



# HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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## SDG 7 and interlinkages with other SDGs - Affordable and clean energy

Wednesday, 12 July 2023, 10:00 AM - 13:00 PM

### Secretariat Background Note

#### Current Status of SDG7

Energy lies at the heart of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all will open a new world of opportunities for millions of people through new economic opportunities and jobs, empowered women, children and youth, better education and health, more sustainable, equitable and inclusive communities, and greater protection from, and resilience to, climate change.

While much progress has been made, the world is clearly not on track for the achievement of SDG 7: globally, 675 million people were still lacking access to electricity and 2.3 billion people did not have access to clean cooking fuels and technology in 2021. The share of renewables in the global total final energy consumption is growing only slowly, having reached 19.1 % in 2020. In addition, the rate of improvement in primary energy intensity, which had already slowed in recent years, dropped to 0.6% in 2020. This makes it the worst year for energy intensity improvement since the global financial crisis. Meanwhile, International public financial flows in support of clean energy in developing countries have a decreasing trend that started before the COVID-19 pandemic and continued through 2021. In 2021, they amounted to \$10.8 billion—an 11% drop from 2020. This was 35% less than the 2010–19 decade-long average, and less than half the 2017 peak of \$26.4 billion.





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Energy action is needed urgently. In 2021, the High-level Dialogue on Energy resulted in the Global Roadmap for Accelerated SDG 7 Action which provides a guide for collective action on energy across sectors that transcends individual and piecemeal approaches and delivers scaled-up and broad impact. Importantly, the Roadmap also includes two sets of milestones for 2025 and 2030. The Dialogue also triggered some 200 Energy Compacts with voluntary commitments of over US\$600 billion into SDG 7. These achievements must now be used as the foundation for transformational change through just, inclusive and equitable energy transitions. The ambition must be to show the first results of this approach already at the Global Stocktaking on SDG 7 which was mandated by the UN General Assembly to be held in 2024.

### Challenges and opportunities

Decisive action is required immediately to achieve universal access to electricity and clean cooking. Ensuring access to clean, decarbonized energy for all by 2030 must be an urgent political priority at all levels. Energy access is one of the areas of sustainable development which has the most co-benefits for other SDGs, thus playing a catalytic role for the entire 2030 Agenda. As the majority of people without access to electricity are located in LDCs and Sub-Saharan Africa, these should be at the centre of the international community's efforts.

Just, inclusive and equitable energy transitions must accelerate world-wide. Without deep energy decarbonization to achieve net-zero by 2050, the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement will fall quickly out of reach. The deployment of renewable energy, however, is lagging, especially in transport, industry, heating and cooling, and global energy efficiency improvements must increase significantly. In fulfilling its key role in efforts towards achieving



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net-zero emissions, energy action must also ensure that it produces just and equitable outcomes, leading to prosperity for both people and planet. A sustained acceleration of progress can only be achieved through energy transitions that leave no one behind, including vulnerable countries and groups.

The overall benefits of energy action must be increased by better taking into account the synergies and interlinkages with other SDGs. SDG 7 is one of the SDGs which can produce particularly high co-benefits in other areas of sustainable development. This includes, but is not limited to, poverty reduction, health, education, gender equality, clean water, food systems, and employment. But these co-benefits do not come about automatically: they require cross-sectoral approaches at the level of policy, planning, and implementation. Ensuring that energy access can lead to productive uses and raising availability of electricity to levels which can support industrial processes is key to generating self-sustaining dynamics in sustainable development.

Importantly, global investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency should be tripled towards 2030. Shifting fossil fuel subsidies to renewables and reforming the international financial architecture will also be crucial in accelerating the energy transition. Concrete steps must be taken to ensure no new coal and the phase out of coal by 2030 in OECD countries and by 2040 in all other countries, including ending all international public and private funding of coal. Moreover, net zero electricity generation by 2035 for all developed economies and by 2040 for the rest of the world must also be ensured.

International cooperation must be dramatically scaled up to catalyse the public and private finance and investment needed to accelerate energy



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transitions, especially for developing countries and small island developing States. Access to finance and the provision of technology transfer must be prioritised. Mobilizing financing to support the Energy Compacts, and all of the MDBs, DFIs, and bilateral agencies to do their part on taking more risk and develop/repurpose financial instruments to lower the cost of capital for renewable technologies.

Moreover, multilateral cooperation must be further strengthened, including through regular intergovernmental dialogues on energy at the UN, including at technical level with strong engagements of multi-stakeholders, ensuring universality and inclusivity. International cooperation on energy is not optional, it is a must. The global stocktaking on SDG 7 which will be convened by the President of the General Assembly in 2024, as mandated by resolution 77/170, will provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the catalytic role of international dialogue, cooperation and partnership.

### Proposed guiding questions

- How can progress towards ensuring universal access to energy be accelerated in support of rescuing the SDGs? How can we mitigate and reverse the setbacks in achieving universal energy access caused by COVID-19 and the global energy crisis in recent years?
- How can the application of renewable energy solutions and energy efficiency measures be accelerated, to turbo-charge just, inclusive and equitable energy transitions in support of climate action and net-zero emissions?
- How can international cooperation and the flow of finance to developing countries in support of achieving SDG 7 be improved, including addressing the needs of the most vulnerable?
- How can we further strengthen intergovernmental dialogues and cooperation on energy, and leverage multi-stakeholder partnerships in



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support of achieving SDG 7, effectively bringing into the fold key stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society, youth and others?