

Ahmed Al Hashmi

Executive Director of Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity (TMBS)

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Ahmed Al Hashmi is the Executive Director of the Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity (TMBS) sector at the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi (EAD), where he heads a team of scientists dedicated to both marine and terrestrial biodiversity.

He currently leads on major pioneering environmental projects, such as establishing and operating the Middle East's most advanced research vessel «Jaywun» as well as the Agency's coral restoration programme. To date, the programme has succeeded in cultivating more than 800,000 coral colonies at four different locations in Abu Dhabi, as part of the Coral Reef Rehabilitation project – the largest of its kind in the region. The initiative is an ongoing effort to cultivate more than one million coral reef colonies to help increase their total area in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Ahmed was also responsible for the Abu Dhabi Mangrove Initiative (ADMI), which was launched in February 2022 during a meeting of His Highness Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Executive Council, and His Royal Highness Prince William, at Al Jubail Mangrove Park in Abu Dhabi. The initiative was established to provide a platform for the development of innovative mangrove planting solutions, while helping to mitigate the effects of climate change, and raise awareness of mangroves' importance and the need to restore them. Since ADMI was inceptioned, 44 million trees have been rehabilitated along Abu Dhabi's coastline, in collaboration with partners. Twenty-three million of which were planted over the last two years, covering a total of 9,200 hectares.

One of Ahmed's most notable success stories is overseeing nine years of the world's most ambitious species reintroduction programmes. The once 'extinct in the wild' Scimitar-horned Oryx (SHO) is again roaming freely in the wild in Chad, and the species has now been reclassified as 'Endangered' by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. The reintroduction programme, initiated in 2014, sought to promote a healthy and self-sustaining SHO population in its

natural habitat within Chad's Ouadi Rimé – Ouadi Achim Faunal Reserve.

As a result of his efforts, 26 invertebrate species new to science have been discovered and, during his tenure, EAD has successfully compiled its Abu Dhabi Red List of Ecosystems – the first such assessment of terrestrial and marine ecosystems in the region, and based on IUCN standards.

His efforts also led to recording a positive increase in the stocks of commercial fish species in Abu Dhabi's waters. This rise is attributed to the policies, procedures and administrative measures of a comprehensive protection plan implemented by Ahmed and his team to improve deteriorating fish stock types, with the goal of enhancing sustainability for future generations. In 2022, EAD recorded a remarkable improvement in the fisheries 'Sustainable Exploitation Index' – increasing from 8.9 per cent in 2018 to 83.1 per cent in 2023.

He also led the establishment of the region's first and largest Plant Genetic Resources Centre – known as the Gene Bank. Inaugurated in early 2024, it aims to ensure the preservation of seeds and tissues of all wild plant types and local agricultural species of importance in the UAE. The centre will also conduct research to support preservation, and will host a herbarium record of Abu Dhabi's and the UAE's flora and its diversity, with a storage capacity of up to 20,000 samples.

As well as a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Biology from UAE University, he completed his UAE Master's Degree in Environmental Science, in collaboration with the United Nations University, in Canada on coral reef reproduction, recording the first coral spooning in the southern Arabian Gulf. He has also authored and published many scientific research papers in several international journals.