



Global Research Council (GRC) Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Meeting

Date: 14th–16th October, 2025.

Venue: The St. Regis Hotel, New Administrative Capital, Cairo, Egypt.

Theme: Equity-based science, technology and innovation for inclusive human development and global sustainability.

Session 1: Meeting Opening and GRC Overview

The meeting was formally opened with welcoming remarks from regional and national leaders, setting a collaborative and ambitious tone for the discussions ahead.

1.1. Welcome Notes

- **Prof. Mona El Naa, Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT), Egypt:** Opened the proceedings, welcoming delegates to Cairo and emphasizing the critical window of opportunity for MENA nations to shape the international research agenda through unified action.
- **Prof. Hassan Y. Alayied, Advisor to the President of King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) for International Affairs and G20, Saudi Arabia, MENA Representative on the GRC Governing Board):** Provided strategic context on the region's growing influence within the GRC and the importance of presenting a cohesive regional perspective on global issues.
- **Prof. Fahad Al-Fadhli, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), Kuwait:** Highlighted the pivotal role of national funding agencies as essential conduits, translating GRC's global principles into locally relevant policies and funding streams.
- **Prof. Gina El-Feky, President, Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT), Egypt:** Delivered a keynote address outlining a dual-focused vision for MENA research: to contribute to global knowledge on sustainability while directly addressing pressing regional challenges like water security and energy transition.
- **H.E. Prof. Mohamed Ayman Ashour, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Egypt:** Officially inaugurated the meeting, reaffirming the Egyptian government's and the wider region's commitment to the GRC's mission and the role of science as a cornerstone for economic and social development.

1.2. GRC Overview and Operational Cycle

- **Speaker: Dr. Jordan Girardin** (Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), representing the GRC Executive Secretariat).

- **Output:** Dr. Girardin provided a detailed overview of the GRC's virtual organizational structure and its mission to foster equitable international collaboration.
- **Key Milestones:** The 14 Annual Meeting is scheduled for 18-22 May 2026 in Bangkok, co-hosted by TSRI (**Thailand Science Research and Innovation**) and NSERC (**Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada**).

Session 2: Reimagining Inclusive Open Science and AI for Equity, Justice, and Sustainability

This session examined transforming Open Science (OS) into an applicable tool for equity, justice, and sustainability.

2.1. Discussion Paper Presentation

- **Presenter of Discussion Paper: Prof. Vissanu Meeyoo** (Vice President, TSRI, Thailand) on behalf of the author, Dr. Shaun Baron (NSERC, Canada).
- **Output:** The paper critically highlighted that OS risks reinforcing global inequalities without dismantling commercial power structures. Prof. Badawy identified structural injustices including linguistic domination (English) and metric bias (Impact Factors).

2.2. Keynote Address

- **Speaker: Prof. Wael Badawy** (Head of Data Science, School of AI, Egyptian Russian University).
- **Output:** Provided a regional perspective on Open Science and Equity. He, also proposed moving away from the "Article Processing Charge (APC) model" toward Diamond Open Access (free to publish and read).

2.3. Panel Discussion

- **Panelists:** High-level panel, moderated by **Prof. Wael Badawy** and featuring **HE Prof. Hossam Osman** (Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Egypt), **Prof. Ahmed ElSherbini** (Professor of Telecommunication, Cairo University), **Dr. Jordan Girardin**, **Dr. Ali Alfayly** (Assistant professor in the computing department, College of Basic Science, Kuwait. Board Member, Association of Artificial Intelligence of Things, Kuwait) **and Dr. Mohamed Raed** (Elsevier).
- **Output:** The panel engaged in philosophical debates and challenges, specifically addressing the linguistic and cultural barriers prevalent in the Arab world. A critical challenge underscored during the discussion was the systemic dominance of the English language in academic output, which often limits regional visibility. Furthermore, the panel examined the ethical complexities of Artificial Intelligence, with a specific focus on data bias and its impact on research equity. Also, Intellectual Property and Co-Ownership, the question of "who owns what" when knowledge is developed on top of open-source science is a major concern. To mitigate these structural injustices, key recommendations were issued, including mandating data

transparency from publishers and enforcing AI Model Disclosure (Model Cards) to ensure accountability and methodological integrity.

Session 3: GRC Working Groups

3.1. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

- **Presenters** **Dr. Sadim Jawhar** (Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation Council (QRDI) & Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF)) **and Dr. Sara Binghadir** ((KACST), Saudi Arabia).
- **Output:** Presented the **MENA Regional EDI-OS Survey**, mapping the inclusive Open Science landscape through six pillars: Representation, Opportunities, Barriers, Infrastructure, Policy & Governance, and Monitoring.

3.2. Multilateral Engagement (MLE)

- **Presenters:** **Prof. Hassan Y. Alayied** (KACST) and **Prof. Ali Bumajdad** (KFAS).
- **Output:** A study revealed that 78% of MLEs are led by the Global North, while Global South partners prioritize capacity building and regional issues. The group is developing standardized establishment protocols and a GRC MLE Helpdesk.

3.3. Responsible Research Assessment (RRA)

- **Presenters:** **Dr. Mohammad Ahamad Alshamsi** (Research, Development, and Innovation Authority (RDIA), Saudi Arabia) **and Dr. Issa Al-Shabibi** (Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), Oman).
- **Output:** Introduced the **RRA Self-Assessment Tool & Maturity Model**, which allows funders to map progress across 11 dimensions (e.g., Research Integrity, EDI, Impact) over five stages of maturity.

