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## Global Launch – Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2022 & SDG7 Policy Briefs 2022: Wednesday, 1 June 2022

Renewable energy is the only energy source that grew during the COVID-19 pandemic, its resilience offering some hope to the prospects of achieving a clean, just energy transition by 2030. With deliberate planning, progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 is expected to have far-reaching benefits in other areas of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and for climate action. In the meantime, with eight years remaining to achieve the SDGs, governments are struggling to make progress during “these quite terrible years,” in the words of one speaker in reference to the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Within this context, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and partners convened a high-level event that launched two publications on SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy for all), one on tracking progress on SDG 7, and another on quantifying the interlinkages between energy and the other SDGs. The half-day event took place on 1 June 2022 with in-person participation in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Chamber at UN Headquarters in New York, as well as virtual participation.

The first publication launched at the event was the eighth edition of the UN’s annual report on global progress toward the targets of SDG 7. [Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report 2022](https://enb.iisd.org/tracking-sdg-7-energy-progress-report-2022) was produced by the respective custodian agencies of the SDG 7 indicators. The five custodian agencies gave a joint presentation highlighting their key findings.

The event also launched the fifth edition of a set of policy briefs, which are released each year in support of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The [Policy Briefs in Support of the High-Level Political Forum 2022: Addressing Energy’s Interlinkages](https://enb.iisd.org/policy-briefs-in-support-of-the-high-level-political-forum-2022-addressing-energy-s-interlinkages) focus on establishing indicators for the interlinkages between energy and the other SDGs. The briefs were produced by the SDG7 Technical Advisory Group and launched by the co-facilitators of the Group.

The co-hosts of the event were the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of Sustainable Energy: Denmark, Ethiopia, Norway, and Pakistan. DESA convened the launch event in partnership with the five custodian agencies for SDG 7: the International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the UN Statistics Division (UNSD), the World Bank Group, and the World Health Organization (WHO).



Speakers at the Global Launch – Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2022 and the SDG7 Policy Briefs 2022



Moderator **Mohammad Aamir Khan**, Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN

### Opening Segment

The moderator for the event, Mohammad Aamir Khan, Deputy Permanent Representative of PAKISTAN to the UN, said this year's policy briefs are the first step toward a global framework to track progress on energy's interlinkages with other SDGs. Together with the SDG 7 progress report, the publications emphasize the need to redouble efforts to ensure energy can fulfill its role in meeting the SDGs and curbing global emissions. He noted that at the halfway mark of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world is struggling to make sufficient progress toward its climate and sustainability goals, and faces additional challenges related to COVID-19 and the food-energy-finance impacts of the Ukraine crisis.

In welcoming remarks, Yoseph Kassaye Yoseph, Deputy Permanent Representative of ETHIOPIA to the UN, Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Sustainable Energy, said that, for the first time, the SDG 7 progress report includes a chapter on SDG indicator 7.a.1 (financing flows to developing countries for clean energy), a reminder of the need to scale up efforts to reach those furthest behind. He noted that Ethiopia generates almost all its electricity from renewable sources.

In a keynote address, Anne Beathe Tivnnerheim, Minister of International Development, NORWAY, called for speeding up the transition to renewable energy and increasing the focus on energy security. She also noted that energy access is necessary to end hunger and achieve food security, given its role in irrigation,



**Anne Beathe Tivnnerheim**, Minister of International Development, Norway

modern farming technologies and fertilizers, and access to information and markets. Tivnnerheim called for working with businesses to unleash the job-generating opportunities from investing in energy.

Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said the SDG7 progress report shows progress is "well off track." He explained that the policy briefs, meanwhile, are a step toward greater understanding of energy's potential co-benefits for other SDGs, and stressed that energy access should be designed to deliver on these. Liu noted the publications will inform the 2022 HLPF session and become even more important when SDG 7 is the focus of review at the 2023 HLPF.

Damilola Ogunbiyi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All and UN-Energy Co-Chair, said the SDG 7 progress report has become the "gold standard" for tracking the transition to affordable and clean energy for all by 2030. She said the energy future must be not only clean, but also just, inclusive, and equitable. She remarked that 80% of the world's people who lack access to electricity live in Africa.

