

LINGO Press Release

## **A conflict of interests - Dugongs versus Fossil Fuels**

### **How trustworthy is the UAE?**

**2 December 2023**

Dubai. A new conflict of interest inside the United Arab Emirates governing circles has emerged in the person of Ms Razan Al-Mubarak, President of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the world's global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

Conflicts of interest in the UAE with its fossil fuel-oriented economy have been pointed out from the outset when Dubai was declared as the location for the UNFCCC's COP28. One of them lies in the continuous expansion strategy of ADNOC, the UAE's state oil and gas company, which includes preparing the exploitation of a vast gas field offshore Abu Dhabi. The Ghasha-Hail sour gas megaproject is planned in and near an important marine protected area, the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Marawah, home to a significant part of the world's second largest population of a rare sea mammal, the Dugong, among other important biodiversity.

Inside and right at the border of the Marawah Reserve, eleven artificial islands have already been constructed, but other building works such as pipeline construction, and drilling operations are yet to start. The fossil gas to be extracted is so-called "sour gas", containing significant amounts of the toxic hydrogen sulphide H<sub>2</sub>S.

The Ghasha gas works are also catastrophic for climate action: at peak extraction the project is set to reach 1.5 billion cubic feet of fossil gas (42 million m<sup>3</sup>) per day, and over 120,000 barrels of oil per day. The gas from Ghasha would release over 49.6 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year when burned, without taking into account methane leakage.

*"In parallel to preparing COP28, which should guide the world away from climate disaster and everything that causes it, the UAE government is kickstarting this massive gas drilling operation, hugely detrimental to protecting the climate." says Dr Kjell Kühne, Director of the Leave it in the Ground Initiative (LINGO). "And there is more conflict hidden here: Ms Razan Al-Mubarak, President of IUCN, the global standard setter for protected areas and for protecting endangered species, has not spoken up against the Ghasha project."*

Dugongs are protected by international laws, specifically by the UN Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species whose executive office is - ironically - located in the offices of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi in UAE<sup>1</sup> which has given the green light to the Ghasha megaproject. Dugongs even enjoy the protection through a specific 'Dugong Memorandum of Understanding', an agreement under the auspices of this convention. UNESCO granted it the status of Biosphere Reserve in 2007, the UAE's first ever.

Dugongs in UAE waters have been protected by Law of the President of the UAE (Federal Law No. 23) and Article 28/2000 Amiri Decree, prohibiting the exploitation of Dugongs in the UAE<sup>2</sup>. To protect the Dugong, the UAE established a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in Marawah off the shores of Abu Dhabi

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<sup>1</sup> CMS website

<https://www.cms.int/en/about/working-together-migratory-species-celebrating-10-year-partnership>

<sup>2</sup>UNEP, Dugong Status Report and Action Plans for Countries and Territories  
<https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2002-001.pdf>

in 2001<sup>3</sup> (ratified by UAE ministerial decree<sup>4, 5</sup>). It is the UAE's largest protected area<sup>6</sup> and part of the Sheikh Zayed Protected Areas Network, named after the founder of the UAE.<sup>7</sup>

Ms Al-Mubarak has excellent environmental and conservation credentials, so it is impossible for her to underestimate the risks for the Marawah protected area and rare species such as the Dugong. A report co-authored by Ms Al-Mubarak in 2008 describes how several coral reefs in the region, including on Mubarras Island inside Marawah MPA have been damaged by the oil industry.<sup>8</sup> Neither could she fail to understand the climate impact of the emissions from the fossil fuels extracted there, since she was appointed as UN Climate Change High-level Champion for COP28.

Yet Ms Al-Mubarak has not been heard publicly about this project - which continues to be advanced, driven by the same man who is supposed to facilitate a climate deal at COP28. Dr Ahmed Al-Jaber is UAE's Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, including energy - and also the Managing Director and Group CEO of ADNOC, the UAE's national oil and gas company, ranked no 20 of the world's biggest oil and gas companies.

LINGO's demands are clearly stated by Dr Kjell Kühne: *"ADNOC and the foreign companies involved in the project should pause or withdraw their collaboration, because the project is incompatible with the Paris Agreement and with international biodiversity conservation.."* (see list of companies involved at end of this release)

*"If the UAE wants to present itself as a trustworthy player, it needs to immediately cancel plans for drilling inside the Biosphere Reserve and publish the Environmental Impact Assessment, which was the basis for permits to extract from Marawah."*

### **A Special Envoy from the Dugongs**

LINGO has invited a "Dugong Special Envoy" to COP28 who will demand "No more fossils", and broadcast "Daily Dugong" comments, news and reflections during the conference to attract attention to what is happening just outside the COP28 doorstep and call out greenwashing. The Dugong Envoy aims to form alliances with those COP delegates ready to side with Dugongs against fossil fuels. Watch this space!

