The Global Grids Accelerator will be officially launched at a roundtable discussion **today, 23 September from 11:00am-12:00pm ET** at **UN Headquarters in Conference Room 7.**

Media can join via livestream at https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1d/k1dh6wz9hh. A photo spray will be available for accredited photographers at the start of the event (please go to the Liaison desk on the 1st floor of the Conference Building 20 minutes before).

Expected speakers include: UN principals from UNDP, UNOPS, SEforAll, UNECA, UNESCAP, UNCTAD, UNIDO; leaders from key partners, including: AfDB, European Investment Bank, IRENA, Climate Investment Fund, OECD, World Bank, International Energy Agency, and the COP31 Presidency; and officials from multiple UN Member States, including: Indonesia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Norway, the Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, Viet Nam, as well as the African Union and the European Union.

Any questions, please reach out to David Pedroza at david.pedrozacastro@un.org.

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EMBARGOED UNTIL 23 SEPTEMBER 12:01 AM EDT

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL LAUNCHES GLOBAL GRIDS ACCELERATOR TO POWER GROWTH AND CLEAN ENERGY IN AFRICA AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

New York, 23 September 2026 - UN Secretary-General António Guterres today launched the Global Grids Accelerator, a new initiative to help accelerate investment in electricity infrastructure across Africa and South-East Asia and help turn government and regional priorities into investable, operational projects.

Announced ahead of the UN Climate Summit 2026, the Accelerator will focus on grid priorities identified by governments, bringing together the policy expertise, project preparation, finance, and implementation support needed to move them forward.

The initiative responds to a central challenge of the energy transition: renewable power is expanding rapidly, but in many places the grids needed to connect and carry that electricity are not keeping pace.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said: "Renewables are booming, but the grids that carry clean power are not keeping pace. Grids are the arteries of the energy transition. The Global Grids Accelerator will help bring the expertise, finance and support needed to build them – expanding access, strengthening energy security and powering growth in developing countries."

Electricity grids have emerged as one of the biggest bottlenecks in the global energy transition. More than 2,500 gigawatts of renewable energy projects - equivalent to nearly twice the entire electricity generation capacity of the United States - are currently stalled in grid-connection queues worldwide. Annual global investment in grids, now approximately $450 billion, needs to increase by around 50 percent by 2030 to keep pace with rising electricity demand and record renewable power additions as confirmed by the International Renewable Energy Agency. The International Energy Agency estimates that more than 80 million kilometers of grids – roughly equivalent to the entire global grid in existence today – will need to be added or refurbished by 2040.

The result is a growing mismatch: clean power is being deployed at record speed, while the infrastructure needed to connect and move that electricity is struggling to keep pace. For developing countries, this is also a development challenge. Grid constraints can delay new power generation, constrain industrial growth, and slow efforts to expand access to reliable and affordable electricity. Modern and stronger grids and regional interconnections can help countries make better use of their vast renewable resources, strengthen energy security, and support new industries and jobs.

The barriers are not primarily technological. A key barrier is turning long-term power plans into investable projects and connecting projects with affordable finance and delivery capacity. Governments, utilities, and regional institutions face policy, regulatory, and institutional constraints. At the same time, expertise and resources are spread across governments, development financial institutions, investors, utilities, technology providers and international organizations.

The Global Grids Accelerator will not create a new financing institution or replace existing initiatives. Its role is to help developing countries navigate this complex landscape by bringing together relevant policy, technical, financing and implementation partners around priority grid investments and helping move those priorities towards delivery.

Supporting country and regional priorities

In Africa, the Accelerator will build on continental, regional and national initiatives already underway, including the Continental Power System Master Plan, the African Single Electricity Market, the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, Mission 300 and the National Energy Compacts. Working with Member States, the African Union Commission, development banks and other regional and international partners, it will support priority grid investments and regional interconnections, and the infrastructure needed to expand reliable and affordable electricity.

