



Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Beirut 6th Energy Forum

Expert Group Meeting on “Road Map for Sustainable Energy Policies: Energy Security Issues in the Arab Region”

Le Royal Hotel Dbayeh, Beirut, Lebanon, 10-11 September 2015.

Concept Note

1- Introduction

Over the last decade, the Arab region has been swept by serious armed conflicts entangled with challenging socio-economic and political upheavals. These challenges pose considerable impediments to achieving regional cooperation in addressing development areas and notably in attaining sustainable energy for all. Since the energy sector plays a central role in the unfolding of realities of the Arab region and is becoming a crucial dimension in policy formulation, the need to revisit national energy policies is imperative and in particular addressing the issue of energy security.

The debate over the energy security concept varies from country to country on the basis of the economic, political and social dimensions, national interests and available sources of energy. The concept would include issues related to broader Arab integration and coordination between countries while taking into account national priorities, strengthening national infrastructure, ensuring energy efficiency and protecting the environment, broadening the use of renewable energy and adapting appropriate technologies to reduce its costs and the completion of the Arab electricity grid.

Securing energy is a strategic priority for all Arab countries and a key driver for achieving socio-economic development on sustainable basis. For countries that produce and export oil and gas, energy security means the continuity in financial revenues needed to invest in socio-economic development. For countries that import oil and gas, securing energy services for its citizens and

productive sectors at affordable prices becomes a strategic priority in defining energy security. Moreover, achieving energy security in the Arab region is directly linked to water and food securities. Energy is necessary to produce drinking water and water for irrigation in a highly scarce region. Over and above, other dimensions have direct bearing on defining energy security such as environmental considerations namely, the need to address pollution and climate change mitigation.

The present geopolitical scene in the region along with the fluctuation in oil prices and its implications on the energy mix in the Arab countries, necessitate developing a common strategic vision and roadmap toward achieving energy security for the region. It is envisaged that such a vision will consider the relevant national targets and the regional interests to consolidate the benefits and reduce the risks.

In light of the above, the Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA) is organizing an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “Road Map for Sustainable Energy Policies: Energy Security Issues in the Arab Region », on the 10th and 11th of September 2015. This also responds to the recommendations of the tenth session of ESCWA’s Committee on Energy which calls upon ESCWA to develop the concept of energy security from the perspective of the Arab region and assess the effects of sharp fluctuations in the prices of oil and natural gas on Arab countries. The EGM is convened within the context of the 6th edition of Beirut Energy Forum (BEF) that will be held from 9 to 11 September 2015. BEF aims to share insights, challenges, and solutions to the region’s energy sector and the EGM will contribute to the Forum’s debate and deliberation which this year will focus on the theme: “New Chapters in the Sustainable Energy Saga: Adopting Dynamic Policies in a Volatile Fuel-Based World Market”.

2- Objectives

The EGM will address different aspects of energy security based on the current situation of oil and gas market as well as the relevant implications on regional cooperation in the Arab countries. The EGM will tackle the challenges to overcome the negative consequences of unpredictable oil market over short and medium terms. It will examine the potential for regional cooperation with a focus on selected themes such as source of energy and electricity trade.

The meeting aims to conclude with a better understanding of energy security concepts, issues and policies implications, and concrete proposals for promoting sustainable energy policies to achieve energy security which is one of the cornerstones of the United Nation’s initiative “Sustainable Energy for All”.

3- Topics

First Session, 10 September 2015: “Energy security and regional cooperation in the Arab Region”- (Presentation and discussion of the SDPD’s publication on "Regional Cooperation for Energy Security"):

- Energy security (concept, variables, factors, benefits).
- Sources of energy and the infrastructure needed for energy security in the Arab region.

- The connection between International energy prices and energy security in the Arab region.
- Potentials of regional cooperation: challenges and opportunities.

Second session, 11 September 2015: “Implications of the drop in global oil prices on managing the energy sector in the Arab region”

- Impacts of falling oil prices: a careful reading through a regional lens.
- The role of Natural Gas in the Arab region: Case of Eastern Mediterranean Basin
- The effects of the current situation of oil and natural gas prices on the Arab countries (economic development, infrastructure, energy industry, nuclear energy, renewable energy and energy efficiency plans ...).
- Arab electricity interconnection and renewable energy integration in the Grid.

The sessions will take place on the 10th and 11th of September 2015 and will involve an interactive dialogue among a range of international and regional experts. Presentations will be delivered in each session on the topics outlined above followed by discussions and interventions.