



Sustainable energy central to realising global development goals

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Modern energy has been the engine of economic growth for the last 150 years, and it continues to power opportunity the world over. However, our current global energy system, based largely on fossil fuel sources, is both inequitable and unsustainable. Some 1.2 billion people lack reliable access to electricity. At the same time, our planet is dangerously over-heating.

Today we have two challenges: We need to turn on the power for every household, while turning down the global thermostat. The good news is that we can do both by providing sustainable energy for all. To my mind, promoting sustainable energy is the best way to generate equitable growth, open up new markets, create jobs, and protect our environment.

It seems incredible that in today's era of modern technologies, one in five people around the planet do not have access to electricity. Twice that many, nearly three billion, rely on wood, charcoal or animal waste for cooking and heating. This energy poverty is devastating to human development.

In industrialised countries, we find the opposite problem: waste and pollution, not shortages. Inefficient, carbon intensive energy use harms our economic productivity and contributes to the changes in our climate that drive extreme weather events costing lives, livelihoods and billions of dollars in damages.

The UN Secretary-General created the Sustainable Energy for All initiative to tackle both these problems simultaneously. Working with the President of the World Bank, he has set out three energy objectives for the world to achieve by 2030: ensuring universal access to modern energy services, doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency, and doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. These goals are complementary, and making progress on any one of them will help with progress toward the others.

Achieving sustainable energy for all is an ambitious but achievable goal. Technological innovations, innovative business models and a growing body of best practices that can be adapted and scaled up are bringing this goal within reach. The transition to sustainable energy systems presents one of the greatest investment opportunities of the 21st century. To spur investment to transform the world's energy systems, to eliminate energy poverty, and to enhance prosperity requires taking action in three inter-linked areas:

- Ensuring universal access to modern energy services including electrification, cooking facilities and/or fuels, is a

precondition for poverty reduction and equitable, inclusive growth. Lack of modern energy access is a global threat. Kitchen smoke is causing around four million premature deaths annually, mostly poor women and children. Options to expand energy access should involve sustainable development of all sources and include both decentralised and centralised energy solutions prioritised according to countries' specific circumstances, and should take into account availability, affordability and quality of energy services. Small/micro entrepreneurs, community bodies and civil society organisations can drive action in energy access, especially in rural areas.

- Investing in energy efficiency presents one of the most cost-effective options to accelerate transition toward a sustainable energy system. By enhancing resource productivity and creating new economic growth opportunities, action to enhance energy efficiency can offer significant investment opportunities for private and public sectors both in developed and developing countries.

- Increasing the share of renewable energy is a fundamental driver for the transformation of the world's energy systems. Renewable energy technologies are increasingly cost-effective. Supporting rapid advances in renewable energy technologies and their deployment will be critical in accelerating this transition that can dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, insulate countries from fuel price volatility, and benefit hundreds of millions of people everywhere.

Governments must establish their own clear targets and strategies, and design and implement a set of national policies, regulations and financial environments that enable change which the market alone will not deliver. Enabling conditions should also be designed to support bottom-up approaches to better identify needs and accelerate scaling-up of proven solutions. International support must build on national ownership of policies, and complement local efforts and fiscal resources.

The private sector has an enormously important role to play. Companies can invest in research and innovation and create new energy products, services and markets that deliver solutions on the scale we need. They can improve energy efficiency and adopt renewable energy in their business operations and supply chains.

This partnership model is a central theme of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative. Momentum is growing.

At the Rio+20 summit last year, world leaders expressed

their determination “to act to make sustainable energy for all a reality and, through this, help to eradicate poverty and lead to sustainable development and global prosperity.”

Many countries and regions such as Africa, the European Union, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have endorsed sustainable energy for all as a political priority through explicit declarations and commitments to action. Hundreds of leaders from other countries, businesses, civil society organisations and international bodies have also come forward with concrete commitments.

Furthermore, the United Nations General Assembly has declared 2014-2024 the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All.

Earlier this year, the United Nations secretariat, joined by Mexico, Norway and Tanzania, facilitated a series of consultations on why and how energy should be integrated into the post-2015 development agenda, i.e. the global framework beyond the Millennium Development Goals that are set to expire in 2015. Overall, a picture emerges where energy is central both to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the years to come and to realising sustainable development in the future. “The High-

Level Dialogue on Energy in the Post-2015 Development Agenda” that took place in Oslo, Norway in April 2013, concluded that energy must be fully integrated into the universal, post-2015 development agenda and called on broad support for “sustainable energy for all” as a global goal.

Importantly, the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda has proposed “securing sustainable energy for all” as one of the 12 illustrative goals for the post-2015 framework, a significant milestone towards establishing a robust goal framework beyond 2015.

All of us working on energy must remain fully engaged with intergovernmental processes such as the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure that energy is kept fully integrated into the final deliberation on the post-2015 framework.

Sustainable energy for all is an investment in our collective future. It will improve lives, grow businesses, generate jobs and create new markets. And by using energy more efficiently, and investing in renewable energy sources, we can build the clean energy economies that will shape tomorrow, today. I invite you all to join hands to make it a reality. □

Carpentry shops like this one in Rwanda can work more effectively with reliable grid electricity

