

## Faces from Sudan

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Our interview this week is with the first Sudanese national to be elected as head of the most important global scientific body on climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Mr. Ismail A.R. Elgizouli.

The IPCC is the leading international body for the assessment of climate change. It was established by the [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#) and the [World Meteorological Organization \(WMO\)](#) in 1988 to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts. IPCC Working groups review the work of thousands of scientists from all over the world, synthesising this into a climate change 'assessment report' every five to seven years. The latest IPCC [report](#) (AR5) warns that climate change will cause 'severe, widespread and irreversible impacts' to people and the natural world unless carbon emissions are cut sharply and rapidly.

**Mr. Elgizouli, let us first congratulate you on your recent appointment.** It is indeed an honour for Sudan to be entrusted to spearhead the work of the IPCC during this critical period. **But Mr., how do you see yourself primarily? What do you consider to be your most valued contribution to Sudan?**

Thank you very much for your kind words. I am very much overwhelmed by the level of support and encouragement that has been given to me by everyone, both here in Sudan and abroad. IPCC Vice-Chair & candidate Chair Jean-Pascal van Presale wrote on his Facebook page *"The Acting [#IPCC](#) Chair, Ismail El Gizouli (Sudan), did a superb job in Nairobi. [#Africa](#) can be proud!"*.

In addition, the Aston University Council has sent me a note congratulating me that one of its alumni now *"is holding such a critical global role"*. Aston University is also planning to enlist me as one of *Aston's top 50*.

What is really saddening that the Sudanese local media has been absent from all of this. My recent appointment has received very low media coverage and very late here in Sudan.

My interests have always been in physics and mathematics which form the foundation of our work on Climate Change. I have graduated from Aston with an MSc in Operations Research and Statistics, following a BSc in Mathematics and Physics from the University of Khartoum.

I started my career in the Ministry of Industry in the 1980s, where I established a unit for research and statistics. At a later stage when they created the Ministry of Energy, I conducted the first energy assessment in Sudan in 1980 in collaboration with the Americans at the time. One of my first contributions was to develop with others the National Energy Plan in Sudan with contributions from the various ministries. This document served as the basis for the first Economic conference following the uprising of the Intifada in 1985.

At a later stage, I was relieved from my post, but I did not stop my engagement there. I drafted the Future Energy Prospectus in East and Southern Africa for the African Development Bank which covered 22 countries.

Now, back in 1997, The climate change issue as a topic was very new to the Sudan. When I first joined, it was a learning process for all of us trying to understand more about the science, inventory, adaption and mitigation methods.

You see, being present in the bureau of IPCC since 2002 has helped me greatly, I contacted all universities in Sudan soliciting names of experts to participate in fourth report. I succeeded in bringing forth 10 lead authors from Sudan to participate in the report, out of a total of 340 authors. Italy Germany and France combined did not have that many authors! .This 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment report has given Nobel Peace Prize Jointly with Famous American political leader Al gore

Why are these reports important? IPCC reports are policy relevant, but not policy perspective; they give you all the options, but do not dictate to countries what they should do. For example, they will tell you that renewable energy will reduce such and such costs, and its impact is such, and the drawbacks of using them are .... etc.

The IPCC does not assess countries at all. It will assess all peer review literature that is available in the world in the six UN languages about on a certain topic. The assessment has to be neutral and encompassing, reflecting all the views in a balanced way.

An IPCC report takes six years in order to be conducted. It is a very tedious process and is comprised of three working groups: I) Science of climate change; 2) Vulnerability impact and adaption of climate change; III) Mitigation.

**What are the opportunities and challenges you see that are present in Sudan?**

Sudan is endowed with experts in all fields. One of our main achievements which we are proud of is that we have succeeded in inserting the issue of climate change into some universities curriculums. We now have 17 task-forces in all states which we work with, however there is lack of adequate support from the government. The General Secretariat nevertheless, is very active and we have focal points working with us in all relevant six ministries.

Another advantage which Sudan has is the presence of good proposals for funds. There are huge opportunities out there for Sudan in terms of funding, but Sudan is limited due to the prerequisites which the country has to fulfill. For example, there is the new Green Climate Fund and the Adaption Fund which Sudan is not yet making use of. -You will not believe that sometimes the only prerequisite required from Sudan to access these funds is designating a national focal point, which sometimes is not fulfilled.

Further, the Green Development Mechanism is another opportunity which Sudan is not making use of. It is one of the [Kyoto Protocol](#) instruments to reduce emissions for development purposes allowing a developing country with an emission-reduction or emission-limitation commitment under the Kyoto Protocol to implement an emission-reduction project. A project activity might involve, for example, a rural electrification project using solar panels or the installation of more energy-efficient boilers.

Sudan also finalized the National Adaptation Plan last July, and we are still waiting to be indorsed and approved by the government to be submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat for funding , to my knowledge no country reach this stage in their plans. You see our problem has never been a problem of funding, it is the policy implementation that has been and continues to be an obstacle.

Regarding opportunities of renewable energy in Sudan, previously there has been work in the Kordofan region involving the use of solar energy which was established by the UN and which had huge impact on the village of Al-Gaaa. Locals in the region used to burn wood in order to create the *salt* which is used for animal feed. Up to 120, 000 tonnes of wood were burned annually. This had serious health and social implications, especially eye diseases and other infections. The installment of solar energy has made real improvement in the lives of the entire community, and especially amongst women.

You might not be aware of this, but wind power was used in Sudan decades ago. Until 1968 there were 58 wind stations in Al Gezira which were established during the British condominium rule. Due of the increased demand on power, people have since resorted to the use of fuel energy instead of using renewable energy. I am very optimistic about the outcome of using wind power; as designed in a project piloted by UNDP which is to be implemented in the next five years. This is very useful for isolated areas where there is no access to the national electricity grid.

**Lastly, what is your vision for the future of Sudan? When imagining Sudan 2030 what do you see?**

I am an optimist by nature and I feel that we should give the youth an opportunity to grow and present themselves at every given opportunity, because they are the ones who will lead our future. I certainly hope that one day any person who is above 45 years old will not hold a political post in Sudan. Also I feel that Sudan is endowed with a number of resources, but they are not optimally tapped into. The Sudanese also need to understand that the world has turned into a small village and we all live together on this planet. The selfishness that is exercised by many will only lead to the end of this planet. We need to collaborate with each other in order to save life in this world as we know it.

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