

# Dubai: In pursuit of innovation to shape the future

*A few months after the close of Gitex Global 2024, a global showcase for emerging technologies that attracted more than 200,000 participants, Dubai reaffirmed its futuristic leadership ambitions with the Dubai Future Forum conference, held on November 19 and 20. This event, though less marked by spectacular demonstrations, was equally strategic, bringing together over 2,500 experts to discuss and explore the major technological challenges of tomorrow.*

Temps de lecture : minute

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In line with its strategy to position itself as a global crossroads for innovation, Dubai transformed the forum into a laboratory of ideas. Prospective thinking, disruptive economics, and technological ambitions were explored through contributions from decision-makers, entrepreneurs, and visionary thinkers. This approach highlights the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) commitment to accelerating the transition towards a skills- and innovation-based economy.

## Building a City on Mars

Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerged as the forum's central theme, reflecting its crucial role in ongoing economic and societal transformations. However, it was space exploration that truly crystallised the UAE's strategic ambitions. Discussions on this topic highlighted projects that are both visionary and pragmatic. Led by prominent figures such as Sara Sabry, the first Arab and African woman to undertake an orbital flight in

2022, she outlined her vision structured around three major pillars: education, accelerating research, and commercialising innovations.

These objectives are part of a much broader ambition: to establish an autonomous city on Mars by 2117. This initiative underscores the UAE's intention to invest in the New Space sector by developing long-term projects on solid foundations.

## A Global Hub for Tomorrow's Ideas

Dubai is positioning itself as an essential hub for those shaping the future. These issues, reflected in the initiatives spearheaded by the Dubai Future Forum, are clearly identified and integrated into a roadmap known as D33.

This roadmap is perhaps best represented by Abdulaziz Khalid Al Jaziri, Deputy CEO and Chief Operating Officer of the Dubai Future Foundation. "I visited Station F. I also went to VivaTech. We saw the scale and enthusiasm generated by the event: and if you come to Dubai, I think you will see the same thing here. Previously, Gitex was mainly oriented towards large corporations. But the startup space has continued to grow. Gitex North Star has become a massive ecosystem for startups, and it keeps expanding. It's becoming an ecosystem in its own right." This innovative approach, initiated before and during the pandemic, has transformed Dubai's appeal for talent.

Through its initiatives, the Emirate aims not only to play a key role in implementing disruptive technologies but also to redefine territories by positioning itself at the forefront of global challenges—as evidenced by a glance at the Global 50 Report.

# Strengthening Innovation and Investment

The Dubai Future Forum marks a further step in this quest, confirming that the city does not merely follow technological trends: it actively shapes them through the *Dubai Future Foundation (DFF)*, a pillar of foresight, and the *Dubai Future District Fund (DFDF)*, a fund entity led by Nader Al Bastaki.

“We have invested in 12 investment funds, and we want to ensure diversity in every phase of capital maturity available to support these startups. The government aims to fill gaps in this capital structure without competing with existing VCs. We want to complement them by providing capital,” explained Al Bastaki regarding the current investment approach.

These two entities, which unite innovation and financing actors, aim to immediately focus on key areas of territorial development: Education, Climate, and, above all, the Future of the Economy. As a key player in each of these pillars, DFF seeks to bring together the world’s best experts to explore contributions from decision-makers, entrepreneurs, and visionary thinkers. By paving the way for welcoming and nurturing tomorrow's champions, DFF aims to anticipate the major challenges of the future.



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Article by Etienne Portais