eReport Final

MENA Regional Meeting of the 2024 Global Research Council

3-4 December 2024

Nouakchott - Mauritania

Introduction

Mauritania participated for the first time in the High-Level Meeting of the Heads of Regional Research Councils in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, which was held in Doha, Qatar 2023. During this meeting, the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation of Mauritania **expressed its willingness to host** The 2024 Regional Meeting in the MENA region **in Nouakchott., with** the National Center for Scientific and Technical Research (CNRST) in Morocco **designated as a co-host for the event.**

The Meeting brought together a distinguished Heads and senior officials **from regional research councils across the MENA region, along with observers from research councils outside the region.**

The Meeting's discussions centered on key scientific research priorities, including artificial intelligence, co-creation, regional collaboration, and shared challenges facing countries in the region.

Meeting Objectives

The Meeting was part of the ongoing efforts of the Global Research Council and the MENA Secretariat to strengthen scientific collaboration among countries in the region. The event focused on:

- **Enhancing regional and international research cooperation.**

- **Discussing recent advancements in research management.**

- **Reviewing member states' experiences and sharing best practices.**

- **Addressing common research challenges.**

- **Developing action plans to tackle the region's challenges through joint research initiatives.**

- **Formulating recommendations to be presented at the upcoming Global Research Council meeting in Riyadh.**

Day 1: Tuesday, December 3, 2024

Opening Session:

- The session began with a recitation from the Holy Quran.
- **Welcoming remarks were delivered by Professor Taleb Khyar Cheikh Malainine, Director-General of the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation of Mauritania, the host. In his address, he emphasized**:

→ **Importance of the Event:**

- Reflecting Mauritania's commitment to fostering regional and scientific collaboration under the framework of the Global Research Council.
- Marking a continuation of the outcomes of the 2023 conference in Qatar and affirming the vision of the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation to strengthen ties between research councils.

→ **Meeting Objectives:**

- Strengthening regional and international cooperation among scientific research institutions.
- Focusing on addressing shared challenges through scientific research and innovation.
- Providing a platform for dialogue, experience exchange, and launching impactful partnerships.

→ **Aspirations for the Meeting:**

- Supporting research efforts to achieve sustainable development in the region.
- Showcasing successful collaboration models to inspire future partnerships.

→ **Significance of Scientific Research:**

- Highlighting its role in providing innovative, cross-border solutions.
- Building bridges between research institutions and scientific communities to address regional priorities effectively.

Key Messages:

- A call for collective action and constructive dialogue to deliver tangible outcomes.
- Emphasizing the importance of collaboration among all stakeholders to support innovation and sustainable development.
- Expressing gratitude to the Global Research Council and the MENA Secretariat for their role in advancing regional cooperation.
- Commending the participation and efforts of the National Center for Scientific and Technical Research (CNRST) in Morocco in ensuring the success of the meeting.

Second Welcoming Address: delivered by Prof. Jamila El Alami, Director of the National Center for Scientific and Technical Research (CNRST) in Morocco. Where she focused in her speech on the following points:

- Welcomed attendees and commended organizers for hosting the meeting.
- Highlighted the meeting as a platform to address research challenges and foster regional cooperation in the MENA region.
- Emphasized Morocco's commitment to innovation and sustainable development, showcasing progress in research output and patents.
- Encouraged new initiatives and collaborations to tackle shared challenges.
- Concluded with gratitude to organizers and optimism for the meeting's outcomes.

◈ **The speech by the representative of the MENA region, Dr. Hassan Al-Ayed, on behalf of His Excellency Dr. Munir Al-Dasouqi - President of King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, Vice President of the Global Research Council, and representative of the MENA region in the council:**

The speech focused on the following key points:

→ **Importance of the Event:**
- Expressing gratitude for the collaboration between the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation in Mauritania (ANRSI) and the National Center for Scientific and Technical Research in Morocco (CNRST) in organizing the MENA Regional Meeting.

