



Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/RFS/2018/CRP.1
19 April 2018
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Regional Preparatory Meeting on Energy Issues
for the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and High-level Political Forum
Beirut, 27-28 March 2018

Outcome Document

The Regional Preparatory Meeting on Energy Issues for the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and High-level Political Forum (HLPF) was held on 27 and 28 March 2018, at the United Nations House in Beirut.

The meeting was jointly organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the League of Arab States. It was attended by members of the ESCWA Committee on Energy; representatives of national, regional and international organizations and of financial institutions; and civil society organizations engaged in energy-related issues and the sustainable management of natural resources in the Arab region.

The meeting consolidated regional views on energy-related issues and determined the priorities facing Arab countries in the field. It discussed the gaps between the policies in place and the targets set for a sustainable energy future, and suggested policy options to lead to the transformation of energy systems through incorporating energy-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets in national reporting on progress, including on the dedicated energy Goal 7.

The meeting highlighted that business-as-usual scenarios in the areas of energy and the management of natural resources in the Arab region are overwhelmingly unsustainable; and that progress on energy issues can no longer be seen as separate from other socioeconomic development goals, rather as a primary condition for sustainably powering progress.

The meeting resulted in the following set of key messages, to be conveyed to the Arab Sustainable Development Forum (Beirut, 24-26 April 2018), in view of informing Arab State preparations for the HLPF (New York, 9-18 July 2018).

KEY MESSAGES

General messages

- Progress towards SDG 7 is a contributing factor to the transition towards sustainable energy systems, which are critical to face the economic, social, environmental and security challenges of Arab countries and build the resilience of their societies.
- The transition towards sustainable energy systems is a priority for all Arab economies; improved resource management, particularly to maximize energy efficiency, and reduction of the overwhelming reliance on fossil fuels for almost all energy needs are key steps in that transition.

Transition processes should take national needs into account and be based on each country's specific conditions.

- The ability to harness the pool of natural resources through adequate choices of infrastructure, technology, governance and sustainable management practices will be key in creating economic opportunities for young people and improving their living standards; it is a key driver for socioeconomic development and for the attainment of gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity.
- Sustainable energy systems should be developed as an enabler for all SDGs. Special attention should be given to the links between energy on the one hand, and poverty and inequality eradication, water and food security, health, education, employment, sustainable cities, climate change, transport, refugees and other situations of displacement, on the other hand.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Over the next four years

- Evaluate status-quo and develop/reinforce national goals, priorities and national plans integrating sustainable energy goals in the specific national context, and take into account energy issues in all sectoral programmes and infrastructures/projects. The proposed sustainable energy solutions should be based on a country-driven, gender-responsive, cross-cutting and fully transparent and participatory approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups.
- Take advantage of the relatively low international oil prices to develop and implement suitable policies and institutional frameworks to boost energy efficiency measures and practices, and to address the barriers preventing progress in energy efficiency and renewable energy deployment, including inadequate market and energy-pricing incentives.
- Develop/reinforce the policies and regulatory frameworks in place to enable accelerated implementation of energy efficiency measures and deployment of renewable energy, including small-scale decentralized solutions, allowing for increased private sector investments and involvement.
- Build/strengthen institutional capacity, transparency and accountability, monitoring and data collection systems, dissemination and information-sharing between government institutions; strengthen the role of scientific and research institutions; and increase cross-sector dialogue and cooperation.
- Strengthen local governance and communication between government, financial institutions and the public and private sectors and reinforce the role of civil society and stakeholder engagement through a participative approach, in a way that most benefits people's welfare and gains local support and engagement.
- Apply a rights-based approach to development and integrate gender considerations and women's empowerment and entrepreneurship into energy-related actions and projects, and into actions towards reduction of poverty and improvement of health and environmental conditions.
- Where appropriate in conflict and disaster-affected areas: address the needs of the refugees and displaced and of their host environments, and cooperate to prepare for rehabilitation and reconstruction based on sustainable energy systems.

