

THE UNITED Nations has declared 2014-2024 as the Decade for Sustainable Energy for all to underscore the importance of energy issues in the post-2015 development agenda.

In a resolution made on 21 December 2012, the UN General Assembly called upon member states to galvanize efforts to make universal access to sustainable modern energy services a priority, noting that about 1.3 billion people worldwide are without electricity and another 2.6 billion people in developing countries rely on traditional biomass for cooking and heating.

It expressed concern that even when energy services are available, millions of people are unable to pay for them.

The resolution stressed the need to improve access to reliable, affordable, economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sound energy services and resources for sustainable development.

To that end, the General Assembly also emphasized the importance of improving energy efficiency, increasing the share of renewable energy and cleaner technologies.

In its resolution, the General Assembly called upon governments as well as relevant international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders to combine, as appropriate, the increased use of new and renewable energy resources, more efficient use of energy, greater reliance on advanced energy technologies, including cleaner fossil fuel technologies, and the sustainable use of traditional energy resources, to meet the increasing need for energy services.

The declaration of the decade builds on the growing interest by Member States in energy issues. General Assembly Resolution 65/151 had declared 2012 the "International Year of Sustainable Energy for All" and called on the Secretary-General to organize and coordinate activities during the year to increase awareness of the importance of addressing energy issues.

In response, UN Secretary-General, Ban ki-Moon has launched the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative, which brings together stakeholders in government, the private sector and civil society.

The initiative is led by Kandeh Yumkella of Sierra Leone, who is also the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and chair of UN Energy.

The purpose of the initiative is to mobilize action towards providing universal energy access; doubling the rate of global energy efficiency improvement; and doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.



2014-2024

Decade for Sustainable Energy

According to Yumkella, sustainable energy for all is essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and for opening up new opportunities for growth and prosperity in all countries.

"It is also central to discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and proposed new sustainable development goals," he said.

As part of the initiative, the UN has launched the Global Consultation on Energy that aims to explore why energy matters in the post-2015 development agenda and identify the key priority issues.

Its purpose is to invite an extensive range of stakeholders to build a shared vision of the world's future energy challenges and the need to integrate energy into the post-2015 development agenda.

The effort is a part of a larger global conversation comprising over 50 national consultations and 11 thematic consultations, one of which is on energy.

The consultation is taking place both on a web-based platform and at various face-to-face events worldwide.

The findings will be shared and fed into post-2015 framework development and other related processes towards 2015 when the present agenda guided by the MDGs is expected to come to an end.

Post-2015 development agenda

The eight MDGs – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV and AIDS, and providing universal primary education – have been a milestone in global and national development efforts since 2000.





Energy for All

The framework has helped to galvanize development efforts and guide global and national development priorities.

While three of the eight goals have been achieved prior to the final deadline of 2015 progress has been uneven within and across countries.

Further efforts and a strong global partnership for development are, therefore, needed to accelerate progress and reach the goals by 2015.

Following the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, which initiated an inclusive intergovernmental process to prepare a set of sustainable development goals, there is broad agreement that there must be close linkages between the two processes and agendas.

Access to energy is widely regarded as a “missing” MDG and debate among development experts is that poverty alleviation and the general global socio-economic condition would improve if energy is identified as the ninth MDG.

Development experts argue that the failure to recognize the central role of energy in the original MDG list has had an impact on how the world responds to issues of sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Energy affects all aspects of development – social, economic, and environmental, including livelihoods, access to water, agricultural productivity, health, population levels, education, and gender-related issues.

For example, the majority of people in southern Africa still rely on traditional energy sources such as wood, or other biomass such as crop residue, which is the dominant fuel for cooking. This comes at a huge cost to the environment as families continue to cut down trees for much-needed fuel.

Therefore, attaining energy self-sufficiency would go a long way in improving SADC’s chances of meeting the MDGs, creating opportunities for people to come out of the poverty trap.

Regional initiatives

To improve access to energy, Southern Africa has embarked on a programme to increase the availability of various energy sources by 2027 at a total cost of more than US\$200 billion.

The recently announced Energy Sector Plan, part of a broader regional infrastructure master plan approved in 2012, addresses four key strategic objectives, namely ensuring energy security, improving access to modern energy services, tapping the abundant energy resources, and achieving financial investment and environmental sustainability.

The plan identifies “hard” infrastructure projects that include the planned electricity generation and transmission projects; refineries, storage facilities and pipelines for the petroleum and gas; and transport facilities for coal distribution and exports.

With regards to the electricity sub-sector, the master plan identified 73 power generation projects to increase generation from the current 56,000 megawatts (MW) and surpass the projected demand of 96,000 MW by 2027.

In addition to the “hard” infrastructure projects, the master plan has also identified 16 “soft” infrastructure issues that need to be addressed before the region can achieve self-sufficiency in the electricity sub-sector.

These include harmonised policies and increased cooperation in energy development and trading. □

Zambia, AfDB sign power loan agreement

ZAMBIA AND the African Development Bank (AfDB) have signed a US\$55 million loan agreement for the construction of the Itezhi-Tezhi hydropower station and transmission line.

The agreement was signed by Zambian Minister of Finance, Alexander Chikwanda and AfDB country representative Freddie Kwesiga.

The project will involve construction and operation of a 120-megawatt (MW) hydropower plant at Itezhi-Tezhi dam along the Kafue River.

Once completed, this project will significantly increase Zambia’s and the region’s power supply. Zambia presently produces 1,800MW which it shares with the rest of the region through the Southern African Power Pool. □

Mozambique gets US\$65 million loan for power station rehabilitation

MOZAMBIQUE IS expected to boost power production after the national power utility, Electricidade de Moçambique (EDM) secured a loan from France for the rehabilitation of two power stations.

Mozambique will get a loan of 50 million Euros to rehabilitate the Mavuzi and Chicamba power stations in the central province of Manica, under an agreement signed in October with the French Development Agency.

The rehabilitation project should increase the generation capacity of the two power stations by 50 percent so that Mavuzi produces 52 megawatts (MW) while Chicamba will generate 38MW.

The two stations are owned by EDM and both are on the Revue River. □