→ **Main Discussion Topics:**
* **Research Management in the Era of Artificial Intelligency (AI).**
* **Co-Creation to Address Global Challenges**.

→ **Strategic Goals of the Conference:**
- Strengthening regional and international cooperation in scientific research.
- Enhancing research management and leveraging AI technologies to achieve sustainable development.
- Engaging the private sector and civil society in scientific research to develop comprehensive and integrated solutions.

→ **Proposed Recommendations and Initiatives:**
- Increasing investment in training young researchers on AI technologies.
- Developing sustainable and innovative solutions to address global challenges.
- Ensuring coordination among stakeholders to build trust and mutual respect.

→ **Future Aspirations:**
- Highlighting the importance of the upcoming annual Global Research Council meeting, scheduled to be held in Riyadh in 2025.
- Emphasizing the need for continued efforts to strengthen the MENA region's position in the global scientific research landscape.

**The Meeting was officially inaugurated by His Excellency Prof. Yacoub Moine -
Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

◈ Key Highlights from the Minister's Opening Speech:

→ **Importance of the Meeting:**

- Serving as a platform to enhance research collaboration and exchange ideas and experiences.
- Reflecting Mauritania's commitment to supporting scientific research as a pillar for sustainable development and addressing global challenges.

→ **Mauritania's Role:**

- ts geographic position as a bridge between Africa and the Arab world, combined with its rich scientific and cultural heritage, makes it an ideal host for this event.
- Highlighting the legacy of "Mahadra" (traditional learning centers) and ongoing efforts to promote scientific research and innovation.

→ **Objectives of the Meeting:**

- Building bridges of cooperation and integration among countries in the region.
- Leveraging scientific research to drive development and address priority issues.

→ **Government Commitment:**

- Investing in scientific research and creating an environment that fosters innovation.
- Strengthening partnerships with international stakeholders to exchange knowledge and expertise.

→ **Key Messages:**

- Expressing gratitude to the Global Research Council and participants for their support. He also expressed Mauritania's readiness to participate in next year's Global Research Council meeting in Riyadh.
- Confidence that the discussions will lay a solid foundation for the future of scientific research in the region.

→ **Conclusion:**
- Welcoming participants and officially inaugurating the meeting with best wishes for its success in achieving its goals.

◈ **Speech by the Secretary-General of the Global Research Council** Dr**. Marcus Wilms:**
The Global Research Council (GRC) : Overview of Aims and Activities

The speech focused on the following key points:

→ **Overview of the GRC:**
• Established in 2012 as a virtual, informal organization bringing together heads of science and engineering funding agencies worldwide.
• Focuses on sharing data, promoting collaboration, and fostering diversity and inclusion in global research.

→ **Organizational Goals:**
• Enhance research quality and funding.
• Address global challenges collectively and efficiently.
• Support member organizations in capacity building and adopting shared principles.

→ **Structure of the GRC:**
• Governed by a board with representatives from five global regions (Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe, MENA, and Sub-Saharan Africa).
• Supported by the Executive Support Group (ESG) for continuity and operational transparency.

→ **Key Initiatives:**
• Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI): Promoting inclusive research environments.
• Responsible Research Assessment (RRA): Advocating for responsible and transparent research evaluation practices.
• Multilateral Engagement (MLE): Developing funding mechanisms for global collaboration.

→ **Yearly Activities:**
   • Annual meetings to discuss global topics such as AI in research and co-creation for global challenges.
   • Regional meetings to align efforts and exchange good practices.
→ **Future Plans:**
   • 2025 Annual Meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, focusing on AI and global collaboration.
   • Calls for hosting side events and future meetings.

The first discussion paper: "Research Management in the Era of Artificial Intelligency (AI)"

Keynote **Speaker**: delivered by Dr. Sakher Al-Kh**ereyf** (Saudi Arabia), focusing on the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in advancing scientific research.