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<sup>3</sup> Feulner, Gary R. "Marawah becomes UAE's first Biosphere Reserve." Tribulus, vol. 17, annual 2007, p. 102. Gale Academic OneFile,

<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=googlescholar&id=GALE%7CA381147609&v=2.1&it=r&sid=AONE&asid=b917e0d9> Accessed 7 Nov. 2023

<sup>4</sup> UAE Decree No. 18 of 2001 declaring the zone of Marawah Island as a Protected Marine Area <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC068299/>

<sup>5</sup> Status report [https://wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/coral\\_reef\\_management\\_plan.pdf](https://wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/coral_reef_management_plan.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> UAE Stat

[https://uaestat.fcsc.gov.ae/vis?lc=en&fs\[0\]=FCSC%20-%20Statistical%20Hierarchy%20%7CNatural%20Reserve%23ENV\\_NR%23&pg=0&fc=FCSC%20-%20Statistical%20Hierarchy&snb=3&df\[ds\]=FCSC-RDS&df\[id\]=DF\\_NR\\_RESERVE&df\[ag\]=FCSA&df\[vs\]=5.7.0&pd=2017%2C2021&dq=...A...&ly\[rw\]=REF\\_AREA%2CEST\\_YEAR&ly\[cl\]=NR\\_TYPE&ly\[rs\]=TIME\\_PERIOD&to\[TIME\\_PERIOD\]=false](https://uaestat.fcsc.gov.ae/vis?lc=en&fs[0]=FCSC%20-%20Statistical%20Hierarchy%20%7CNatural%20Reserve%23ENV_NR%23&pg=0&fc=FCSC%20-%20Statistical%20Hierarchy&snb=3&df[ds]=FCSC-RDS&df[id]=DF_NR_RESERVE&df[ag]=FCSA&df[vs]=5.7.0&pd=2017%2C2021&dq=...A...&ly[rw]=REF_AREA%2CEST_YEAR&ly[cl]=NR_TYPE&ly[rs]=TIME_PERIOD&to[TIME_PERIOD]=false)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ead.gov.ae/en/Discover-Our-Biodiversity/Sheikh-Zayed-Protected-Areas-Network>

<sup>8</sup> Conservation and Management Plan For Abu Dhabi and Eastern Qatar Coral Reefs. SCENR Qatar, EAD Abu Dhabi, NCRI & EWS-WWF, April 2008, [https://wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/coral\\_reef\\_management\\_plan.pdf](https://wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/coral_reef_management_plan.pdf) pages 8, 28 and 36.

