

Issue brief

SDG 7

ENSURING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7) – ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all – with its targets on universal access, energy efficiency and renewable energy, will open a new world of opportunity for billions of people. It will lay the foundation for the eradication of poverty, for climate action and for a sustainable world. Simply put, without progress on SDG 7, it will be impossible to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Facts and figures

- **About a billion people** currently live without electricity, which significantly limits their development opportunities.
- **More than 3 billion people** rely on wood, charcoal, animal and crop waste or other solid fuels to cook their food and heat their homes.
- Each year, **close to 4 million people** die prematurely from illnesses attributable to household air pollution from inefficient cooking practices.
- Globally, improved energy efficiency could account for 40 per cent of the emissions reduction we need to achieve.
- While China, Europe and the United States accounted for nearly 75 per cent of the global investment in renewable power and fuels, 2017 saw significant investment in developing country markets.



Environmental dimension of SDG 7

The environmental impacts of energy systems include local, regional and global pollution from the combustion of fuels, climate change and impacts on the integrity and stability of different ecosystems. The exact impacts depend on the type of primary energy source, the conversion technology, the size and location of the system and other factors. Energy is also a major contributor to human health problems, primarily from air pollution caused by the combustion of fuels.

UN Environment and SDG 7

At the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), we believe that sustainable energy presents an opportunity to transform lives and economies while safeguarding the planet. That is why we are working with

Governments to improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewables in their countries and cities. We aim for sustainable energy approaches that lay the foundation for resilient, low-emission economies and societies around the world.

Our work on energy focuses on four areas:

- Improving understanding of science and the links between energy and the environment
- Providing Governments with environmentally sound policy advice
- Catalysing public and private finance for clean energy
- Supporting the uptake of clean energy technologies

We have a wide portfolio of activities related to energy efficiency, renewables, technology and energy finance that cover multiple sectors.





We work with a variety of partners to improve energy efficiency in transport, lighting, appliances, buildings and cities, the latter through district energy systems. We also strengthen the business case for energy efficiency in developing countries and emerging economies, including at the city level.

We reduce barriers to the uptake of renewable energy by raising awareness, working with the finance sector and providing Governments with information and advice.

We make it easier for the finance community to invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency by providing technical assistance and targeted financial support that reduces risk, particularly for “first movers”.

Our work contributes to the implementation of other SDGs, including SDG 13 (climate action), and supports key UN processes such as the UN Framework



Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Sustainable Energy for All initiative. Through a partnership between UN Environment, the Government of Denmark and the Danish Technical University, the Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency was established as the energy-efficiency hub of Sustainable Energy for All. The Centre also acts as the secretariat of the Global Energy Efficiency Accelerator Platform.

UN Environment hosts the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction, an initiative launched at the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC as part of the Lima-Paris Action Agenda, which contributes to the objective of limiting global warming to well below 2°C.

Together with the UN Industrial Development Organization, UN Environment manages and hosts the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN). As the operational arm of the UNFCCC Technology Mechanism, CTCN helps countries to turn the ambition set forth in their nationally determined contributions into action, including in the field of affordable and clean energy. UN Environment also hosts the secretariats of the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-lived Climate Pollutants.

Key messages for policymakers:

- ➔ We must step up. Without urgent action, the world will fall short of achieving the targets in SDG 7 and consequently the other SDGs.
- ➔ 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 decreases in costs; strategic shifts in policies, regulatory frameworks and investments; new business models; and 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, and improvements in energy efficiency, all of which will make clean energy more affordable than ever for the benefit of all.
- ➔ Achieving SDG 7 will catalyse actions to combat climate change and reach the other SDGs.
- ➔ 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.
- ➔ Partnerships are crucial in ensuring that all stakeholders are able to focus their best efforts in support of SDG 7, translating the Global Agenda into specific, strategic, bold and time-bound plans of action.

UN Environment stands ready to work with Member States and stakeholders to ensure that SDG 7 is fully implemented. For further information or questions, please contact Mark Radka, Economy Division, UN Environment at mark.radka@un.org.



This issue brief is based on expert inputs provided in the policy briefs on SDG 7 developed by the multi-stakeholder SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group convened by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.