In South-East Asia, the Accelerator will support regional and national initiatives including the ASEAN Power Grid, working with ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat, the ASEAN Centre for Energy, development banks and other partners to advance priority grid investments, regional interconnections and cross-border electricity trade.

The Government of Singapore, which will be serving as ASEAN Chair beginning in January 2027, said: "Modern, resilient, and interconnected grids are essential to strengthening energy security and enabling ASEAN's transition to a low-carbon future. Singapore will continue to work with our ASEAN partners to advance the ASEAN Power Grid and cross-border electricity trade, including overcoming regulatory hurdles and developing clear frameworks for cross-border infrastructure such as submarine power cables. International support can complement ASEAN-led efforts by helping translate our shared ambitions for regional connectivity into viable projects on the ground."

Across both regions, the Accelerator will support grid priorities identified by countries themselves, spanning policy and planning, project preparation, finance and investment, and implementation.

Coordinating support across the UN system

The Accelerator will bring together diverse capabilities from across the United Nations system to provide more coordinated and effective support for country and regional grid priorities. The UN Development

Programme (UNDP), the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) will convene the Accelerator working with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the UN Global Compact and other UN system entities to mobilize their respective policy, technical, financing and implementation capabilities.

Alexander De Croo, Administrator of UNDP, said: "Grids are the backbone of modern energy systems. They power hospitals, connect businesses, create jobs and make industrial growth possible. Yet too many clean energy projects remain stuck between national plans and investable pipelines. The Global Grids Accelerator will help countries in Africa and South-East Asia to help close that gap by bringing the right partners together around country-led priorities. Clean power only changes lives when it reaches people."

Jorge Moreira da Silva, Executive Director and Under-Secretary-General of UNOPS, said: "To move from ambition to impact, the energy transition requires delivery on the ground. UNOPS is proud to support the Global Grids Accelerator by bringing expertise in procurement, infrastructure and project management to turn national plans into clean reliable power for millions of people."

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, said: "The ASEAN Power Grid has the potential to be a pathfinder for Asia and the Pacific, demonstrating how cross-border grid interconnection can strengthen energy security, accelerate the clean energy transition and deliver shared economic benefits. The Global Grids Accelerator provides an important opportunity to bring together the partnerships, expertise and resources needed to translate such regional ambitions into accelerated implementation. By building on ASEAN's experience and enabling lessons and solutions to travel across borders, the Accelerator can help catalyse a new generation of interconnected, resilient and sustainable power systems across Asia and the Pacific and beyond."

Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary of UNECA, said: "The Global Grids Accelerator should be grounded in Africa's realities, build on existing continental and regional frameworks, and provide a practical pathway to rapidly expand and modernize electricity grids. It should contribute to a world better served by electricity to advance inclusive and sustainable development. The Accelerator should leverage and reinforce the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), African Single Electricity Market (AfSEM), and Continental Power Master Plan (CMP)."

Gerd Müller, Director General of UNIDO, said: "The grids we build in the future must do more than transmit clean power: they must strengthen resilience, reduce import dependence and create local value. Through the Accelerator, UNIDO will work with governments, regional institutions and utility companies to link grid development with industrial strategies from the outset, turn grid plans into investment pipelines for industrial development, mobilize capital, and build skills and technical capacity. This is how grid investment can drive green industrialization and lasting prosperity."

Damilola Ogunbiyi, CEO and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for SEforALL, said: "The Global Grids Accelerator is an important opportunity to bring the UN system focused on ensring stronger and more resilient grids that are critical to expanding electricity access, integrating growing shares of clean energy and supporting economic growth and industrial development. At SEforALL, we are proud to work with partners across the UN system to help countries turn their priorities into practical action."

The Accelerator will work with Member States and regional institutions, and engage multilateral development banks and international institutions, including the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the World Bank, the Climate Investment Fund (CIF), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Investors, utilities, technology providers and industry will also be engaged according to the needs of individual country and regional priorities.

