

## With access to modern, clean energy, poorer countries look to power ahead through innovation – UN report

22 November 2017 – Energy is key to global development, but the world's poorest and most vulnerable nations fare up to six times worse than their more industrialized counterparts when it comes to accessing the vital resource, the United Nations warned on Wednesday.

In its 2017 report on the world's 47 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), focused on [Transformational Energy Access](#) the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said that only four of them were on course to achieve internationally agreed targets on energy distribution by 2030.

While they have made great strides in recent years, achieving the global goal of universal access to energy by 2030, the finish line for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), will require a 350 per cent increase in their annual rate of electrification, said UNCTAD.

“Achieving Sustainable Development [Goal 7](#) is not only a question of satisfying households' basic energy needs,” UNCTAD Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi said in Geneva, ahead of the report's publication on Tuesday.

“That in itself has valuable welfare implications, [but we need to go beyond](#) [...] For electrification to transform LDC economies, modern energy provision needs to spur productivity increases and unlock the production of more goods and services.”

Dr. Kituyi added: “The productive use of energy is what turns access into economic development, and what ensures that investments in electricity infrastructure are economically viable. But that means looking beyond satisfying households basic needs to achieving transformational energy access – satisfying producers' needs for adequate, reliable and affordable energy.”

*Find out more about the UN's work with and for the world's 47 Least Developed Countries [here](#)*

To that end, the report notes that renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, could have a revolutionary effect in rural areas, home to 82 per cent of those without power in the least developed countries, and help to overcome the historical obstacles to rural electrification.

But non-hydro renewable energy in these countries has so far come mostly from small-scale technologies, such as solar lanterns and stand-alone home systems. While these have brought some progress, they fall short of the game-changing access to power that they need to transform their economies.

Utility-scale renewable technologies capable of feeding the grids and mini-grids necessary not only to power homes, but also to grow businesses and

industries, need to be deployed rapidly. But to achieve this, the least developed countries must overcome important technological, economic and institutional obstacles. This will require both the right national policies and stronger international support.

Because energy technologies, and particularly renewable technologies, are constantly evolving, it is critical that the least developed countries gain access to the technologies suited to their particular conditions and circumstances, and that they strengthen the capacity of their energy sectors to absorb such technologies.

The recently created [Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries](#) could help, but developed countries could help even more by living up to their technology-transfer obligations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)) and the Kyoto Protocol, said UNCTAD.

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## [UN urges action so women and girls everywhere can live free from all forms of violence](#)

22 November 2017 – Achieving gender equality and the full empowerment of women is the answer to ending violence against women, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Wednesday, calling for collective global action on this cause.

“Violence against women is [fundamentally about power](#),” Mr. Guterres said in his remarks alongside UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, at a special event held at UN Headquarters in New York to commemorate [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#), which is annually observed on 25 November.

“It will only end when gender equality and the full empowerment of women will be a reality,” he stressed, adding that his policy on gender parity in the United Nations is one step towards achieving this goal.

Mr. Guterres noted that every woman and every girl have the right to a life free of violence, but this right is violated in a variety of ways in every community, with more than one in three women worldwide face violence throughout their lifetime.

This violence, the most visible sign of pervasive patriarchy and chauvinism, directly impacts women’s physical and psychological health. It affects whole families, communities and societies. While it continues, States will not achieve the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, a master plan to end poverty and save the planet, adopted by them in 2015.

“There is increasing recognition that violence against women is a major barrier to the fulfilment of human rights, and a direct challenge to women’s inclusion and participation in sustainable development and sustaining peace,” said Mr. Guterres.

The United Nations is committed to addressing violence against women in all its forms, he stressed, citing such initiatives as the [UN Trust Fund](#) to End Violence Against Women, which has successfully awarded \$129 million to 463 initiatives across 139 countries and territories over the past 20 years.

These also include the [Spotlight Initiative](#) recently launched by the UN and the European Union, as well as the [UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative](#), which seeks to help end sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces.

Mr. Guterres is also addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse inhouse by launching a new, victim-centred approach to the offenses committed by those serving under the UN.

While noting that these initiatives should help deliver transformative change, he said much more remains to be done.

“It is time for united action from all of us, so that women and girls around the world can live free from all forms of violence,” he said.

### [Everything you need to know about the 16 Days of Activism against Gender based Violence](#)

Led by [UN Women](#) and partners, hundreds of events will be held worldwide, including marches, flashmobs, concerts, and football and rugby games. Iconic buildings will be lit up in orange to galvanize attention during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence from 25 November to 10 December, when the world marks [Human Rights Day](#).

The 16 Days campaign takes place under the umbrella of the Secretary-General’s campaign [UNiTE to End Violence against Women](#) by 2030. Orange has been designated as the colour of the UNiTE campaign as it symbolizes hope and a violence-free world.

This year’s theme for the campaign is ‘Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and Girls.’

**AUDIO:** Marking International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Secretary-General António Guterres said every woman and girl had the right to a life free from violence, while more than one in three are victims of a violent act at some point in their lives.

