**For Immediate Release**

**Ford Conservation and Environmental Grants Award Over $100,000 to Nine Organisations Across Middle East and North Africa, with New Solutions to Plastic Pollution for 2018**

* An unprecedented five projects from Iraq, Lebanon and Morocco share first place, each earning US$15,000 in grants from Ford
* First-ever “Beating Plastic Pollution” special category $5,000 grant goes to Jordan’s *Our Environment, Everyone’s Responsibility* environmental education project
* Since its inception in 2000, more than $1.8 million in Ford Grants have been awarded to 200 projects with added incentives for Best in Engaging Local Communities, and Beating Plastic Pollution

**RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, December 18, 2018** – Ford Motor Company today announced the latest recipients of its Conservation and Environmental Grants, with a total of $101,500 awarded to nine successful entries. Winners in 2018 hailed from five different countries – Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco – with projects focused on three main areas: Environmental Education, Protection of the Natural Environment and Conservation Engineering.

Over recent editions, the programme has seen the addition of extra categories to offer financial support for winning projects: *Best in Research* – projects that show use of research in finding and implementing solutions to a specific environmental issue – and, this year, in line with World Environment Day 2018’s theme, *Beating Plastic Pollution*, for the project that best raised awareness and tackled the negative impact of plastic use.

**Environmental Education**
It was a close contest between the top two projects in the Environmental Education category, where both the *Halgurd-Sakran Park Project* by [Waterkeepers Iraq](https://www.waterkeepersiraq.org/), and *Rehabilitation of Al Nakheel Island in El Mina* by Andre Nahhas School in Lebanon, each walked away with a $15,000 bursary from Ford’s Conservation and Environmental Grants.

The Waterkeepers Iraq project will use the funds for creative and educational activities in support of the Halgurd-Sakran Park, such as commissioning local artists to create murals, and launching a river festival. This will be the first park of its kind in Kurdistan, and one that encompasses around 740 square-kilometres of rocky mountains, alpine meadows, and deep valleys cut through by the wild white-water rivers in the Zagros Range.

In joint first place, the Environment Club at Andre Nahhas Public High School for Girls aims at restoring the ecological balance of Al Nakheel Island reserve off the coast of Tripoli in northern Lebanon. As well as bringing irrigation-suitable water, cleaning materials, and awareness boards to the island, the school will invest in palm seedlings, and fifty pairs of rabbits – plus feed for one year – bringing natural life back to the flat, rocky island of eroded limestone.

Rounding out the Environmental Education top three, was [Jordan’s Royal Scientific Society](http://www.rss.jo/), which will put its $7,000 windfall to good use in its climate change awareness programme, *Science Engagement, Mentoring and Empowerment of Young Scientist: Climate Change and Energy Challenges*. The project will fulfil efficient scientific communication to university student-scientists on how to overcome the challenge of climate change, promote innovation and creativity, and raise awareness on how young scientists should use all forms of media for public engagement.

**Natural Environment**
The need for an academic centre concentrating on the policy development, practical intervention, and community participation in necessary green space development in the Kurdistan region, has been the driving force behind the future creation of a new campus botanical garden at the [American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS)](https://auis.edu.krd/). With its first place Natural Environment category $15,000 grant, the Centre for Environmental Conservation and Research at AUIS will invest in, among other things, relocating specimens and seed samples to the university’s campus, making building modifications to enable proper temperature controlled storage, and upgrading the university environmental programme to enable students to benefit fully from the collaboration between the university and the [Kurdistan Botanical Foundation](http://kurdistanbotanical.org/).

Recipient of a second-place $6,000 grant is Dr. Karim Omar, a freelance environmental consultant botanist who has worked for a number of years determining the conservation status of five threatened plant species in South Sinai. With Ford’s support, Omar will lead his team to increase his study area, conservation activities, and building scope and awareness among local communities.

Taking a third place in the Natural Environment category, but also found deserving of the Best in Engaging Local Communities $3,500 bonus acknowledgement, the West Asia-North Africa (WANA) Institute was allocated a total of $8,500 to focus on its [*Local Climate Change Adaption Plan Through Youth and Community-Based Organisations*](http://wanainstitute.org/en/project/enabling-communities-climate-change-adaptation-planning-understanding-gender-roles). WANA will utilise the funds for a four-day advanced climate change workshop, which will revolve around research design and adaption strategy design in its homeland, Jordan.

**Conservation Engineering**
Joint winners split a $30,000 fund evenly in the Conservation Engineering category for this year’s grants from Ford, with the Ouaourint Association for Development and Cooperation – lead by Abou Baker Sawti – based in Morocco, and [Arcenciel](http://www.arcenciel.org/en/) in Lebanon.

The former, *Protection of the Waterways: Wadi Al Abid*, hopes to use funds supplied by Ford to tackle water pollution supplying the Bzou community in the northwest corner of Morocco’s Azilal Province. The two basic principles of the Ouaourint Association’s project, are 1) the preservation and protection of water and fisheries resources from all polluting factors, such as household waste and residues from agricultural fertilisers and chemical pesticides; and 2) the rational exploitation of the water by improving exploitation techniques, particularly in the field of agriculture. The $15,000 afforded by the Ford grants, added to the $10,000 awarded in last year’s grant allocation, will go a long way to seeing Protection of the Waterways reach a successful conclusion.