The session showcased innovative AI applications in research management and addressed challenges related to digital infrastructure in less-privileged countries. Contributions included:

- **Iraq**: Dr. Lubna Mahdi – Director-General of Research and Development at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.
- **Qatar**: Dr. Riham Daher – Program Director at Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation Council; Qatar National Research Fund.
- **Mauritania**: Dr. Mohamed Yahya Dah – Director of Scientific Research, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.
- **Saudi Arabia**:

   Dr. Moatasem Samir Al-Suwadi – King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (online).

   Dr. Maha Almozaini – Research, Development, and Innovation Authority.

- **Morocco**: Prof. Jamila Alami – Director of the National Center for Scientific and Technical Research.
- **Egypt**: Dr. Mona El-Naa – Advisor for International Scientific Relations and Vice President of the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology.

The second discussion paper: "Co-Creation to Address Global Challenges"

Presented by **Dr. Fatih Sinan Esen**, who discussed fostering collaborative innovation across nations to tackle global challenges.

Session Chair: Oumlemnine Mawloud – Deputy Director-General of the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation, Mauritania.

Notable Contributions:

   • **Oman**: Dr. Issa Al Shabibi – Undersecretary for Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (TRC) / MoHERI.

   • **Kuwait**: Dr. Ali Bumajdad Consultant - Research & Technology Directorate of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS)

The day concluded with a review of key points and a roadmap for the next steps.

Day Two: Wednesday, December 4, 2024

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Session Three: Report on the Global Research Council Working Groups

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Moderator: Dr Mohamed Yahya Dah Director of Scientific Research at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (Mauritania)

- **Working Group on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion - reporting and discussion**

Speaker: Dr. Mohammed Al-Shamsi on the group.

- **Working Group on Responsible Research Assessment – reporting and discussion**

Speaker: Dr. Sadeem Johar on the group.

- **Working Group on Multilateral Engagement - reporting and discussion**

Speaker: Dr. Riham Daher: Dr. Riham Daher on the group.

The reports highlighted the achievements and challenges faced by the working groups, alongside recommendations for improving performance.

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Session 4: Selected presentations from Mauritania and Morocco

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Moderator: Dr. Oumar Elyoussoufi of the NCSTR, Morocco

Presenters:

- **"University of Nouakchtt, Vision, Prospects, and Challenges"**: Presented by Prof. Ali Mohamed Salem Boukhary **President of the University of Nouakchtt**, who shared his vision for the university's future.

- **"Prospective of agricultural drones in Mauritania"**: Delivered by Dr. Adema Barry, **Researcher, Professor of Higher Education, and Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture - Mauritania** focusing on Mauritania's innovative use of drones in agriculture.
- **"Advancing Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Morocco"**: Presented by Prof. Najma Laaroussi from the Higher School of Technology in Morocco.

"The Development of Communication Technology and Its Prospects in Mauritania": Dr. Moustapha El Aoun **Researcher, Professor of Higher Education** discussed digital transformations in Mauritania and their impacts.

3rd High-Level Meeting of the Regional Research Council Heads (closed)

The heads of regional research councils discussed future strategies for collaboration among member states and explored ways to expand it.

Session Management:

- **Moderator**: Prof. Taleb Khyar Cheikh Malainine
- **Rapporteur**: Dr. Oumlemnine Mawloud

Session Proceedings:

⇒ Opening Remarks by the Chair: Prof. Taleb Khyar Cheikh Malainine.

⇒ Presentation by the Secretary-General of the Regional Research Councils affiliated with the Global Research Council: Prof. **Hassan Al-Ayed** highlighted the initial phase of executive programs aimed at enhancing the region's role within the council

⇒ Also, Prof. Al-Ayied, shade the light on the three programs that was approved last meeting in Swezerlan which are:

  - High-level strategic Planning Programme
  - Bilateral and Multilateral Regional Cooperation Programme
  - Scientific Capacity Building Programme

⇒ Progress Update on the High-Level Strategic Planning Program: Presented by Abdullah Sultan Al-Khalid, Business Consultant and Secretariat Member.

