

“Accelerating Progress toward SDG 7: UN System Contributions”

Thursday, 21 July 2016, 09.00-13.00

Conference Room 5, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Summary

The aim of this event was to highlight the current status and actions being taken by UN system organizations and other leading partners in support of Sustainable Development Goal 7 implementation, as well as interlinkages between energy and other goals. Representatives from around 20 UN system entities, funds and programmes participated in the discussions. Main findings from the Secretary-General’s Progress Report on SDGs and the recent expert group meetings of UN-Energy were presented to provide the context for interactive discussions during the event.

The event was hosted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in cooperation with UN-Energy. It featured four separate interactive discussions, each focusing on the contributions of the UN system and its partners towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7. Each session also looked at what actions will be needed in order to continue to advance towards the overall goal and how the UN system can support this momentum.

Opening session: Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, stressed the importance of the new SDG7 on energy, and in particular keeping in mind the specific challenges of vulnerable countries. He mentioned the role played by the Secretary-General’s Sustainable Energy for All initiative, and that, going forward, the whole UN system will need to play a pivotal role in making SDG7 a reality together. Mr. Jamil Ahmad, Deputy-Director of the UNEP New York office, added that the UN system needs to use its wealth of experience on working together around the issue of energy. He mentioned some of UNEP’s contributions through the hub at the Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency, as well as its leadership in the areas of several energy efficiency accelerators.

Perspectives from the UN system: Mr. Ivan Vera, Secretary of UN-Energy, provided reflections from recent UN-Energy expert group meetings in Panama, Republic of Korea, and Ethiopia. Building on this, recommendations for moving forward included to: Continue providing platforms for knowledge exchange, capacity building and international cooperation; Continue developing a more comprehensive set of energy indicators -disaggregated and linked to other SDGs; Align all the efforts to support SDG 7, including current SE4All activities, Decade activities and the Global Tracking Framework; Start preparing for 2018 when SDG7 will be debated in the HLPF; Have a better coordination of efforts among UN agencies at global, regional and national levels.

Session 1: Universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services: Mr. Malcolm Cosgrove-Davies, Global Lead for Energy Access, World Bank, mentioned their efforts to develop a multi-tier framework for energy access, in order to move beyond the binary understanding of switch on/off, and into a more qualitative understanding. He also said that $\frac{3}{4}$ of all SDG indicators require energy to progress. Mr. Jo Scheuer, Director for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, UNDP, mentioned a big number of activities through which UNDP is working on energy, across energy access, renewable energy, and energy efficiency. He mentioned that UNDP is currently developing a new substantive energy framework, and that they will seek input as part of this process. Mr. Werner H. Obermeyer, Deputy Executive Director, WHO Office at the United Nations, said that exposure to household air pollution causes 4.3 million premature deaths each year, which is more than the global toll from malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS combined. He also stressed the importance

of electricity for running effective and safe health clinics, and that WHO is involved in projects to provide solar suit cases, to ensure energy access to health facilities in rural areas off the larger grid.

Session 2: Increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix: Ms. Yera Ortiz de Urbina, Senior Liaison Officer, IRENA, stressed that renewables will help social and economic, as well as environmental dimensions, of sustainable development, not least in developing countries by bringing energy access outside of the larger grid. She mentioned the Africa Clean Energy Corridor, the SIDS Lighthouses initiative, the Global Geothermal Alliance, and analyses, such as REmap 2030, as examples of IRENA actions. Mr. Michael Williamson, Head of Office, Office of the Executive Secretary, ESCAP, highlighted that over the next 20 years, the energy consumption in the Asia-Pacific region is expected to double. He also mentioned the good news that the region is emerging as a leader in manufacturing of sustainable energy technologies, and that a country like Bhutan has gone 100% renewable. On its part, ESCAP has established an intergovernmental committee on energy. Ms. Angelica Shamerina, Program Advisor (Climate Change) and Regional Focal Point (Latin America and Caribbean), GEF Small Grants Programme, UNDP, informed that the Small Grants Programme has already invested over \$ 450million and leveraged similar levels of co-financing, supporting over 18,500 community based projects in over 130 countries.

Session 3: Double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency: Ms. Sara Pasquier, Energy Efficiency Programme Manager, IEA, informed that IEA will begin a training programme on energy efficiency, and encouraged everyone to get involved. She stressed that both OECD and non-OECD need to focus on efficiency in order to reach the SDG7 target for 2030. She highlighted in this regard the Energy Efficiency in Emerging Economies (E4) Programme. Mr. Pradeep Monga, Director, Energy and Climate Change, UNIDO, stressed the linked between SDGs 7, 9 and 13 on energy, industry, and climate respectively. With industry accounting for 1/3 of global energy use, UNIDO works hard to push for energy efficiency in this sector, including through Energy Management Systems and by using the Industrial Energy Efficiency Accelerator as a partnership platform. Ms. Yamina Djacta, Director of UN-Habitat New York office, said that in 2050, 75% of people will live in cities. This also means that much of the housing for the future is yet to be built. She underlined the importance of housing codes, regulations and policies to push the efficiency agenda, but stressed that this is not enough, as there is also a need for broad awareness to reach the goals.

Session 4: Nexus between energy and other SDGs: Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director, Sustainable Development and Productivity Division, ESCWA, made clear that in the Western Asian region, the concept called nexus is a very real one – not least the nexuses between energy, water, and food. She said that while the region is rich in both fossil fuel and renewable sources of energy, there is still large untapped sources of especially solar and wind energy. Mr. Alex Heikens, Senior Adviser on Climate and Environment, UNICEF, said that the issue of energy is relatively new to the fund, with three issues becoming their main areas of focus; energy access, air pollution, and climate change. UNICEF last year published a report on ‘Why sustainable energy matters to children’. He mentioned the importance of energy for education, as well as for safety through accessibility of street lighting. Mr. Paul Quigley, Energy Expert, UNHCR, also said that energy is an area with increasing attention at their office, with an energy unit being established. With the average life-span for a refugee camp being 17 years, he underlined the need for good services for the users, while there should also be a plan in place for how the host country and region can make use of the installation capacity afterwards.

Closing Session: Mr. Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary, UNECE, stressed how important the energy SDG is for all other SDGs, and that there therefore is a need to take a broad UN system approach. He mentioned UNECE’s central role in determining standards, for example for cars, and said he hoped that this could be expanded to other areas. He underlined the importance of international cooperation, and invited everyone to join the efforts of the regional commissions’ International Forums on Energy for Sustainable Development, with the sixth forum to be held in Yerevan, Armenia in October, and a seventh planned for Astana, Kazakhstan in 2017. Mr. Friis Bach described an energy picture that is becoming more diverse, and that the future seems to be more about buying services – such as 4000 km driving distance for your car – rather than specific fuels.