Also a repeat-winner of a Ford grant, and putting in a successful bid for the fifth time, Lebanon’s Arcenciel will this year invest its $15,000 in finalising its study on 11 strains of indigenous actinobacteria. The project’s main objective is to optimise the compost industry through the use of an innovative bacterial inoculum. The result of the work completed by lead researching agronomist Abdo Tannoury and his team will allow Arcenciel to introduce a concept in composting engineering to local and international markets; a process that has never-before been scientifically developed, and one that takes into consideration the interaction of bath microbiota and used raw materials simultaneously.

**Special Categories**
Aside from WANA Institute’s Best in Engaging Local Communities grant worth $3,500, a second Special Categories winner was awarded this year. A $5,000 grant was afforded to *Our Environment, Everyone’s Responsibility*, an Environmental Education project from Jordan that earned the grant for its focus on “Beating Plastic Pollution” – the theme for this year’s World Environment Day which coincided with the launch of Ford Motor Company Conservation and Environmental Grants 2018 in June.

The project, fronted by environmentalist Hayel Al Omoush, aims at raising awareness on the use of plastics and the damages incurred by its improper use. By organising activities, lectures, and workshops, and by publishing the necessary brochures that show the hazards of plastic – the length of time they remain in the environment, and the difficulty of its decomposition – Al Omoush hopes to reach as many students and local communities as possible, starting with Jordan’s Al Mafraq region, to tackle the scourge of plastic pollution.

“For nearly two decades, Ford Motor Company has been committed to conservation and sustainability in the region, with close to $2 million granted to local environmental projects,” said Mark Ovenden, president of Ford Middle East and Africa. “Ford is very proud to empower individuals, and local organisations, who are dedicated to preserving the environmental well-being of their community. By providing necessary funding and visibility, Ford hopes to encourage the spread of similar grassroots efforts that will serve as catalysts for change across the globe.”

The Conservation and Environmental Grants programme is one of many initiatives Ford has invested in to preserve our environment for future generations. With this year’s World Environment Day theme of Beating Plastic Pollution in mind, the programme included an additional special category to be awarded a $5,000 ‘beating plastic’ grant.

For years, Ford has been working with renewable materials, from farm elements to plastics. In partnership with Coca-Cola, Nike and Procter & Gamble, Ford proudly co-founded the plant-based PET Technology Collaborative (PTC), a strategic working group focused on accelerating the development and use of 100 per cent plant-based PET materials and fibres. Ford also boasts the first automotive use of Coca-Cola’s PlantBottle plastic, used in the seat fabric, trim, carpets and headliner in an electric Ford Focus battery demonstration vehicle.

The World Wildlife Fund’s [Bioplastic Feedstock Alliance (BFA)](http://bioplasticfeedstockalliance.org/who-we-are/) can, too, rely on Ford as a partner, as it works to support the responsible development of plastics made from plant material, and helps build a more sustainable future for the bioplastics industry.

**Note to editors:**
Annually, entries are accepted from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Yemen. In its 18 years of existence, the Ford Grants initiative has become one of the largest corporate initiatives of its kind in the region, created to empower individuals and non-profit groups that are donating their time and efforts to preserve the environmental well-being of their communities.

Since its inception, the Ford Motor Company Conservation and Environmental Grants programme has received support and recognition from various governmental and non-governmental environmental authorities from around the Middle East, including the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Emirates Wildlife Society, and the Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED).

Recipients are chosen by an independent panel of judges consisting of academics and leaders from regional environmental organisations. The judges are seasoned environmentalists or academicians from the region carefully selected based on geographical coverage, age and gender equality. They look for initiatives that demonstrate a well-defined sense of purpose, a commitment to maximising available resources, and a reputation for meeting objectives and delivering planned programmes and services.

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***About Ford Motor Company***

*Ford Motor Company is a global company based in Dearborn, Michigan. The company designs, manufactures, markets and services a full line of Ford cars, trucks, SUVs, electrified vehicles and Lincoln luxury vehicles, provides financial services through Ford Motor Credit Company and is pursuing leadership positions in electrification, autonomous vehicles and mobility solutions. Ford employs approximately 200,000 people worldwide. For more information regarding Ford, its products and Ford Motor Credit Company, please visit* [*www.corporate.ford.com*](http://www.corporate.ford.com)*.*

*Ford’s history in the Middle East goes back more than 60 years. The company’s local importer-dealers operate more than 155 facilities in the region and directly employ more than 7,000 people, the majority of whom are Arab Nationals. For more information on Ford Middle East, please visit* [*www.me.ford.com*](http://www.me.ford.com).

*Ford Middle East is also a responsible corporate citizen with currently various CSR initiatives running in the region including the Ford Motor Company Conservation & Environmental Grants, Ford Warriors in Pink® breast cancer awareness campaign, Ford Driving Skills for Life for young drivers and the Henry Ford Entrepreneurship Academy education initiative for young entrepreneurs*.

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