⇒ Progress Update on the Capacity-Building Program: Delivered by Dr. Ali Bumajdad, Team Leader - the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science.

⇒ Progress Update on the Implementation of the Regional Cooperation Program (Bilateral and Multilateral): Presented by Dr. Issa Al-Shabibi, Team Leader - the Directorate General for Scientific Research and Innovation at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation, Oman.

⇒ Moderation of Open Discussions and Recommendations: Led by Prof. Ahmad Alabdulkader.

Key Discussion Points:

- Identifying the host for the next regional meeting.
- Highlighting on the status and future of the Global Research Council Secretariat.
- Highlighting on the political neutrality of the Global Research Council.
- Addressing emerging issues and other.

Group Photo and Session Closure: Concluded by Prof. Taleb Khyar Cheikh Malainine.

Closing dinner for the participants.

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→ Call for continuing to prepare and implement the three agreed upon programmes approved at the Interlaken meeting

→ Strengthen the region's role within the council and activate the necessary measures to achieve this goal.

→ Implement the accession plan for joining the Global Research Council.

→ Prepare detailed program reports to assess progress and outcomes.

→ Enhance research and human capacity building to support the dissemination and shared utilization of existing research infrastructure, with recommendations presented to universities.

→ Produce a quarterly report to track developments and progress.

→ Establish partnerships and agreements among the research councils of member states to foster regional collaboration.

→ Engage with non-member countries during high-level meetings to encourage their participation and promote cooperation among member states.

→ Approve and adopt the high-level program after finalizing and endorsing the executive plan.

→ Provide opportunities for participating entities to host council activities, ensuring the selected hosts have prior experience and expertise.

→ Encourage the utilization of the local initiatives to strengthen the local efforts.

→ Agreement to adopt a rotational cycle of hosting the future MENA Regional meetings based on the previous rounds of hosting the regional meetings. The initial agreements of the MENA Regional Meeting main host are as follows:
  - 2025   Egypt
  - 2026   Saudi Arabia
  - 2027   Lebanon
  - 2028   Kuwait
  - 2029   Oman
  - 2030   Qatar
  - 2031   Morocco

→ The initial hosting countries of the MENA Regional Meeting are flexible and could be amended if the meeting cannot be hosted in the recommended host country, provided advance notice and coordination with the regional secretariat and the regional representative of the region at the GRC ESG.

Conclusion_____

Mauritania's hosting of this conference presented a successful model of regional and international collaboration in the field of scientific research. The outcomes of this meeting will potentially be posted on the GRC website aiming to communicate and inform the regional outcomes with the other regional HORCS, further solidifying the position of the Middle East and North Africa region on the global research agenda.

Report Prepared by: The National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation, Mauritania

o **Agenda 2024- MENA GRC Regional Meeting:**

Day 1: Tuesday, December 3, 2024

Time	Activity
08:30 - 09:00	Reception of guests and registration of participants
09:00 - 09:30	**Oppening Session** **Opening with recitation from the Holy Quran** **Welcome speeches:** - **Prof. Taleb Khyar Djeh Cheikh Malainine, Director General of the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation, Mauritania** - **Prof. Jamila El Alami, Director of the National Center for Scientific and Technical Research, Morocco** - **The speech by the representative of the MENA region, Dr. Hassan Al-Ayied, on behalf of His Excellency Dr. Munir Eldesouki - President of King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, Vice President of the Global Research Council, and representative of the MENA region in the council**
09:30 - 09:45	**Speech by the Secretary-General of the Global Research Council** Dr**. Marcus Wilms**
09:45 - 10:00	**Official opening: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Prof. Yacoub Moine**
10:00 - 10:45	**Presentation of the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation annual awards for excellence in scientific research**
10:45 - 11:00	**Introduction of participants to the meeting**
11:00 - 11:15	**Coffee break**
11:15 – 12:15	**Introduction to the first discussion paper: "Research Management in the Era of Artificial Intelligency (AI)"** **- Keynote Speaker: Dr. Sakher Al-Khereyf (Saudi Arabia)** **- Discussion** **Moderator: Dr Mohamed Yahya Dah (Mauritania)** **Discussion session**

