidson M, 'Egypt's Climate Action Plan Is "Highly Insufficient," Analysts Say', *Al Fanar Media* (21 August 2022) https://al-fanarmedia.org/2022/08/egypts-climate-action-plan-is-highly-insufficient-analysts-say/

institutional framework.[130] The implementation of recommended adjustments extends beyond the establishment of current environmental strategies; it focuses on tangible implementation and use of systems to measure and increase effectiveness by ensuring implementation strategies are being carried out.

Improvement in the design and monitoring of landfill systems

This recommendation elevates the WML through modernisation of design and monitoring of landfill systems.[131] These improvements are needed to increase protection from extreme weather events and sea level rise, which result in contamination risks and leachate[132] of landfill waste into neighboring ecosystems and local communities. In addition, improving waste management as proven by the work conducted so far can result in the development of natural fertilisers or compost, which improve soil fertility and water retention. This recommendation increases the overall attention to environmental challenges by focusing on the modernisation of current waste management systems to protect against sea level rise and extreme weather events that are specifically targeted under other policies. This ultimately enhances the current law by focusing on established systems in comparison to the majority of the current work which focuses on establishment of new waste management plants/projects.

Egypt's climate action has faced criticism for policy processes and effective coordination, making it imperative to address landfill modernisation to combat the vulnerability of environmental hazards and failures to take advantage of opportunities for renewable energy generation. Improvement in the design and monitoring of landfill systems therefore addresses this disconnect and improves the effectiveness of the waste management framework by strengthening the standards of operation and ensuring the removal of outdated infrastructure. This leads to effective coordination with the actions that are being taken and the policies that are set by the government.

In order to follow through with these adjustments and effectively coordinate with policies set by the government, implementing these changes requires the use of technical expertise of architects and engineers to improve the current design of the landfill infrastructure. This would be followed by the increase in installation of bioreactors, greater development of energy conversion systems, and climate-resilient designs. All this work would require public and private

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[130]'Cat Climate Governance Series – Egypt – March 2022' (CAT Climate Governance, 2022) https://climateactiontracker.org/documents/1027/CAT_2022_03_ClimateGovernance_Egypt.pdf
[131]K. C. Goh, 'Reinforcing Urban Resilience Through Sound Landfill Management: Addressing Global Climatic Challenges with Novel Solutions - Sciencedirect' (Science Direct, March 2025) https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0957582025000436
[132] N. P. Cheremisinoff Ph.D, Leachate is contaminated liquid that is formed when water percolates through a solid waste disposal site

investment in addition to training of landfill operators to maintain and utilise these updated technologies.

Increase in Existing Management Projects from Pilot Hotspots to all Vulnerable Areas

The second recommendation focuses on the five priority hot spots most severely affected by and vulnerable to sea-level rise and extreme storms in low-lying lands of the Nile Delta. In order to scale the positive environmental effects of this policy, this recommendation advises an increase in existing management projects from pilot hotspots to all vulnerable areas across the Nile Delta.[133] Expansion of coastal adaptation systems helps mitigate sea level rise, extreme temperatures, and desertification as it enhances natural defences against flooding and erosion by improving these natural barriers (dunes and vegetation). The restoration of these natural environments helps with moisture retention, decreased heat stress, promotion of sustainable land management, and reduced soil erosion, which fuels desertification. National Expansion of Coastal Adaptation increases developed strategies by promoting the scale of projects across more coastal regions and the Nile Delta. This is due to the expected outcomes of the policy which focus on reduced vulnerability of coastal infrastructure and agricultural assets to coastal flooding damage in hotspot locations only.[134]

This recommendation increases political commitment to the fight against rising sea levels by expanding from a limited number of pilot hotspots to more vulnerable communities all throughout the coast and the Nile Delta. Effects of climate change are not yet strong enough to produce large-scale migrations, but studies suggest that 6 million people could be displaced as a result of sea-level rise, further deepening the need for a strategy to cope with crises in the Nile Delta.[135] The solution to build defence of coastal infrastructure across towns and cities most vulnerable does not protect the rest of the coast as models show that 25% of the delta could disappear by 2100.[136] Continuing to build infrastructure to protect the coastline and existing human settlements is encouraged to reach most vulnerable areas that may worsen with time if not addressed.

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[133] UNDP Climate Change Adaptation, 'Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast of Egypt' https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/enhancing-climate-change-adaptation-north-coast-egypt

[134] Ibid

[135] F. Bonnefoi, 'Sea-Level Rise in the Nile Delta: Promoting Adaptation Through Circular Migration.' Baker Institute, 2 May 2024,

[136] M. A. Hassaan and M. A. Abdrabo, 'Vulnerability of the Nile Delta Coastal Areas to Inundation by Sea Level Rise,' Environmental Monitoring and Assessment 185, no. 8 (2013): 6607–16, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10661-012-3050-x

The steps required to implement this recommendation include funding of field work and scientific research to identify the most vulnerable areas and the appropriate management strategies that could be utilised. Expertise would be required to monitor the implementation and improvement process, and funding from intergovernmental organisations and the public and private sectors would be required to establish these adaptation systems. It is important to acknowledge individuals within target communities, as well as to promote members integrated into their communities to engage in workshops and experts to act as intermediaries within the communities. Promoting this dialogue between community members and experts is vital to monitoring the implementation and improvement process.