Nadia Calviño, President of the European Investment Bank (EIB), said: "Electricity grids are the missing link in the energy transition. Without stronger, smarter and more interconnected networks, we cannot fully deliver on renewable energy, electrification, energy security and industrial competitiveness. The European Investment Bank welcomes efforts to accelerate investment in grid infrastructure and, as one of the world's largest financiers of energy infrastructure, stands ready to support this collective effort and help unlock the investment needed to deliver the Global Grids Accelerator's objectives."

Francesco La Camera, Director-General of IRENA, said: "I strongly welcome the launch of the Global Grids Accelerator. It comes at a critical moment. Renewable power is scaling at record speed, but grids are not keeping pace. We must urgently expand, modernise and invest in grids to build the electrified, renewable-powered energy system of the future. IRENA's analysis has consistently highlighted the widening gap between renewable deployment and grid development. If we do not close this gap, we risk holding back the enormous gains renewables can deliver for economic development, energy security and climate protection, particularly across Africa and South-East Asia. My message is clear: no grids, no energy transition. IRENA stands ready to fully support this important UN initiative by leveraging its data, knowledge, regional cooperation and private-sector partnerships like UNEZA, the Utilities for Net Zero Alliance."

Tariye Gbadegesin, CEO of the Climate Investment Fund (CIF), said: "The Global Grids Accelerator promises to focus much-needed attention on a vital link in the clean energy transition: smart, flexible and reliable systems to get that energy where it is needed. CIF is proud to be part of the solution by offering the world's only climate finance program fully dedicated to the modernisation and expansion of national energy systems."

Ajay Bhushan Pandey, Vice President of AIIB, said: "Modern, reliable, and interconnected electricity grids are essential to achieving a secure and inclusive clean energy transition. As a core area of AIIB's energy sector engagement, grid investments have reached approximately USD 2.7 billion in approved financing by mid-2026, supporting our members in integrating renewables, strengthening power system reliability, and expanding access to affordable electricity. AIIB welcomes the Global Grids Accelerator and its focus on Africa and Southeast Asia as an opportunity to turn national and regional grid priorities into bankable opportunities, help mobilize capital, and accelerate the delivery of resilient, technology-enabled power systems, with lessons and solutions that can benefit other regions as well."

"Modern and interconnected power systems are essential to advancing sustainable development, strengthening energy security, and unlocking the full potential of renewable energy across Asia and the Pacific. Through its support for the ASEAN Power Grid and recently launched Pan-Asia Grids Initiative, the Asian Development Bank is working with its members and partners to advance regional power connectivity and cross-border power trade. The Global Grids Accelerator provides an important platform to bring together governments, development partners, financiers, and technical institutions behind shared priorities. ADB stands ready to contribute its financing, knowledge, and convening capabilities to

help translate regional power grid ambitions into tangible investments that deliver sustainable and inclusive development outcomes," said **Wempi Saputra, Vice President of the Asian Development Bank**.

Dr. Sidi Ould Tah, President of the African Development Bank, said: "The Global Grids Accelerator will strengthen the pillars underpinning Mission 300 while facilitating connection of millions more people and businesses to reliable, affordable, and modern electricity. Thereby enhancing confidence in the goal of providing electricity access to an additional 300 million people by 2030 in Africa."

At the launch, UN Principals, Member State representatives from Africa and ASEAN, and senior representatives of international and development finance institutions will set out how the Accelerator will operate, identify an initial set of country and regional priorities for support and set out the capabilities partners can bring to them in Africa and South-East Asia.

They will also set out a series of milestones through the thirty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP31) in Antalya and into 2027.

The Global Grids Accelerator advances the Secretary-General's longstanding call for a faster, fairer transition to clean energy by tackling one of its most important infrastructure constraints. By helping developing countries to advance the grid investments needed to connect clean power, expand electricity access and enable green industrialization, the Accelerator aims to support countries in capturing more of the development benefits of the clean energy transition - including jobs, growth and greater energy security.

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More Information:
https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/climate-summit-2026

Media Contact:
David Pedroza | david.pedrozacastro@un.org