Keynote address
by
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High Representative
And
Under-Secretary-General
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States


High-Level Briefings and Interactive Dialogues:
Session 3 on Policy Challenges and Opportunities to Reach the Goals of the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014-2024

Venue: ECOSOC Chamber

UNHQ, New York
24 May 2019
11:35 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates
friends and colleagues,

I thank Mr. LIU Zhenmin, our Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, for convening this important meeting.

Our meeting marks the midpoint of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014-2024.

It is not this audience I need to remind how energy truly is at the heart of the energy needed to make our SDGs reality for all!

As you know, OHRLLS is a voice for 91 vulnerable countries around the world.

For the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. Geographically this stretches across islands in the Pacific to landlocked countries in Central Asia, and to least developed countries in Africa.

This means about 1.1 billion people at high risk not to be included in our goals for making Agenda 2030 a reality for ALL.

All countries face complex, unique development challenges at the core of which is their struggle to accelerate access to sustainable energy and to realize their energy transition. This is a must for sustainable but also resilient development in light of the often drastic to life-threatening exposure these countries experience with accelerating climate change impact.

Earlier this morning we heard of progress made in achieving the SDG 7 targets.

I am sure you all just I am are encouraged by the progress made.

Our challenge now is to ensure that the vulnerable countries, the most vulnerable people also join the strong global momentum that has developed around sustainable energy. It truly is about inclusion and their fundamental human right to development.

It is alarming that the 20 least-electrified countries in the world are all LDCs.

The small island countries especially are highly dependent on fossil fuel imports and have some of the highest electricity tariffs in the world.

This is all the more perplexing as the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS all have abundant natural renewable energy resources.

This clearly shows that more needs to be done to turn the promise of SDG7 into a reality also in vulnerable countries.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
This is a very critical year with the High-level Mid-term Review of the SAMOA Pathway. The formal review meeting takes place on Friday, 27 September 2019, here in New York. Yes, please do note in your agendas already!

This meeting takes on great importance because we will review progress made in addressing the priorities of SIDS through the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

Leading up to the meeting, we made every effort to have maximum participation and held a very informative and telling round of 3 regional preparatory meetings.

They were held in the AIMS, the Pacific and Caribbean regions – which have identified the priorities of SIDS in the further implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

Energy received considerable focus in all preparatory meetings.

The need to scale up investment and enhance the enabling environment for expanding renewable energy in SIDS is high on the agenda.

So, I very much hope that the Midterm Review will provide new momentum for strengthened partnerships in the sustainable energy sector in SIDS.

Similarly, later this year, in early December, the high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action will take place.

Sustainable energy plays a particularly driving role in spurring socio-economic development of landlocked developing countries. Investment in energy infrastructure, along with information and communications technology, is a key priority for LLDCs. It is the driver to structurally transform economies from being dependant on primary commodities to producers of manufacturing goods. Sustainable energy will also help reduce the high trade costs that LLDCs face.

To contribute to the upcoming midterm reviews and as part of the work of the SDG7 Technical Advisory Group, OHRLLS has prepared policy briefs on small island developing states and landlocked developing countries.

The two policy briefs we launched yesterday provide action-oriented policy recommendations for SIDS and landlocked Developing Countries for the next 5 years to promote energy connectivity and energy security.

The policy briefs highlight that going forward, vulnerable countries will need continued, strong support from the full range of development partners.

We definitely need to focus much more on how to strengthen private sector engagement in the renewable energy sector.

The private sector is a key partner in the efforts towards realizing sustainable development aspirations and mobilizing required funds in all vulnerable countries.

Excellencies,
We have a strong and full of hope global vision - the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Climate Change Agreement, the Programmes of Actions for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS!

I am confident that by putting new technologies and new innovative financing mechanisms to their fullest and most practical uses we together can open real windows of opportunity to turn words to action and impact.

My confidence in the "we can do " is even stronger by seeing you all here this morning, equally committed for action and equally determined to end energy poverty.

If there is one area where we can bring rapid, truly changing transformation to people’s lives, it is in the area of sustainable, modern energy.

Thank you.