

KEY MESSAGES FOR POLICY MAKERS SDG7 TAG Policy Briefs

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Colleagues;

At the start of the Decade of Action, the SDG7 Technical Advisory Group still believe that SDG 7 is within reach - but only if we all make the right decisions, enhance our ambitions and take immediate action to scale up our efforts.

We are at a possible turning point. Decisions we take in the coming months will seriously impact our ability to reach SDG7.

The COVID-19 pandemic can either widen the existing sustainable energy access gaps or accelerate the path towards achieving SDG 7, depending on the priorities of national recovery efforts.

The choice is ours!

As countries develop policies and take actions to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, they need to safeguard past gains in terms of more sustainable energy systems. Greater improvements to address the needs of a post-pandemic world that leaves no one behind should also be aimed for.

Getting all stakeholders to step up, focus, and make the right decisions will determine whether we will achieve SDG7 or not.

Colleagues

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We, as co-facilitators, are proud to present the third edition of the SDG7 Policy Briefs to inform this year's review of progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the High-Level Political Forum in July 2020.

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In the Policy Briefs, as can be seen on the slide, we provide Key Messages for Policy Makers how to energize the Decade of Action for the SDGs and our efforts to reach the Paris Agreement targets. We also focus on how we can advance SDG7 in the face of COVID-19. We are also grateful to the regional UN commissions that have provided their perspectives. Finally, we address how to strengthen interlinkages with energy and the other SDGs.

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Now, let me present the overarching key messages from the SDG7 TAG:

- **First, we must maintain global momentum to accelerate a shift towards decarbonised, climate resilient energy systems and universal energy access.** Failure to transition quickly to more accessible, affordable and sustainable energy systems will reinforce weaknesses in our energy systems demonstrated by COVID-19. It will also jeopardise the fight against climate change and threaten human well-being, ecosystems and economies for centuries. Therefore, we need political leadership, determination and unity against climate change even as we mobilise against the pandemic.
- **Second, although the world continues to make progress on SDG 7, overall efforts are falling well short of the scale required.** Efforts must be intensified, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa which accounts for 70% of the global deficit. Urgent action will be required to expand electricity access for health facilities to address COVID-19 emergencies. Major initiatives, political prioritisation and substantial investments will be needed to achieve universal access to clean cooking solutions. Energy-efficiency must be made a policy and investment priority. Current costly energy practices in humanitarian assistance will need to be changed to deliver sustainable energy solutions to refugees. And we need to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into all energy actions to advance the SDGs.

- **Third, far more needs to be done to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 in pursuit of the 1.5°C goal.** Current ambition levels related to renewable energy and energy efficiency do not match the efforts needed for meeting the mitigation targets set out in the Paris Agreement. Countries need to set more ambitious targets and policies in their NDCs. There is an urgent need to support the phase-out of coal through clean energy plans and targets and remove inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, supported by just transition strategies. Building interconnected energy systems could also accelerate energy sector decarbonisation.
- **Fourth, post COVID-19 recovery strategies present opportunities for economies to become greener and more resilient while working towards SDG 7 targets.** Priorities of national economic stimulus packages and global responses to support those most in need will determine the path towards achieving SDG7. **My co-facilitator will provide additional remarks on this issue.**
- **Fifth, we call on all Member States and other stakeholders to drive the global energy transformation forward by forming transformational partnerships.** In dealing with the pandemic, strong political commitments by governments and multilateral cooperation will be more crucial than ever to maintain the momentum for SDG 7. Multi-stakeholder initiatives play a central role in accelerating action. UN entities, international organisations, and multilateral development banks, as well as businesses, civil society and other stakeholders, must step up and strengthen their efforts to support the implementation of the SDGs.

We also provide more detailed recommendations which can be found in our report. We encourage all of you to download the report.

The COVID-19 pandemic is spreading human suffering, **de-stabilising** the global economy and **up-ending** the lives of billions of people in an unprecedented way.

While COVID-19 is the most urgent threat facing humanity **today**, **poverty and climate change** remain greater threats in the long term. We must not lose sight of these overwhelming challenges in our current responses to the pandemic.

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Even before this pandemic, the world was not on track to achieve most of the Sustainable Development Goals, as the SDG 7 custodians told us today.

As we address the current crisis, the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement **must** remain at the centre of our efforts **to recover**, so that we move forward **in a better and greener way**, leaving no one behind.

Governments that integrate their responses to COVID-19, together with their SDG targets and **long-range efforts to combat climate change**, will create more resilient societies with stronger health systems, fewer people living in extreme poverty, more gender equality, and a healthier natural environment.

Sustainable energy **should** play a central role in countries' efforts to recover from the COVID-19 crisis, in ways that make them better and stronger.

Energy services are essential for fighting the pandemic – **including for powering healthcare facilities and keeping medicines cold**, supplying clean water for handwashing, and providing communication services to connect people, share information, and facilitate education **during** social distancing. Expanding these services through increased investments in sustainable energy solutions, **will enable** countries to respond to the pandemic **while also** creating significant green jobs, empowering women, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and advancing other Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The pandemic can either widen the existing **sustainable energy access gaps** or accelerate the path towards achieving SDG 7, depending on the priorities of national recovery efforts. The SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group is pleased to offer a **set of recommendations** that may help **governments' responses** to become better and stronger, while also advancing the SDGs and putting the world on a **1.5 °C pathway**.

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Let me briefly highlight some of these:

- First, integrate sustainable energy solutions into COVID-19 responses and **recovery strategies** to help economies become greener and more resilient – based on the **SDG 7** targets;
- Second, use enhanced NDCs as a framework for green investments in **economic recovery packages**;
- Third, **prioritise** modern energy services which also saves lives, powered by a mixture of on and off-grid and clean cooking solutions,
- Fourth, invest in renewables and energy efficiency to create green jobs;
- Fifth, phase out inefficient fossil fuel **subsidies**;
- Sixth, adopt just transition **strategies** to support the phase-out of coal through clean energy plans and targets;
- Seventh, support vulnerable groups of people to leave no one behind; and promote a more gender-equal response and recovery;
- And finally, strengthen **international cooperation** and **multilateralism**.

We are very grateful to all of the Technical Advisory Group members and the SDG 7 custodians, for their **hard work**. We are proud of the active engagement **in our work by colleagues** from a number of organisations – **as can be seen on the slide**.

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This collaborative work – combined with the diverse operational experience, expertise and viewpoints of **everyone involved** – provides a model for strengthened coordination and coherence, within and beyond the UN development system.

We also **wish to acknowledge the leadership** provided by Under-Secretary-General, Liu, **and** the dedicated UNDESA team **that has** supported our efforts.

We sincerely hope that Member States and all stakeholders—including the international organisations, multilateral development banks, businesses and civil society groups—will find the analysis and recommendations useful as they review and **renew** their commitments to achieving **the SDGs**.

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The time to act is now. We are **counting** on everyone to work together to make the achievement of **SDG 7** a reality.

Thank you for your attention!