Usha Rao-Monari, Associate Administrator, UN Development Programme (UNDP), said countries vary widely in their ability to scale up renewable energy, and highlighted UNDP's efforts to support developing countries, including the Sustainable Energy Hub, the Derisking Renewable Energy Investment framework, and the Africa Minigrids Program. She said the needed changes could be disruptive; thus, their impacts on vulnerable people must be understood and mitigated.



**Yoseph Kassaye Yoseph**, Deputy Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the UN, Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Sustainable Energy



**Liu Zhenmin**, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

## Launching Ceremony

The two publications were launched with keynote addresses and statements from the organizations involved in their production.

### Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2022:

Riccardo Puliti, Vice President for Infrastructure, World Bank, gave a keynote address as Chair of the 2022 tracking report. He noted the report is composed of chapters from each custodian agency for the SDG 7 indicators, and “the only such collaboration among SDG custodians.”

Previewing the global data published in the 2022 report, Puliti said progress on electricity access has slowed due to disruptions stemming from COVID-19 and will continue to be hampered by the impacts of the war in Ukraine. He reported the data also reveal a decrease in public financial flows to developing countries for clean energy, but that renewable energy demonstrated “remarkable resilience” as the only energy source to grow during the pandemic.

Puliti concluded that SDG 7 is still attainable if governments integrate universal access into their national energy plans, with a focus on the most remote, vulnerable, and unserved populations, and significantly increase financing for energy access. Puliti said the WHO will chair the production of the 2023 tracking report.

The five custodian agencies then presented key messages from their respective chapters in the progress report. On electricity access, Gabriela Elizondo Azuela, World Bank, said the pace of electrification has slowed in recent years amid COVID-related obstacles to connecting the “last mile.” Based on the current pace, 670 million people are expected to lack electricity by 2030. She recalled that the UN High-level Dialogue on Energy in 2021 adopted recommendations to accelerate access, including to provide demand-side subsidies and to engage in public-private partnerships to ensure reliable, high-quality energy services.

On access to clean cooking, Maria Neira, WHO, said household air pollution causes four million premature deaths each year. She explained that women and children are the most exposed to this pollution, and that health impacts include stroke, cardiovascular diseases, pneumonia, and low birth weight. In Africa, she said only one in five people has access to clean cooking. She suggested joint plans between health and energy to motivate action.

On renewable energy, Rabia Ferroukhi, IRENA, said renewable energy proved more resilient than other energy sources



Rabia Ferroukhi, IRENA

during the COVID-19 pandemic, representing 80% of all new electricity capacity in 2020. Ferroukhi stressed that: phasing out fossil fuels depends on increasing renewable energy generation; and mobilizing financial resources is critical to enable this in developing countries. She added that this year’s report highlights the need for policies around green hydrogen to address trade-offs with its production.

On energy efficiency, Laura Cozzi, IEA, said efficiency is a priority in a moment of global energy crisis, to ensure affordability for everyone. She noted energy efficiency is improving in every area except buildings, where retrofitting of old buildings is lagging and the needed building codes are not in place for growing cities. On the overall SDG 7 outlook, Cozzi noted that: renewable energy solutions exist and are more affordable, citing mini-grids and standalone systems; solutions also exist for clean cooking, although the number of people that need to be reached is daunting; and the USD 40 billion/year required for energy access is less than 2% of the amount of money spent in the energy sector each year.

Stefan Schweinfest, Director, UN Statistics Division, stressed the importance of building statistical capacity related to energy, to help meet the need for high-quality, reliable, and comparable data to track SDG 7 progress. This allows governments to make appropriate policy decisions, he added. Schweinfest observed that “after a decade of progress, we are in trouble,” referring to COVID-19 and the conflict in Ukraine, which he said underscore the need for timely data to understand what is happening to energy, especially in developing and least developed countries.

**SDG7 Policy Briefs 2022: ‘Addressing Energy’s Interlinkages with Other SDGs’:** The co-facilitators of the SDG7 Technical Advisory Group launched the 2022 policy briefs in support of the HLPF, which focus on energy’s interlinkages with other SDGs. The briefs identify potential indicators for interlinkages between energy and SDGs 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), and 15 (life on land), which will be reviewed during the 2022 HLPF. The 2023 briefs will address energy’s interlinkages with the other SDGs. The briefs also assess data availability for the potential indicators.

