PRESS RELEASE

SDG 7 Advisory Group Urges Energy Policies and Actions that Support Broader Sustainability Goals to Maximize Impact across Multiple Global Crises

New York, 1 June — An advisory group of energy experts is calling for governments and decision-makers to prioritize their energy policies in ways that address the interlinked global challenges reflected across the Sustainable Development Goals, to maximize impact. This work on "energy interlinkages", the group notes, is particularly relevant at a time when the world faces a growing climate emergency and continuing impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a triple crisis of energy, food and finance arising from the conflict in Ukraine. The advisory group is also calling for better data and identifying potential indicators in order to measure and assess the benefits of such policy actions that aim to generate multiple benefits across sectors. Analysis of regional energy trends and priorities is included as well.

The Technical Advisory Group for Sustainable Development Goal 7 today released this year's edition of the SDG7 Policy Briefs, to provide recommendations for how to achieve clean, affordable energy for all, recognizing that tackling the interlinked crises under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change will require massive investment in clean energy.

"Strong action towards achieving SDG 7 is needed today more than ever," said Mr. LIU Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. "We must urgently counteract the recent slow-down in progress on SDG 7 with swift implementation of the outcomes of the High-level Dialogue on Energy, including the Global Roadmap for Accelerated SDG 7 Action. Sustainable energy is key to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. For energy action to deliver its much-needed co-benefits, we must gain a better understanding of the interlinkages among energy, climate action and sustainability."

These concerns were echoed by the Co-facilitators of the SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group, Ms. Sheila Oparaocha, Coordinator of ENERGIA International Network on Gender and Sustainable and Energy, and Mr. Hans Olav Ibrekk, Special Envoy for Climate and Security, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In their joint Foreword to the Policy Briefs, they stated that, while energy action is needed more than ever in our current situation, "we are actually losing pace towards achievement of SDG 7.... We must urgently step-up action to ensure that energy fulfils its key role in the attainment of the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. To do this, we need a better understanding of energy's interlinkages with other SDGs."

Addressing energy's links with other SDGs

The advisory group specifically examined the data available and potential indicators to measure the role that energy plays in education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5) and sustainable land use (SDG 15), among the goals that will be under in-depth consideration by this year's High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July.

In these three key areas, the group noted, for example, that one out of four primary schoolchildren -- over 186 million students in total -- attend schools without any kind of electricity. Women are 9 to 23 percentage points more likely to gain employment outside the home once they have access to electricity. Clean energy solutions can reduce environmental degradation and deforestation, but investment in renewables needs to take into account multiple needs for land and water use at the community level.

The Policy Briefs draw on the latest data issued today in *Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report,* showing that 733 million people still lack access to electricity globally, and 2.4 billion people -- one-third of the world population -- still lack clean cooking fuels and technologies, with the pace of progress slowing in recent years because of disruptions by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the growing complexity of serving remote and poorer people. The Briefs call on governments and others to reverse the decline in investment in clean energy in developing countries for the second year in a row, noting that a tremendous effort by all stakeholders will be needed to turn the tide on energy and climate change. Overall, it is estimated that annual global investment in clean energy must triple by 2030.

Addressing regional priorities to accelerate just, inclusive energy transitions

Regional breakdowns and analyses are included in the Policy Briefs, as prepared by the relevant UN regional commissions, to provide insights and advice to decision-makers in those parts of the world. Highlights include the following:

Africa remains the least energized region, accounting for close to 80% of the 760 million people globally without access to electricity and 36% of the 2.6 billion people without access to clean cooking. Despite its abundant clean energy resources potential, deployment of renewables on the continent remains very small, with Africa's share of global electricity generation from hydropower, wind and solar power being only 3.3%, 1.2%, and 1.1%, respectively. Less than 2% of global clean energy investments flow to Africa, mainly in just a few countries.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the pace of energy intensity improvement is slowing, falling seriously short of the global target. Progress toward achieving universal access to electricity is well on-track, but recent years have seen a decline in the total number of people in the region making the transition to clean cooking, reversing a previously improving trend. Modern renewable energies, particularly wind and solar, are helping renewables make small gains as a share of final energy consumption.

In the Arab region, renewable energy penetration rates continue to lag other regions, with only 4.6% of the region's total final energy consumption covered by renewables, mainly from traditional biomass**.** Modern renewables, however, continue to grow as their costs fall. Access to electricity in the Arab region was around 90% in 2020 with about 42 million people not having electricity access.

For the ECE region, the most significant development has been the Ukraine crisis and its consequences for energy prices and energy security. Importers in the region will increasingly replace gas with other alternatives, which will entail faster growth of renewables but could also result in a reversion to existing infrastructure based on coal. Generally, the western areas of the ECE region have seen considerable investment in renewable energy technology, but in the eastern areas there has been more limited activity.

Latin America continues to make progress in the implementation of SDG 7, but the negative impacts on the region's economy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have limited the progress made. Overall, electricity access is 97.4%, but rural areas remained disadvantaged. In many LAC countries, more than 10% of the population still does not have access to clean cooking. The region has continued to make significant progress on renewable energy, increasing its share in the primary energy supply from 30% (2019) to 33% (2020). This exceeds the global average in primary supply, which is only 13%.

In the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), access to energy is moving at a slower pace and falling behind actual needs to achieve structural transformation, although electricity access improved steadily between 2010 and 2020, from 33% to 55%. As of 2020, 478 million people in LDCs still had no access to electricity, and over 860 million people relied on harmful fuels for cooking. Excluding traditional uses of biomass, the share of renewables in total final energy consumption reached 10.3 % in 2019, down slightly from 10.7 % in 2010. Non-renewable capacity continues to expand faster than renewables to meet growing energy demands in LDCs. LDCs received 25% of international financial flows to developing countries in support of clean energy in 2019, an increase from 21% in 2018, but hiding an actual 9% decrease from US$3.0 billion to US$ 2.7 billion.

The Policy Briefs are compiled by the multi-stakeholder SDG7 Technical Advisory Group, composed of 40 experts from Governments, UN and international organizations, and other stakeholders, convened by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). The complete Policy Briefs, membership of the Advisory Group and more information can be found online.