Press Release

Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group Announces 2017 Sustainable Business Leadership Awards Winners and Launches 'Year of Giving' Category

Abu Dhabi, 1 March 2017: Over 200 senior executives and sustainability experts from different organisations in the GCC region attended the Abu Dhabi Sustainable Business Leadership Awards ceremony on 28th February 2017, which is supported by the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) and organized by the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group (ADSG).

The event, held at the Anantara Eastern Mangroves Hotel, Abu Dhabi, brought together businesses from across multiple industries who are at the forefront of sustainability management and leadership in the GCC region. It focused on raising awareness of the benefits of sustainable management and responsible business growth, and gave special recognition to the companies demonstrating sustainability best practice.

Dr Abdullah Zanzam, EAD's Assistant Secretary General opened the event by stressing that the UAE realizes the need to balance between both economic and sustainable development requirements. He added that in order to achieve this objective we need a strong partnership between the different governmental institutions, which would thus enable both public and private sectors to contribute to protecting the environment and serving the society.

He added, “Over the last few years, Abu Dhabi identified its directives and developed its priorities and targets in the Abu Dhabi Plan and identified the Emirates’ vision with regards to development, economic, and social fields, as well as sustaining this growth. EAD has played a main role in developing programs and projects related to the environment in Abu Dhabi”.

“This direction enhanced our commitment to protect the environment, and implement sustainability principles. We updated our five-year strategy according to the Abu Dhabi Plan requirements. One of our priorities is to position EAD as an organisation of excellence and as a leader in environmental sustainability,” he noted.

Huda Al Houqani, ADSG's Director said: "Whether you're an expert in sustainability or on the path to learning more, what we all understand is that sustainable practices are essential. This isn't just about the environment and communities; it also makes enormous business sense."

The Sustainable Business Leadership Awards is an award and recognition scheme that is designed to recognise sustainability best practice and to raise awareness of the benefits of sustainable management for organisations. The awards are the region’s only independent annual awards for sustainability achievements. There were five categories - Best Sustainability Report, Best
Sustainability Initiative, Best Sustainability Communication Programme, Best Sustainability Manager and Best Sustainability Leader.

It was down to an expert panel of judges - Laila Abdullatif, Deputy Director General, Emirates Wildlife Society, Jessica Fries, Executive Chairman, HRH Prince of Wales, Accounting for Sustainability Project (A4S), and Dr Jenny Davidson, Director of Learning and Teaching in Corporate and Exec, New Castle Business School - to make the difficult decision on which of the many impressive applicants deserved to win.

Laila Mostafa Abdullatif, Deputy Director General at EWS-WWF, commented, “It is an absolute pleasure to be a member of the prestigious steering committee of the ADSG Business Leadership Awards. Tonight we celebrated organizations who have assessed their sustainability impact and are working towards a profitable and sustainable future, and believe in making an impact”.

“Building a future in which people live in harmony with nature is our mission at EWS-WWF. We are strongly aligned with the Year of Giving and are delighted to see that ADSG is also joining hands with this nation-wide initiative which aims to promote the importance of living in harmony with nature”, continued Laila.

At the event, Dolphin Energy was awarded Best Sustainability Report, for the way they effectively presented their environmental, social and economic performance. The Best Sustainability Initiative was given to “Connect to Learn” initiative in Domiz Refugee Camps Iraq, the initiative which is realised through partnership between Asiacell, Ericsson and International Rescue Committee (IRC); and was aimed at providing education to Syrian refugee children affected by the conflict.

Ibrahim Al-Zu’bi is the Head of Sustainability at Majid Al Futtaim-Holding picked up the award for Sustainability Leader of the Year and Geraldine Seguela, Sustainability Manager at Cleveland Clinic - Abu Dhabi was awarded Sustainability Manager of the Year - for their exceptional commitment in implementing sustainable responses to environmental, social and economic challenges.