Implementation of Frameworks to Increase Accountability in the Governorates Against Desertification and Climate Action

The third recommendation takes a broader approach to Decisions 27/COP 16 and 28/COP 16 in order to establish clear targets and reporting frameworks for strengthened implementation. Multi-stakeholder platforms and regional initiatives are needed in order to take necessary sand and dust storm mitigation measures. More specifically for Egypt, focusing on the implementation of frameworks to increase accountability in the governorates[137] against desertification and climate action is imperative given that the decisions invite the UN Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms to be a primary example in implementing policies and action plans across several countries.

The recommended target development allows for direct measurement of responsible land governance and access to natural resources, given that the fact that tenure security empowers the adoption of and investment in long-term sustainable land and water management and restoration practices (useful to achieving land degradation neutrality) has been demonstrated.[138] Similarly, combating sand and dust storms mentions technologies and tools for SDS management, but fails to mention specific targets such as hectares restored, the number of mapped source areas, or timelines for implementation of detection methods.[139] The introduction of these frameworks and clear targets helps mitigate desertification by direct land management and understanding that this challenge directly increases the frequency and intensity of SDS. Especially in Egypt, adding direct pressure on governorates to follow targets allows for the strengthening of restoration actions. This restoration helps combat extreme temperatures and sea level rise as the restored ecosystems act as natural barriers capable of absorbing heat and acting as temperature regulators.

[137] A. Briney, 'List of the 29 Governorates in Egypt,' ThoughtCo, 7 May 2025
[138]UNCCD, 'Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: gender, land tenure, and sand and dust storms', 5 May, 2026
[139] Ibid

This recommendation focuses on Performance Frameworks, directly addressing concerns about a lack of transparency in the policy process across Egypt and the lack of effective coordination in institutional frameworks. The recommended governorate accountability addresses these challenges by establishing measurements to analyse the progress that is being made and forcing transparent reporting systems. The steps required to implement this recommendation include the development of standardised reporting frameworks and the establishment of targets for progress tracking of Decisions 27/COP 16 and 28/COP 16. National governments would then be able to implement these targets in their own countries and require reports of implementation progress in alignment with the UNCCD policy frameworks. In Egypt specifically, scoring criteria by professional and national experts could be developed to identify top and low-scoring governorates in accordance with established targets. Additional resources required would include GIS data development, report mechanisms, technical support teams, and the use of satellite monitoring systems to verify the reported performance of governorates.

Conclusion

Yasmine Fouad has dedicated over 25 years of her professional life to the environment and international cooperation within national institutions and international organisations. While her expertise and economic agenda push for development and social mobility, her climate leadership is rooted in a genuine passion to safeguard sacred ancestral land. From the beginnings of her career to leading roles as Minister of Environment and Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, Fouad has proven to be an altruistic climate leader grounded in scientific and diplomatic expertise.

Her diligent efforts to push forth climate policy through the United Nations, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change, the New Partnership for Africa's Development Regional Flagship Programs Steering Committee, and more, display a keen interest in upholding her commitments to the environment. Her work traces back to her academic background in environmental science and, having received a doctorate in Euro-Mediterranean studies, merges her political influence with a scientific and technical background.[140] Fouad uses evidence-based strategy focusing on systematic impact while remaining dedicated to her defining mission to safeguard Earth as God's creation.[141] This personal connection defines the

[140] *United Nations* 'Ms. Yasmine Fouad of Egypt - Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification' 22 May 2025 https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/personnel

[141] *UNCCD*, 'Yasmine Fouad, '100 Days of Leadership: Land, Resilience & Our Universal Mission', 22 November, 2025

beginning of her career and demonstrates how climate leaders can shape their career around a personal commitment by continuing to redefine their purpose throughout their leadership journey.

As Minister of Environment from 2018 to 2025 and COP27 Ministerial Coordinator and Envoy, Fouad led a powerful transition for current and future generations to adopt environmentally sensitive practices, continue the biodiversity agenda, and push forth environmental innovation in Egypt.[142] Egypt's pressing climate stakes have continued to shape Fouad's climate policy agenda—extreme temperatures leading to increased energy demands, drought, and food insecurity, sea level rise threatening coastal regions and the Nile Delta, and worsening desertification across the nation's agricultural zones—pushing her towards actionable and high impact solutions. These climate risks are understood as life threatening and a severe risk to economic growth leading Fouad to necessary climate solutions such as the Waste Management Regulation Law, Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast of Egypt, and Decisions 25, 27, and 28 under the UNCCD. Fouad has received the 2025 Nobel Sustainability Trust Award outlining her expertise and dedication to a life long pursuit of climate leadership.[143]

To conclude, Fouad emerged as an international climate leader by pushing Egypt to the forefront of climate governance. Through nature based infrastructure and legislative reform, Fouad has demonstrated a commitment to improve the quality of life across Egypt, protect our planet and secure global environmental protection through climate policy. Fouad's unique leadership style directly captures the attention of policy makers, leaders and the public as she understands, beyond the technicalities of her environmental science expertise, how to bridge personal conviction with technical policy. She directly links her work to preserving the land humanity has inherited while also addressing future generations at risk of facing extreme economic, productivity, and cultural setbacks without urgent measurable action.[144]

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[142] *IUCN Leaders Forum,* 'Yasmine Fouad' https://iucnleadersforum.org/speakers/yasmine-fouad

[143] M. Bakr, 'UN desertification chief Yasmine Fouad wins 2025 Nobel Sustainability Trust award' 10 December 2025, https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/1234/558449/Egypt/Foreign-Affairs/UN-desertification-chief-Yasmine-Fouad-wins--Nobel.aspx

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