



# ACCELERATING SDG 7 ACHIEVEMENT SUMMARY FOR POLICYMAKERS

**7** AFFORDABLE AND  
CLEAN ENERGY





# Summary for Policymakers

Energy is central to the achievement of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change. The *Key Messages for Policymakers* presented below are aimed at informing the review of progress on Sustainable Development Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (SDG 7) by the UN High-Level Political Forum in July 2018. These Key Messages are drawn from and build on a series of *SDG 7 Policy Briefs* developed by the multi-stakeholder SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group convened by UN DESA.

1. **We must step up.** Without urgent action, the world will fall short of achievement of SDG 7 and consequently other SDGs. About a billion people currently live without electricity, which significantly limits their development opportunities. Almost three billion people lack access to clean-cooking solutions and are exposed to dangerous levels of air pollution, which results in millions of deaths each year, mostly among women and children. Although power generation using renewable energy is expanding rapidly, little progress has been made on integrating renewable energy into end-use applications in buildings, industry and transport. Meanwhile, the current rate of improvement in energy efficiency (2.2 per cent per year) is less than the 2.7 per cent per year needed to meet the global target. Financial flows, including public and private investments in energy, are also falling short of what is needed.
2. **SDG 7 is within reach.** The transformation of the world's energy systems is already under way and being accelerated by advances in technologies, rapid cost declines, strategic shifts in policies, regulatory frameworks and investments, new business models, concerns for energy security, increased cooperation and sharing of best practices. Capitalizing on this momentum to support achievement of SDG 7 requires strengthened political will, increased levels of investment and action by all stakeholders to scale up the deployment of renewable energy technologies, increase energy efficiency and make clean energy more affordable than ever for the benefit of all.
3. **Achieving SDG 7 will catalyse actions to combat climate change and reach the other SDGs** on poverty eradication, gender equality, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, food security, health, education, sustainable cities and communities, clean water and sanitation, jobs, innovation, transport, and refugees and other situations of displacement. Special emphasis should be placed on mainstreaming gender considerations into all SDG-related energy actions, as well as climate change responses, and on promoting energy services for productive end uses to enhance development benefits.
4. **A Global Agenda for Accelerated SDG 7 Action is proposed as a foundation for concerted action** by all stakeholders in support of SDG 7. The Global Agenda presents a set of priority actions to be taken by all stakeholders to accelerate the achievement of SDG 7, based on the analysis in the Policy Briefs and on experiences from existing efforts to date, recognizing the special challenges facing those countries that are most vulnerable and the furthest behind, including least developed countries, small island developing States and land-locked developing countries. This Agenda also aims to better link SDG 7 actions and results with existing intergovernmental processes related to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Key elements of the Global Agenda for Accelerated SDG 7 Action are presented below.
5. **All stakeholders should step up and focus their efforts in support of SDG 7** by forming partnerships and jointly translating the Global Agenda into specific, strategic, bold and time-bound plans of action, including through facilitation of efforts by the UN Secretariat including the UN Regional Commissions and in coordination with the UN development system, international organizations, multilateral development banks, businesses, civil society and other stakeholders. Efforts of the multi-stakeholder SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group should be strengthened to support such actions. Future global milestones in addition to the High-Level Political Forum, including the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties and the Secretary-General's Climate Change Summit 2019, present key global platforms for sharing lessons and inspiring further actions. The UN Decade on Sustainable Energy for All 2014-2024 should also be leveraged to spur global momentum.

## The Global Agenda for Accelerated SDG 7 Action

### Objective

The Global Agenda for Accelerated SDG 7 Action is presented as a foundation for concerted action by all stakeholders in support of achieving SDG 7. It presents a set of priority actions to be taken by stakeholders to accelerate the achievement of SDG 7, based on the analysis in the SDG 7 Policy Briefs developed by the multi-stakeholder SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group convened by UN DESA, as well as experiences from existing actions to date, and recognizing the special challenges facing the countries that are the most vulnerable and the furthest behind. It also aims to better link SDG 7 actions and results with the existing intergovernmental processes at the UN related to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. By bringing all stakeholders together, it is also intended to increase coordination, reduce duplications and enhance synergies.

### Priority Actions

The Global Agenda aims to catalyse concerted, strategic, bold, time-bound and measurable actions in support of SDG 7 by 2030, grouped into four interlinked categories:

