



REGIONAL MEETING ON SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR ASIA-PACIFIC LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES KATHMANDU, NEPAL | 22-23 MARCH 2017

Achieving Sustainable Energy: A Win-Win Scenario for Asia-Pacific's Least Developed Countries

PRESS RELEASE

Kathmandu, 22 March 2017 - The Asia-Pacific region is undergoing marked changes to its economy, energy consumption patterns and energy mix and it is critical that least developed countries (LDCs) can effectively transition to sustainable sources of energy and be able to join the rapid pace of development and progress being achieved in the region.

At a two day meeting of sustainable energy experts which began today in Kathmandu, participants will discuss the means to accelerate and prioritize efforts to close the "last mile access" to energy for the Asia-Pacific LDCs. While formidable barriers including under developed local capital markets, weak policy frameworks and limited capacity are evident, there are significant opportunities for LDCs to leapfrog over traditional fossil-fuel energy sources and rapidly transition to low carbon economies focused on renewable energy and energy efficiency. Energy is included in the eight priority areas for action in the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs which recognizes that reliable and affordable access to energy is a growth and development enabler; essential for private sector development, promoting industrialization, expansion of trade and enhancing productive capacities. Similarly, universal access to affordable modern energy plays a crucial role in enhancing opportunities for education, health and gender empowerment.

"Sustainable energy can create a win-win situation for LDCs to achieve not only Sustainable Development Goal 7 but also the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the ambitions of the Paris climate change agreement" said Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. "The Asia-Pacific's least developed countries are well placed to rapidly transition to renewable energy sources but this requires a confluence of efforts by all stakeholders including governments, development partners, private sector, international financial institutions and civil society to summon the right blend of best practices, innovative financing instruments and creative solutions that can build momentum towards sustainable energy in these countries. We have to deploy grid, mini grid and off grid solutions."

The regional meeting is being organized by the Government of Nepal, the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing

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States (UN-OHRLLS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Over the next two days government representatives from Asia-Pacific least developed countries, development partners, the United Nations, private sector and civil society will focus on practical, workable solutions in areas including access to finance, formulating energy investment and business plans, benefitting from global energy initiatives, project preparation skills to attract investment and partnerships for sustainable energy.

“Nepal has made a remarkable achievement in terms of access to electricity. It has increased the access from 20% in 2000 to almost 80% in 2016. The major contributor for this is hydropower and in recent days it also focuses in other renewable energy resources,” said Honorable Dr. Arbind Kumar Mishra of the National Planning Commission of Nepal. “This includes both the on-grid and off-grid energy access. The major challenge that needs to be addressed is the contribution of energy from traditional firewood, agricultural residue and petroleum is still above 90% which needs to be shifted to modern energy in the form of electricity. The per capita electrical energy consumption is merely 140 kWh, which is the lowest in the region. There is immediate need to scale up per capita energy consumption. This can be achieved by replacing domestic consumption of electricity and industrial growth to increase the livelihood of the people. There are some initiatives taken in recent days, however its paced needs to be accelerated.”

Only 34 per cent of the 900 million people living in the 48 LDCs have access to electricity. From 2010 to 2012, energy access in Asia-Pacific least developed countries grew 3.2 per cent on average per year, from 52.8 per cent of the population having access in 2010 to 56.2 per cent in 2012. There is a huge disparity between the urban and rural areas. To achieve the global goals on energy in Asia-Pacific LDCs, it will be essential to act quickly in creating enabling environment for investments from both public and private sources. Achieving sustainable energy for all by 2030, an objective that is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sustainable Energy For All (SE4All) agenda will require innovation, deployment of modern technologies and increased investments.

The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States has been actively advocating for improving access and investments to sustainable energy sources in LDCs as a means to not only achieve global development goals but also to develop local economies and livelihoods in a sustainable manner. The Office is also supporting the establishment of the Technology Bank for LDCs which will build capacities in Science, Technology and Innovation in LDCs including in the renewable energy sector. The resolution establishing the Technology Bank for LDCs was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2016.

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Meeting Webpage:

<http://unohrlls.org/event/regional-meeting-asia-pacific-lDCs-sustainable-energy/>

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