The award for Best Sustainability Communication Programme went Bourouge for their Sustainable Campus Initiative, which is being implemented in partnership with the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi and aims to strengthen and build sustainable leadership capacity amongst the youth.

This year, the awards and the Abu Dhabi Sustainable Business Leadership Forum were inspired by the UAE Government’s ‘Year of Giving’. Launched by the President, His Highness Shaikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the year’s focus is centred around three main themes - strengthening social responsibility in the private sector, promoting a spirit of volunteering and strengthening the concept of serving the nation in new generations of Emiratis and expatriates.
The Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group is actively participating through collaboration with the UAE Food Bank and the UAE Red Crescent. Furthermore, in the spirit of the Year of Giving a new sixth category was launched during the event; this award is noncompetitive and is granted by the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group in recognition of organisations that make significant achievements in any of the three ‘Year of Giving’ themes.

The new award category went to **Takatof** for their superb volunteering programme. Their work exemplifies the mission of the UAE 'Year of Giving' 2017 that was launched by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE.

Speaking at Abu Dhabi Sustainable Business Leadership Awards, Maytha Al Habsi, Deputy CEO at Emirates Foundation said: “We are greatly honored to be receiving this distinguished award from the Abu Dhabi Sustainable Business Leadership forum and feel a deep sense of gratitude and responsibility towards the vision set forth by the UAE wise leadership aiming at educating and raising the awareness of our youth about the importance of volunteerism, giving, respect and appreciation of the rich diversity of our country’s cultures.”

Al Habsi further elaborated: “At the Emirates Foundation, we deploy business based principles through the operations of all our programs, and this has demonstrated that we can create sustainable impact at scale, impact that can change people’s lives permanently and not just a one time intervention. Today, more than ever, we believe in the highest potential of our youth and their sense of social responsibility and therefore trust them to deliver on being ‘Ambassadors of Giving’ for our nation. We are proud of our Takatof youth who demonstrate the highest levels of commitment towards promoting the values, beliefs and most importantly the practices of volunteerism.”

As well as acknowledging great acts of sustainability by organisations and individuals, the event also saw Kamelia Zaal, an Emirati landscape designer, stand as the keynote speaker for the evening. Ms Zaal’s accolades include a Silver Gilt Medal at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May 2015, for her work "The Beauty of Islam."

She spoke about our role as custodians for nature, safeguarding flora and fauna, Islamic values and teachings around looking after our planet. She also discussed the importance of building a sustainable garden that supports wildlife and gives immeasurable pleasure and value to all generations in the UAE.

During her presentation, Kamelia Zaal, Founder and Lead Designer at Kamelia Landscape Design, said “As an Emirati in the field of landscape design, sustainability is part of our heritage however it is necessary for future generations to come to ensure true sustainability is established in our everyday lives and having such awards helps to encourage businesses to affirm their commitment to our community and the UAE as a whole”.

**-ENDS-**
Notes to editors:

About the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group (ADSG)

The Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group (ADSG) is a membership initiative whose mission is to promote sustainability management in Abu Dhabi by providing learning and knowledge sharing opportunities for government, private companies and not for profit organisations in a spirit of cooperation and open dialogue. The ADSG was set up by EAD in 2008, as a forum of members who have signed the ADSG Declaration, committing to adopt best practices of sustainability management and reporting and to actively participate in ADSG activities. The ADSG is open to new members willing to practice and champion sustainability in Abu Dhabi in a spirit of cooperation and open dialogue [www.adsg.ae](http://www.adsg.ae).

The Abu Dhabi Sustainable Business Leadership Awards

The Abu Dhabi Sustainable Business Leadership Awards, launched for the first time in 2015, is an award and recognition scheme that is designed to celebrate sustainability best practice and to raise awareness about the benefits of sustainable management practices for organisations.

The scoring process for award selection is based on pointers such as, integration of sustainability, plan, do, review cycle, impact, communication and engagement, innovation and leadership, materiality, recognition. Medium to large organisations with over 250 employees in the region are able to enter.

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