#### I. Advancing SDG 7 implementation

- *Make clean-cooking solutions a top political priority*, and put in place specific policies, cross-sectoral plans and public investments, supported by renewed game-changing multi-stakeholder partnerships.
- *Close the electricity access gap* by establishing detailed plans of action nationally, regionally and globally to “leave no one behind”, backed by determined leadership, targeted policies and regulations, multi-stakeholder partnerships, bottom-up actions and increased investment in both on- and off-grid solutions. Cross-border grid connections, on-grid renewable energy solutions and decentralized options will all be required to respond to the differing needs of countries and regions.
- *Accelerate the pace of transition towards renewable energy*, especially in end-use sectors such as transport, buildings and industry, to combat climate change and realize substantial economic, health and environmental benefits.
- *Harness the potential of decentralized renewable energy solutions*, which are key to universal energy access and empowerment of people, companies and communities. The rapid growth of decentralized energy systems challenges the structure and economy of the energy sector and requires a new policy and regulatory framework to fulfil its transformational potential.
- *Scale up investments in energy efficiency across all sectors of the economy*, supported by well-designed, evidence-based policies (e.g., building codes, minimum energy performance standards, energy performance labels, cost-reflective energy tariffs and fuel economy requirements), as well as by regional, national and local action plans (with effective enforcement and monitoring).
- *Double the financing for SDG 7 globally*, from the current annual level of about US\$ 500 billion to US\$ 1 to 1.2 trillion per year until 2030. Public finance must be designed to catalyse far larger amounts of private financing. Climate finance should be tapped, as it could effectively contribute to the achievement of SDG 7 as well as the Paris Agreement. Use of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies should be phased out. Special attention needs to be given to those countries, regions, communities and people that are currently left out, including in the advancement of decentralized energy and clean-cooking solutions.
- *Scale up capacity-building and education*, with renewed, cross-sectoral approaches, to develop human and institutional capacities and required skills in support of universal energy access and energy sector transformation. A network of national, regional and global institutions should be mobilized to facilitate needs assessments, deliver trainings and other capacity-building activities, and develop robust monitoring arrangements. Refresh and realign the curriculum in education institutions to better respond to SDG 7 and other goals.
- *Enhance innovation systems, including research, development, deployment and diffusion* in the design and operation of the whole energy system, and especially in the end-use sectors of transport, industry and buildings, through increased public and private investments and increased international cooperation.
- *Invest in data collection systems and data analysis* to build institutional capacities at the national level and ensure effective monitoring of the SDG 7 targets, including, as needed, through improved, policy-relevant indicators. Joint work by the global custodians of SDG 7 indicators should be strengthened in order to present a coherent SDG 7 tracking report.

## II. Strengthening interlinkages between SDG 7 and other SDGs

- *Harness the potential of cross-sectoral interlinkages to maximize multiple benefits and synergies* by promoting energy as an enabler for all the SDGs. Special attention should be given to the interlinkages between energy and poverty eradication, reduction of inequalities, gender equality, jobs, climate change, food security, health, education, clean water and sanitation, sustainable cities and communities, innovation, transport, industrialization, peace and security, refugees and other situations of displacement. Risks of trade-offs, such as among sustainable energy, food security and water, will have to be managed, while harnessing the opportunities for synergies.
- *A unified approach is required to achieve SDG 7 and meet the goal of the Paris Agreement simultaneously.* Decarbonization of the world's energy systems and attainment of the targets of SDG 7, including ensuring universal access to modern energy by 2030, are mutually reinforcing and must be advanced at the same time.
- *Integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into all energy actions to advance the SDGs.* Empower women in the design, production and distribution of modern energy services, by developing their technical and business skills and establishing financing schemes to support gender-specific programmes and women's access to capital. Develop gender-responsive policies, programmes and monitoring systems, and ensure equal participation of women in decision-making bodies in energy institutions, along with sex disaggregation and gender analysis of data to monitor SDG 7.
- *Promote sustainable and low-carbon cities* with reliable and affordable public transportation systems, energy-efficient built environments and significant shares of their energy needs met by cleaner energy sources.

## III. Addressing regional priorities

- *Strengthen cooperation at the regional level* to promote innovation and facilitate financing; support regional cross-border power grid connectivity to enhance energy security, advance economic integration and sustainable development; and share best practices (including on productive uses) that are responsive to regional needs regarding SDG 7 and its interlinkages with other SDGs.
- *Prioritize ending energy poverty in the most vulnerable countries.* Investments (by all stakeholders) in sustainable energy in these countries will have a significant positive impact across different SDGs, and exemplify the true spirit of leaving no one behind. Each country faces specific challenges in its pursuit of sustainable development, and there are serious challenges within many middle-income countries. However, the most vulnerable countries—in particular, African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states—deserve special attention, as do countries in situations of conflict or post-conflict.

## IV. Accelerating transformation towards a sustainable, inclusive and equitable energy future

- *Promote transformational investments* in developing sustainable, inclusive and equitable energy systems, including by strengthening energy systems through cross-border grid connections and fully incorporating decentralized renewable energy solutions in energy planning, while recognizing that energy transition will take different paths in different parts of the world. Promoting such a transformation will require multiple and multifaceted actions by all actors, including a concerted, multilateral approach that paves the way for advancing universal energy access through decentralized solutions, while at the same time advancing the Paris Agreement.
- *Transform human behaviour from energy-intensive lifestyles to more sustainable patterns*, promoting technological and institutional changes that would result in adequate food, clean water, better education and reduction of poverty and gender inequalities, together with reductions in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- *Strengthen decision-making processes by reinforcing improvements in energy data collection, indicators and monitoring efforts*, adopting, as needed, a broader range of forward-looking indicators on energy for sustainable development, including interlinkages indicators (e.g., energy-health and energy-jobs).
- *Harness the power of all stakeholders to drive change* through advocacy, capacity-building, mobilization and collaborative action, including businesses, civil society, women and youth.

## **Making it happen**

Turning the Global Agenda into action requires increased international cooperation among all stakeholders on specific, strategic, bold and time-bound plans of action and partnerships, including through facilitation of efforts by the UN Secretariat including the UN Regional Commissions and in coordination with the UN development system, international organizations (such as the International Energy Agency and the International Renewable Energy Agency), multilateral development banks (including the World Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and regional development banks), businesses, civil society and other stakeholders. Future global milestones, such as the High-Level Political Forum, the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties, and the Secretary-General's Climate Change Summit 2019, present key global platforms for sharing lessons and inspiring further actions in support of SDG 7. The UN Decade on Sustainable Energy for All 2014–2024 should also be leveraged to strengthen leadership-level engagements, share plans, programmes and lessons, and catalyse action, partnerships and resources globally. The multi-stakeholder SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group should continue to be strengthened and leveraged to support such efforts.

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**HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM  
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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