Towards 2030

- Enforce proactive and integrated policies to manage natural resources more sustainably, especially the water-energy-food nexus.
- Develop a more rational use of the region's valuable fossil fuel resources by boosting their productivity and optimizing their input into the energy mix, while exploiting the economic potential of energy alternatives, particularly renewable energy.
- Strengthen analytical capacity to address the different interactions between energy policy and climate change and the water-energy-food nexus, in order to promote innovative sustainable policy approaches.
- Enhance interregional cooperation and trade, and develop local manufacturing of clean energy technology components, as well as grid interconnections between Arab countries, and promote pan-Arab integration projects and initiatives such as a pan-Arab electricity market, focusing on smart grids and green corridors.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The development of sustainable energy systems is crucial for achieving almost all SDGs through the means and modalities outlined below:

1. Promotion of investments in clean technologies, and enablement of the financial and local markets

- Review the existing instruments for implementing sustainable energy solutions and consider experiences in the region that involve the development of public structures or of public-private partnerships, allowing an upscaled deployment of clean technologies. Programmes targeting public institutions, facilities and vehicle fleets should be considered a priority.
- Negotiate with international instances to make greater use of international finance available for clean energy projects – including renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy access – to secure funds for sustainable energy transitions.
- Implement enabling tools and financing mechanisms for the deployment of micro, mini and off-grid renewable energy technologies, and ensure upscaling of energy efficiency programmes based on each country's conditions.
- Seek opportunities to capitalize on foreign aid channeled towards energy resilience to build essential infrastructure for sustainable energy and pursue ways to plan for sustainable financing of energy programmes.
- Promote more systematic reform to open up utility sectors, allowing markets to establish a business case for alternative technologies.
- Encourage the involvement of national, regional and multilateral development banks and the commercial banking sector in creating specialized credit lines, credit guarantees, contracts, and other products required to service the unmet financing needs of clean energy projects in the region.
- Explore tools and business models that reduce the perceived risk of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects and that provide guarantees and de-risking mechanisms to leverage private investments.

- Create financing instruments designed for non-institutional end users, with special attention to the marginalized women and men in remote and rural areas, including public revolving funds designed to ensure the sustainability of these instruments.

2. Technology dissemination and transfer

- Support research and development and the commercial introduction of new technology, capital and management skills to support energy transitions.
- Encourage joint ventures for local manufacturing of energy-efficient and cleaner energy equipment, thus contributing to job creation.
- Develop regional frameworks for energy performance labelling and Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS) across all economic sectors, and encourage South-South cooperation and exchange of best practices.
- Enhance collaboration between entities in different Arab countries and within the same country that work on the same research area and share best practices.
- Establish sustainable energy knowledge-sharing platforms at national and regional levels.

3. Capacity-building

- Strengthen capacity of national decision makers in the energy sector and the linked sectors of water, food and environment, building in as much as possible on, but not necessarily limiting focus to, existing structures and mechanisms. Design capacity-building programmes for the short, mid and long term.
- Promote policy dialogues for policy integration, involving multi-stakeholder partnerships.
- Reinforce and adequately resource energy statistics programmes that monitor and report comprehensive energy variables, and that integrate fully with other economic and social national statistical efforts.
- Establish capacity-building and qualification programmes for technicians and workers involved in the design and implementation of energy efficiency and cleaner energy solutions.
- Establish educational programmes targeting the youth and develop capacity-building programmes for private stakeholders, including the financial sector.
- Initiate and implement sustainable energy awareness campaigns and foster community champions.

4. Energy data, indicators and analysis

- Adapt existing indicators for SDG 7 to reflect the range of issues on access, energy efficiency, and renewable energy, and complement reporting on agreed indicators to include indicators for all energy-related SDGs.
- Develop specialized national energy data observatories to centralize the consolidation, processing and analysis of energy-related data and indicators on a regular basis.

- Ensure that full energy balances are produced regularly and in a timely fashion by Governments as the basis to track national energy trends, and that international methodologies are adopted to ensure data comparability.
- Develop indicators adapted to the systems of the future, continue to adapt data gathering systems, including monitoring and evaluation, and develop new indicators that reflect the links between the issues of water, food, climate, investments in clean energy, gender, and other forms of energy.