Sheila Oparaocha, Executive Coordinator, ENERGIA, said action on SDG 7 has multiple benefits in other areas, with the briefs being the first step toward a better, quantifiable



Riccardo Puliti, Vice President for Infrastructure, World Bank



**Hans Olav Ibrekk**, Special Envoy, Climate and Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway, and co-facilitator of SDG7 Technical Advisory Group

understanding of these interlinkages. For example, she explained that energy in school settings improves education access and quality.

Oparaocha shared findings that global CO2 emissions reached an all-time high in 2021. She said the world does not need to choose between solving the energy crisis and the climate crisis. Dramatically scaling up investments in both renewable energy and energy efficiency is the solution to both crises, she underscored.

Hans Olav Ibrekk, Special Envoy, Climate and Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NORWAY, and co-facilitator of SDG7 Technical Advisory Group, expressed concern about declining investment levels, and noted the challenge of directing the needed USD 40 billion per year into energy access. He remarked that the briefs' authors have turned to progressively stronger words each year, calling for this year to "drastically scale up our efforts."

### **Interactive Segment**

Four UN Member States made interventions from the floor during the interactive segment. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION cited views that renewable energy may not fully meet developing countries' practical needs and said a more comprehensive picture of a just transition is needed. He said African countries may need to exploit fossil gas for several more decades as a transitional energy source.

KENYA said the policy briefs show the need for integrated planning to address nexuses between energy and other SDG areas. He said Kenya is on track to achieve universal access to electricity by 2035, but progress on clean cooking access is slower. He called for providing technology and financing to developing countries for the energy transition, in a way that is affordable, accessible, flexible, and timely, and said governments must take enabling actions for this support at the country level.

ICELAND emphasized the importance of a just and equitable energy transition and noted its focus on gender-transformative approaches and reaching last-mile populations. She said Iceland has committed to increasing its climate finance contributions through renewables.

Responding to a question from Iceland on what could cause investment in renewables to rise instead of fall, Puliti said efforts are underway to improve how private investors perceive

creditworthiness, to foster long-term investment in middle- and low-income countries. On public investment, he said all public budgets are currently stretched thin due to the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, but he expressed hope that "after these quite terrible years," public investment in energy will recover.

Ogunbiyi added that investment in climate does not automatically mean investment in energy access. She said the amount of money going to developing countries for energy is "quite pitiful," and developing countries currently face barriers to accessing financing.

EL SALVADOR affirmed its commitment to use sustainable energy at the national level, and said his country seeks universal access to energy by 2030 through the expansion of the electrical network, as well as isolated systems for reaching more distant areas. He added that the government is decarbonizing the energy sector, increasing energy efficiency in the transportation sector, and working to replace firewood with biogas for heating and cooking.

### **Closing Segment**

Marie-Louise Koch Wegter, Deputy Permanent Representative of DENMARK to the UN, Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Sustainable Energy, said renewable energy is the only path to real energy security, and the fact that the share of renewable energy has only marginally increased is deeply concerning.

She said expanding the use of fossil fuels in Africa to meet energy demand would be "a serious mistake" as it is the opposite of what is needed to meet our climate commitments. Moreover, as renewables' competitiveness increases, fossil fuel investments risk becoming stranded assets, exacerbating the heavy debt burden for developing countries. She cautioned against locking countries into a high-emissions pathway, "a dead end economically and for the climate."

Wegter encouraged everyone to support the five critical actions outlined by the UN Secretary-General to jump-start the energy transition: improving access to battery storage technologies; scaling up and diversifying components for renewables energy technologies; building frameworks to level the playing field for renewables; removing fossil fuel subsidies; and tripling public and private investments in renewables. She invited everyone listening to read the 2022 publications and after reading them: "I hope that you will all act."



**Marie-Louise Koch Wegter**, Deputy Permanent Representative of Denmark to the UN, Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Sustainable Energy