### **Contacts:**

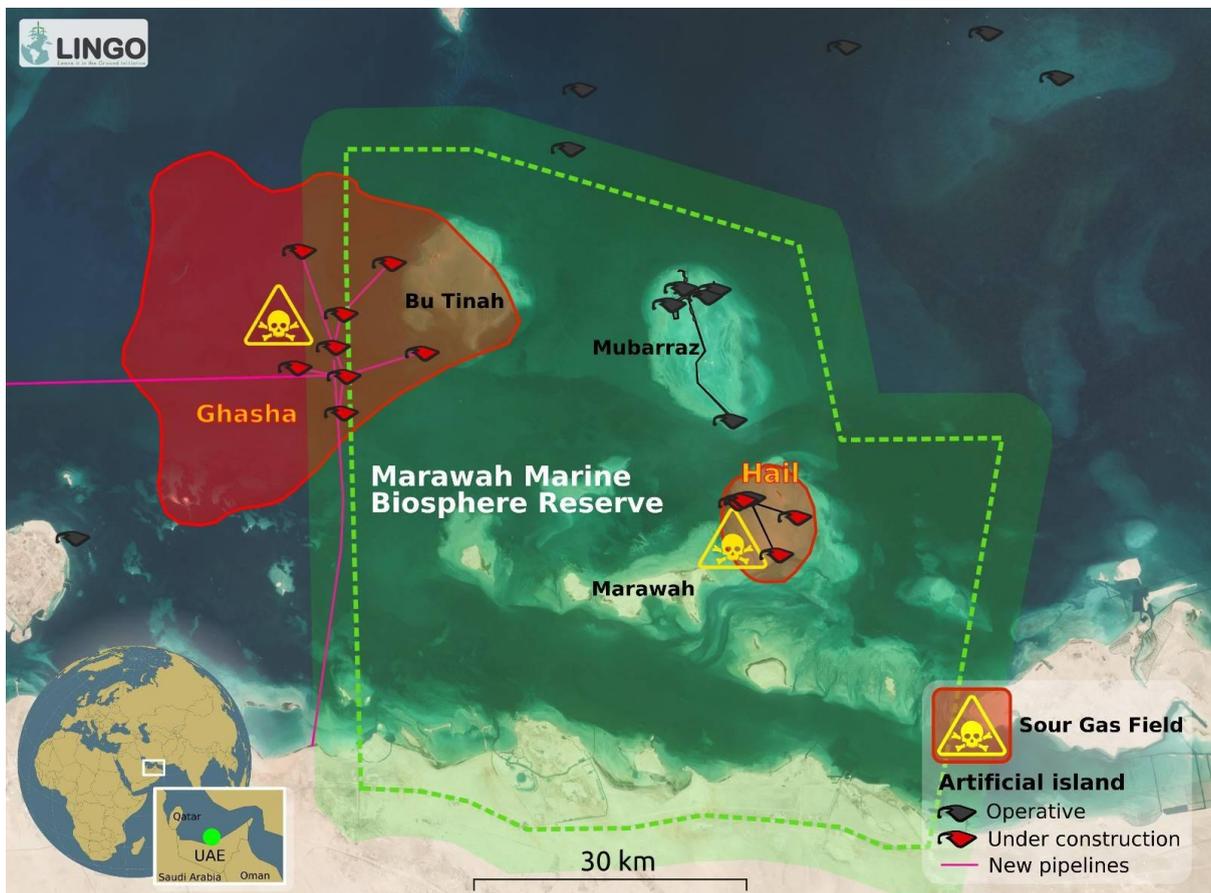
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### **Supporting material:**

1. Oil and Gas in the Marawah Biosphere Reserve. LINGO Case Study, May 2023. Download from [HERE](#)
2. Map of the Marawah UNESCO Biosphere Reserve with fossil fuel infrastructure in operation and under construction. © LINGO 2023



3. International companies involved in oil and gas extraction from Marawah (Source: LINGO Research)

Company name	Country of HQ	Involvement in	Comments	Source
OMV	Austria	Ghasha concession, asset inside Marawah	5% share in Ghasha concession	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Technip Energies	France	Hail&Ghasha Megaproject	"Pre-Construction Services Agreement (PCSA) related to the Onshore facilities"	<a href="#">LINK</a>
TotalEnergies	France	Asset inside Marawah	4 assets in Marawah, including in the Hail oil field	Rystad Energy, U Cube Upstream Solution. Oct 2023
Wintershall	Germany	Ghasha concession	10% share in Ghasha concession	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Eni	Italy	Ghasha concession	25% share in Ghasha concession	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Saipem	Italy	Hail&Ghasha Megaproject	Building four drilling centres and one processing plant on artificial islands, as well as offshore structures and more than 300 km of subsea pipelines.	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Tecnimont	Italy	Hail&Ghasha Megaproject	"CO2 and sulphur recovery and handling" for onshore facilities.	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Cosmo Energy E&P	Japan	Asset inside Marawah	3 assets in Marawah, including in the Hail oil field	<a href="#">LINK</a>
JERA	Japan	Asset inside Marawah	3 assets in Marawah, including in the Hail oil field	Rystad Energy, U Cube Upstream Solution. Oct 2023
JX Nippon Oil and Gas	Japan	Asset inside Marawah	3 assets in Marawah, including in the Hail oil field	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Kansai Electric	Japan	Asset inside Marawah	3 assets in Marawah, including in the Hail oil field	<a href="#">LINK</a>
LUKOIL	Russia	Ghasha concession	5% share in Ghasha concession	<a href="#">LINK</a>
Samsung Engineering	South Korea	Hail&Ghasha Megaproject	"pre-construction services agreement"	<a href="#">LINK</a>



*LINGO's logo for 2023, supporting the "Dugong Special Envoy for COP28"*

*Dugong logo © LINGO 2023*