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HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON
ENERGY
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 2021

High-level Dialogue on Energy 2021

Technical Working Group III. Enabling SDGs through inclusive, just energy transitions

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to UN General Assembly resolution 74/225, the Secretary-General will convene a High-level Dialogue on Energy at the summit level during the 76th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2021 in New York. As the first global gathering on energy under the auspices of the UN General Assembly since 1981, the Dialogue will be a historic opportunity to accelerate SDG 7 action for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The Dialogue will be informed by inclusive, far-reaching preparatory processes and meetings at various levels. In order to draw on a broad range of expertise and perspectives, five multi-stakeholder Technical Working Groups will be formed on the five Themes of the High-Level Dialogue which are:

- I. Energy access,
- II. Energy transition,
- III. Enabling SDGs through inclusive, just energy transitions,
- IV. Innovation, technology and data, and
- V. Finance and investment.

OBJECTIVE

The Technical Working Group III will focus on developing a ***Theme Report on Enabling SDGs through Inclusive, Just Energy Transitions*** that presents a set of recommendations towards an action-oriented global roadmap for the achievement of SDG 7 by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. The report should be made in a succinct manner and can be widely consumed by a non-technical audience.

This group will focus on maximizing the positive impacts of inclusive and just energy transitions on the achievement of the SDGs, including gender equality, job creation, youth empowerment, agriculture and food systems, health, education, water, and sustainable production and consumption, through coordinated multi-sectoral interventions. The focus is to move away from ideas of ‘separation and competition’ to one of ‘interdependence and collective action.’

FOCUS

Energy lies at the heart of both the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7) represents a first-ever universal goal on energy, with five targets on universal energy access, renewable energy, energy efficiency and means of implementation to be achieved by 2030.

Access to sustainable energy is essential for the achievement of virtually all development goals, including poverty eradication (SDG 1), food security (SDG 2, and part of the water-energy-food nexus, and SDG 6), advances in health and education (SDGs 3 & 4), gender equity and female empowerment (SDG 5), decent work opportunities and sustainable economic growth (SDG 8 and SDG 11), innovation

(SDG 9), and the principle of “leaving no one behind” (SDG 10), in addition to climate action (SDG 13). Lack of access to energy services is a form, an outcome and a cause of poverty, and it is essential to couple policies to foster socio-economic development to sustainable energy policies. People deprived of modern energy are trapped in a reinforcing cycle with insufficient means to improve their living conditions and basic services, including lighting, education, health and fresh water to meet basic human needs. At the same time, poor households without energy access spend a significant share of their very limited income on expensive, unhealthy, unsafe, time-consuming and inefficient forms of energy. Modern, affordable energy is essential for breaking this cycle.”¹

Policymakers across the globe need also to recognize that reliance on depletable, polluting sources of energy and inefficient technology bears too high a cost on society and our planet to allow us to continue under business as usual. Achieving universal energy access and energy transitions for all will require significantly more efforts from governments to integrate policies in support of the 2030 Agenda and the ultimate goal of net-zero emissions in 2050 as a matter of priority.

Energy transitions are about people. To ensure that costs and benefits are fairly distributed, the global energy transformation has to be accompanied by policies enabling an inclusive, just transition. A just transition must generate opportunities to people, communities and countries through new economic initiatives, education and skills trainings and adequate social safety systems, to ensure that no one is left behind.

Commitments from stakeholders in energy and other sectors need to be backed up with strategic planning, capacity building and clear policies, as well as capable, accountable and dedicated institutions. Only then will we be able to leverage on the pivotal role sustainable energy plays in building resilient, global economies, helping people mitigate and adapt to the challenges that lie yet ahead of all of us in dealing with an ever more populous, warming planet.

The Theme Report aims to synthesize the evidence on some of the important cross-sectoral interlinkages between just sustainable energy transition and the ‘future we want’, presenting a set of clear recommendations to effectively leverage inclusive, just energy actions for advancing the SDGs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The outputs of the Technical Working Groups are to be guided by the following Principles:

- **Ambitious** – recommendations must contribute towards realising the SDG7 targets for 2030 and net-zero by 2050.
- **Innovative** – recommendations should consider resolving identified barriers in novel and fit-for-purpose ways.
- **Catalytic/ high impact** – recommendations should optimize for impact in the form of co-benefits, or through a significant contribution to overcoming the barriers identified.
- **Collaborative** – solutions that allow multiple market stakeholders to work together and create value for all partners including local communities should be prioritized.
- **Outcome focused** – interventions should take a targeted approach to responding to the barriers identified and advancing progress on the Theme.
- **Replicable at scale** – recommendations that can be replicated across geographies at scale, and possible across Themes should be prioritized.