12:15 - 13:15	**National experiences: Presentation of national experiences in research management in the era of AI**
	Participating countries:
	Moderator: Dr Sadvi Sakhawi (Mauritania)
	
	- **Irak, Lubna Mahdi - Director General of the Research and Development Department, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**
	- **Qatar, Dr. Sadim H. Jawhar Program - Director of Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation Council (QRDI); Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF)**
	- **Mauritania, Dr Mohamed Yahya Dah - Director of Scientific Research at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**
	- **Saudi Arabia:**
	    Motasem Samer Alsawadi - King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology
	    Maha Almozaini (RDIA) - Research development Innovation Authority
	- **Morocco, Prof. Jamila El Alami - Director of the National Center for Scientific and Technical Research, Morocco**

	- **Egypt,** Prof. Dr. Mona ElNaa - Supervisor of Scientific and Cultural Relations Sector and Vice President of Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT) **Discussion session**
13:30 - 14:30	**Lunch break**
14:30 - 15:30	**Introduction to the second discussion paper: "Co-Creation to Address Global Challenges"** **- Keynote Speaker: Dr. Fatih Sinan Esen - representative from Turkey** **Moderator: Dr. Oumar Elyoussoufi of the National Center for Scientific and Technical Research, Morocco** **Discussion session**
15:30 - 15:45	**Coffee break**
15:45 - 16:45	**National experiences: Presentation of national experiences in co-creation to address global challenges** **Participating countries:** **Rapporteur : Oumlemnine Mawloud** - **Tunisia, Besma Benmesbeh - Director of Science Parks,** - **Oman, HE Dr. Saif Al-Haddabi Undersecretary for Research and Innovation Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (TRC) / MoHERI** - **Kuwait, Ali Bumajdad Consultant - Research & Technology Directorate of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS)** - **Lebanon, Tamara Elzein - Secretary General of National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS-L)** **Discussion session**
16:45 - 17:00	**Summary of the day and next steps**

Day 2: Wednesday, December 4, 2024

09:00 - 11:15	**Session 3: Report on the Global Research Council Working Groups** **Moderator: Dr Mohamed Yahya Dah (Mauritania)**
11:15 - 11:45	**Working Group on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion - reporting and discussion** **Speaker: Dr. Sadim H. Jawhar**
11:45 - 12:45	**Working Group on Responsible Research Assessment – reporting and discussion** **Speaker: Dr. Mohammed Al-Shamsi**
12:45 – 13:30	**Working Group on Multilateral Engagement - reporting and discussion** **Speaker: Dr. Riham Daher**
13:30 - 14:45	**Session 4: Selected presentations from Mauritania and Morocco** **Moderator: Dr. Oumar Elyoussoufi of the NCSTR, Morocco** **Presenters:** - **Prof. Ali Mohamed Salem Boukhary: "University of Nouakchtt, Vision, Prospects, and Challenges"** - **Prof. Najma Laaroussi: "Advancing Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Morocco"** - **Dr. Adema Barry: "Prospective of agricultural drones in Mauritania"** - **Dr. Moustapha El Aoun: "The Development of Communication Technology and Its Prospects in Mauritania"**
14:45 - 15:00	**Group photo of participants**
15:00 - 15:15	**Lunch break**
15:15- 16:30	**Session 5: 3rd High-Level Meeting of the Regional Research Council Heads (closed)** **Moderator: Prof. Taleb Khyar Cheikh Malainine** **Speaker: Prof. Hassan Al-Ayed** **Rapporteur: Oumlemnine Mawloud**
16:30 16:30 - 16:45 16:45 - 18:00 20:00 - 21:00	**Conclusion of the regional meeting** **Group photo** **Break at the hotel** **Gala Dinner**

Photo Album of the Meeting

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