Session 4: Research for Sustainable Communities

4.1. Discussion Paper Presentation

- **Speaker:** **Prof. Vissanu Meeyoo** (Vice President, TSRI).
- **Output:** Prof. Meeyoo defined sustainability as fulfilling present human needs without compromising the future. Cities were identified as "provokers" of climate change, responsible for 75% of global CO₂ emissions.

4.2. Keynote Address:

- **Speaker:** **Prof. Amr Ezzat Salama** (Secretary General Director, Association of Arab Universities, Professor of Structural Engineering at Helwan University, Egypt).
- **Output:** Prof. Salama underscored the necessity of a holistic approach that integrates environmental, social, economic, and cultural dimensions. Within this framework, the roadmap for the "Decent Life" (Haya Karima) initiative was presented,

focusing on the urban and economic sustainability of 4,600 villages. Additionally, the session highlighted the Integrated Desert Building Technologies (IDBT) project which is a collaborative effort between KAUST (Saudi Arabia) and American University in Cairo (AUC) as a premier example of Arab Regional Collaboration.

4.3. Panel Discussion

- **Panelists:** **Prof. Amr Ezzat Salama**, **Prof. Abbas El Zafarany** (Professor of Environmental Design and Planning, Cairo University) and **Dr. Aya ElKhouly** (Assistant Professor of Architecture and Urbanism, AUC).
- **Output:** The panel emphasized that sustainability is a proactive, intergenerational responsibility that moves beyond simply "minimizing loss" to "living positively." To support this, the 2Pi model (Participatory, Proactive, Inclusive) was presented as a key framework for community engagement, stressing the importance of starting with people to effectively engage researchers and enhance sustainability. To bridge the gap between theoretical points and real-life implementation, the discussion proposed Fostering Inclusive Governance and Researcher-Community Co-design to ensure research is action-oriented and translate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into action.

Session 5: Inspiring Spotlights

5.1. The Federation of Arab Scientific Research Councils (FASRC) Initiative (ARICA)

- **Speaker:** **Dr. Nahed Alashkar**
- **Output:** The **Arab Research & Innovation Co-Funded Alliances** (ARICA) approved 28 alliances involving 18 Arab countries, already resulting in 14 patent applications and 20 (Q1/Q2) journal publications.

5.2. AI Governance in Research

- **Speaker:** Dr. Ali Alfayly (Kuwait).
- **Output:** Dr. Alfayly opened the session by establishing a definition for AI governance, highlighting its strategic significance specifically for the research domain. A proposed AI Governance Framework for Academic Research was introduced, centering on six key components: Academic, Integrity, Methodology, Data Management, Research Funding, and Peer Review. A survey indicated that 82% of respondents reported using AI on daily basis.

5.3. Unlocking Egypt's Digital Renaissance: Presentation on the Revolutionary Impact of the Egyptian Knowledge Bank (EKB): Roadmap and strategies for boosting qualities and capacities of Egyptian research output.

- **Speaker:** **Eng. Maged El Sadek** (Director of Data Center Administration, EKB).

- **Output:** The EKB, a presidential national project since 2016, has driven Egypt's digital renaissance by providing free, unlimited access to a vast range of digital resources. Quantifiable achievements include boosting Egypt's global scientific output ranking from 42nd to 25th in 2023. The EKB is also launching a Mobility Tracker module to analyze brain circulation patterns and mobility effects on Egypt's research ecosystem, quantifying brain drain/gain to inform policy. Key initiatives include the Arabic Citation Index (ARCI) and a Transformative Agreement with Springer Nature, the first of its kind in the region, to promote Open Science.

Session 6: Collaboration and Neutrality Task-group (CNT)

- **Speaker: Prof. Ahmad Al-Abudlkader** (KACST, the MENA Regional Representative, GRC Executive Support Group).
- **Output:** Participants reached a consensus on sustaining the GRC as a neutral and non-political platform, viewing political neutrality as a key factor in achieving its future vision and strategic objectives. To address crises, the region recommended a flexible and non-prescriptive guiding framework that respects the specific contexts of conflict zones while ensuring the Council avoids Non-Core Involvement to maintain a clear distinction between research and political events.
- **Session 7: High-Level Meeting (Closed Session)**
- **Chaired by: Prof. Mona El Naa** (ASRT), **Prof. Hassan Y. Alayied** (KACST) and **Prof. Fahad Al-Fadhli** (KFAS).
- **Strategic Outcome:** Proposed a roadmap to operationalize Statements of Principles (SoPs) by translating them into actionable and measurable procedures.

Meeting Closing and Key Decisions

The meeting was concluded with high-level mandates to ensure the continuity of regional research excellence.

- **Regional Host Cycle:** Members approved a rotating annual hosting schedule for MENA meetings (2025–2031), starting with Egypt and Kuwait in 2025.
- **2026 Meeting:** The proposal of **KFAS** to host the 2026 MENA Regional Meeting was officially welcomed.
- **Elections:** Approved the re-election of **H.E. Prof. Munir Eldesouki** (President, KACST) to a three-year term as the MENA regional representative on the GRC Governing Board.
- **Programs:** Confirmed the continuation of active programs, including **Bilateral/Multilateral Regional Cooperation** and **Scientific Capacity Building**.