¹ United Nations (2018) *Policy Briefs in Support of the First SDG7 Review at the UN High-Level Political Forum 2018, Accelerating SDG7 Achievement*. New York. Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18041SDG7_Policy_Brief.pdf.

KEY QUESTIONS

Experts and participants will be asked to provide their insights and suggestions on the following guiding questions:

1. In your perspective, what would be the most important recommendations that this report should present? Could you provide one or two specific points?
2. Acknowledging how closely interlinked energy is to all SDGs, how would you suggest we discuss such interlinkages, e.g. across all SDGs or focused on a select few? In your perspective, does the proposed outline (in annex) provide a useful starting point?
3. Given that there are currently no officially agreed indicators for measuring and tracking the impact of the interlinkages between the SDG7 and other related SDGs, what potential indicators would you suggest in this regard?
4. Do you have case examples/lessons-learnt to share that would highlight the energy-SDG interlinkages?

Timeframe

- 25 Feb. 2021: **First Meeting:** Introduction & Concept Note including objectives, deliverables, timeline.
- 10 March 2021: Annotated outline sent to Members
- 17 March 2021: Comments on the annotated outline from Members due
- 6 April 2021: First draft report sent to Members
- Week of 12 April 2021: **Second Meeting:** First draft, with a draft Matrix of Actions.
- Week of 26 April 2021: **Third Meeting:** Cross-Technical Working Groups discussions to ensure synergies and coherence.
- Week of 17 May 2021: **Forth Meeting:** Final report endorsement and next steps, with the final Matrix of Actions.

Annex: Draft Outline for the Theme Report for TWG 3

The Co-Leads of each thematic Technical Working Group, with inputs from all members of the group, will compile a Theme Report, of approximately 10,000 ~ 12,000 words, which provides **substantive recommendations with a plan of action for the Theme**, which, together with other Theme Reports, will contribute towards an action-oriented global roadmap towards the achievement of SDG 7 by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. The report should be made succinctly and can be widely consumed by a non-technical audience. Each report must include the following components.

1) Goal

*Present the overall goal and targets for **Theme III**, setting clear ambition in support of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the achievement of SDG 7 by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2050. Approx. 1,000 words in total. While energy's interlinkages with all SDGs will be fully recognised upfront, it is proposed that a focus will be placed on energy's links with the following:*

- a. Good health and wellbeing (SDG 3)
- b. Education and job creation (SDG 4 & 8)
- c. Gender equality and women empowerment (SDG5)
- d. Ending poverty and reduced inequalities (SDG 1 & 10)
- e. Responsible production and consumption (SDG 12)

2) Context

*Introductory section with a state of the sector assessment, providing background and current landscape of **Theme III**, with a focus on energy's links with the following issues (Approx. 1,000 words in total):*

- a. Good health and wellbeing (SDG 3)
- b. Education and job creation (SDG 4 & 8)
- c. Gender equality and women empowerment (SDG5)
- d. Ending poverty and reduced inequalities (SDG 1 & 10)
- e. Responsible production and consumption (SDG 12)

3) Challenges

*Identification of critical barriers to progress in **Theme III**. These may be categorised, e.g., as political, policy and regulatory, financial, market design, and/or behavioural, and levels of urgency can be attached to each barrier, with due consideration to the different circumstances of countries and regions. Approx. 2,000 words in total.*

4) Recommendations/Plan of Action

A proposed menu of ambitious and concrete solutions and policy options that will contribute towards a global roadmap towards the achievement of SDG 7 by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050; and respond to the challenges identified in Section (3), taking into account unique and diverse challenges faced across counties/regions, with a focus on energy's links with the following issues. Provision of concrete examples of transformational action, including where possible implementation details and potential co-benefits. Approx. 5,000-6,000 words in total.

- a. Good health and wellbeing (SDG 3)
- b. Education and job creation (SDG 4 & 8)
- c. Gender equality and women empowerment (SDG5)
- d. Ending poverty and reduced inequalities (SDG 1 & 10)
- e. Responsible production and consumption (SDG 12)

5) Indicators

Proposal of concrete indicators that can be used to track integrated progress in SDG 7 in combination with other SDGs.

6) Impacts

Assessment of catalytic potential impacts of the proposed recommendations on SDG7 in support of the SDGs and net-zero emissions by 2050. Approx. 1,000-2,000 words in total.

Case studies (Boxes)

Examples of existing policies, initiatives and programmes that highlight integrated progress in SDG 7 in combination with other SDGs.

References
