Remarks
by
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Energy Action Forum
“Panel C: The Current State of SDG7: Energy Access”

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**Introductory Remarks**

It is good to be with you and to me being here at the center for SOCIAL JUSTICE is at the heart of what we will talk about. Equitable access to sustainable energy as SDG 7 is about is such a key driver. Now, the function, the office I represent focuses on those 1 billion people most at risk of EXCLUSION - being left behind.

We " love " acronyms. so it is the more than 1 billion peoples of 91 countries in the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. This represents close to 50 per cent of the UN's member states !!

The mean average rate of energy is estimated at just 51% average in LDCs. This is an average and the sad reality is it remains far less than that in some countries and let me not even mention the situation in rural areas.

The urgency of sustainable energy access is there if we want to realize so many linked SDGs and above all achieve national development goals by 2030. And let me not even dwell on what this means for climate change action...

In a way I could say access to sustainable energy is like a heart fuelling the linked arteries of the SDG " body " , is the heart to release vulnerable economies from fossil fuel dependency , technological exclusion into getting a shot at becoming sustainable and inclusive societies and economies. Yes, so of course energy access is a centrepiece of the work of the UN-OHRLLS.
**Question 2: What are the key components to dramatically advance energy access across the world, in particular the least developed countries?**

This begs the question- what do we mean by dramatic? Do we talk accelerating timeframes, is it access? What is clear is: business as usual will not work and we need to work on both angles.

One in two persons in LDCs are still without access. And the ones who have access often struggle with affordability and reliability. And I have not even touched the issue of what kind of energy we need access to and that is so critical to climate change and sustainability!

The key drivers - and they all are of equal importance here I see as: capacity building, access to finance and technology and increased focus on outreach and resilience of infrastructure.

capacity building in a multi-stakeholder approach

New technologies are bringing energy to areas formerly out of reach of traditional grids.

Energy efficiency is a key driver across the sustainable development agenda.

To ensure the least developed countries get included we must ramp up capacity building. The needs range from policy and legislative frameworks, to securing finance and technology, to building infrastructure, awareness raising and how to
prepare bankable projects. These needs go from national to local levels and demand a multi-stakeholder approach between public, private and civil society stakeholders.

Pulling together all players from the off grid, mini-grid to on grid, private sector, national and regional development banks, multilateral banks, local investment pools to CSO, different line ministries and power utilities will be the key to achieving lasting results.

**Second**, adequate and TIMELY funding and leveraging blended financing: least developed countries will need faster and strengthened support from their partners. Donors must deliver on promised funding in order to meet severe funding gaps. Blended, flexible financing approaches must prioritize viable projects and optimize a mix of private, public, and concessional funding for least-cost solutions that adapt to risk profiles.

AND, without compromising on transparency and accountability, we must find much more expeditious ways of accessing finance and then working with it.

**TIME IS NOT ON OUR SIDE.**

**Third**, resilience is critical to advancing and protecting long term access. Energy systems must be resilient not just to advance but to protect advancements in access and development. Low-resilience energy systems will be insufficient for long term energy access in an era when climate disasters can instantly reverse progress and push vulnerable communities back into energy poverty. We are already counting the
consequences everywhere in the world – from low rainfall in Zambia a few years ago, earlier this year in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi during cyclones Idai and Kenneth, in the Bahamas only weeks ago. And, not just in the countries of my Office – in Europe, in Puerto Rico, in Houston, Texas, we have witnessed the same struggle.

Building resilience should take into account:

- Renewable-based systems that do not make energy access a hostage of fuel;
- Local renewable sources, investing in systems that can leverage local conditions to ensure long term reliability;
- A diverse portfolio of resources to diversify risk and achieve least-cost pathways.

All countries OHRLLS advocates for have the political resolve for energy transition. They see the urgency, they are eager to scale-up and speed-up their energy initiatives. We need to extend faster and strengthened support to these countries to dramatically advance energy access.

**Question 3: Considering especially rural areas are lagging behind in terms of energy access, how do we ensure to leave no one behind on this transition?**

According to 2017 data the grim reality is that in 15 LDCs rural access remains below 10%. This is unacceptable.
A right combination of grid mini- and off-grid solutions will be vital to solving the current gap in rural areas.

Decentralised systems are essential to extend access into rural or hard-to-reach areas where the main grid does not reach as a result of logistical access or cost equations.

Decentralising under a coherent territorial approach is key including to sustainability! Experience has already shown that fuel-based infrastructure simply will not reach the poorest populations due to poor supply incentives, customer affordability, and infrastructure capacity. This is why sustainability is a core part of SDG7.

**QUESTION (5) What existing organizations and formal collaborative groups can we support to accelerate current initiatives and increase coordination of current players and initiatives?**

Several global and regional groups provide support to countries to accelerate their energy transition, SEforALL, IRENA to mention just two.

UN-Energy plays a key role in coordinating UN system’s support.

OHRLLS works with all of them and over the past months, we have worked on the preparation of a Malawi Sustainable Energy Investment Study. With this study we
want to zoom in at country level and analyse how well-coordinated and strategically planned action could spur investment in the sustainably energy sector and put the country on track for achieving SDG7 by 2030.

The study articulates how Malawi – a country with very low electrification rates - can attract and generate the required investment to achieve SDG7, and leapfrog to clean energy. The expectation is to see this example replicated and gathering multi-stakeholder support for the implementation.

To conclude, vulnerable countries often highlight that they need stronger capacity building support and advice on how to access various climate funds and other existing funding mechanisms.

I’m very pleased to share with you that both LDCs and SIDS are launching tomorrow at the Climate Action Summit their vision for developing a resilient and carbon neutral pathway for their energy sectors and building a strong coalition of stakeholders to support them.

**Closing remarks (1 minute)**

To me the big social justice challenge we have is to ensure that those least responsible for climate change are not also the ones suffering its gravest consequences.
Over the coming days, we must keep that in mind and commit to tangible and fast action in support of those already for too long left behind.

As our youths reminds us: enough talk - do something!

Our responsibility is to get result and for that we must work together and forge even stronger partnerships, ensuring that the energy transition reaches the poorest and most vulnerable communities.