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## Adopt a 'common line,' UN negotiator appeals to Syrian opposition

22 November 2017 – Syrian opposition groups meeting in Saudi Arabia should do all they can to unify ahead of a fresh round of United Nations-facilitated talks in Geneva, UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura said on Wednesday.

The veteran negotiator was speaking to reporters in the Saudi capital Riyadh, at a meeting involving the principal opponents of forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Al Assad.

After welcoming the “wide spectrum” of representation at the Saudi meeting, Mr. de Mistura noted the “very complicated environment” in which it was taking place – a reference to the [crisis in Syria](#) that has left hundreds of thousands dead and displaced millions.

Despite these obstacles, the UN Special Envoy called for the opposition groups to take a “common line” on their country’s future.

Their actions could help shape not one but two rounds of [intra-Syrian talks](#) in Geneva, Mr. de Mistura said.

The first discussions are due to begin next Tuesday, to be followed by a second session in December.

“We want to show, and we want to show through you, that this is the way the future of Syria can be decided,” Mr. de Mistura told all those gathered in Saudi Arabia.

He added that they had a chance to give “a new dynamic” to the UN’s efforts to secure peace in Syria, based on UN Security Council [resolution 2254 \(2015\)](#). The measure calls for the Syrian Government and opposition to engage in formal negotiations on a political transition process “on an urgent basis” – something will be sure to figure prominently when intra-Syrian talks begin on Tuesday.

In his push “for real negotiations” based on resolution 2254, Mr. de Mistura explained that once back in Switzerland for the UN talks, he would be seeking progress on a new constitution and elections supervised by the United Nations.

The aim is to produce “credible, all-inclusive, non-sectarian governance” in Syria, he said, and to address the threat of terrorism in the war-torn country.

In addition, the UN Special Envoy insisted urged also to press for the release of detainees and missing persons, and humanitarian access to areas still under siege in the more than six-year war.

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## UN agency gravely concerned by lack of medical services in Syria's eastern Ghouta

22 November 2017 – Despite escalating violence and increasing humanitarian needs, life-saving medicines, medical equipment, and surgical supplies are prevented from entering eastern Ghouta in Syria and the plan to transfer critically ill patients to hospitals elsewhere has not been approved, the United Nations health agency has warned.

“Continuous and [unimpeded humanitarian aid](#) to eastern Ghouta is urgently needed, and medical evacuations of critically ill patients are long overdue,” said Elizabeth Hoff, World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) Representative in Syria.

“Life-saving health supplies are available, and WHO, along with partners, stands ready to respond to health needs once access is granted,” she added.

In eastern Ghouta of Rural Damascus, local health authorities report that in just four days through 17 November, 84 people were killed, including 17 children and 6 women; and 659 people were injured, including 127 children and 87 women.

During the same period, more than 200 surgical operations were conducted in eastern Ghouta's overwhelmed and under-resourced hospitals. Hospitals and healthcare centres have been damaged, severely limiting medical care for people at a time when they need it most.

On 18 November, two resident doctors and three patients at al-Mujtahed Hospital in Damascus city were injured in an attack. The 412-bed facility is one of the main public hospitals in Damascus serving patients from eastern Ghouta and other parts of the country.

WHO is also concerned that lack of essential health services, as well as limited electricity, fuel, safe drinking-water and basic sanitation services are increasing the risk of disease outbreaks such as diarrheal diseases, typhoid and hepatitis.

Further, inter-agency convoys to the area have been irregular, and the aid provided has been insufficient to meet the increasing needs of up to 400,000 people besieged for more than 4 years.

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# Conviction of Mladic, the 'epitome of evil,' a momentous victory for justice – UN rights chief

22 November 2017 – Welcoming today's conviction of former Bosnian Serb army commander Ratko Mladic on multiple counts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes by a United Nations international tribunal, the Organization's top human right official said that the verdict is a warning to perpetrators of such crimes that they will be brought to justice.

Mladic is the epitome of evil, and the prosecution of Mladic is the epitome of what international justice is all about, underscored Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a [statement](#) Wednesday.

Today's verdict is a warning to the perpetrators of such crimes that they will not escape justice, no matter how powerful they may be nor how long it may take. They will be held accountable, he added.

Mladic presided over some of the most horrific crimes to occur in Europe since World War II, bringing terror, death and destruction to thousands of victims, and sorrow, tragedy and trauma to countless more.

In the statement, Mr. Zeid also noted that Mladic's conviction, by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), is a testament to the courage and determination of those victims and witnesses who never gave up hope that they would see him brought to justice.

Today's verdict is a warning to the perpetrators of such crimes that they will not escape justice  
High Commissioner Zeid

He also expressed hope that while the conviction will not return loved ones to their families or erase the past, the verdict can help counter the voices of those who either deny these horrific crimes or glorify those who committed them.

Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic two of the main architects of some of the worst atrocities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the genocide of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica have now been convicted by the Tribunal and are facing lengthy jail sentences.

From 1994 to 1996, Mr. Zeid, had served at the UN Protection Force in the former Yugoslavia and experienced the war there first-hand. He later played a key role International Criminal Court ([ICC](#)).

Underscoring that all those who question the importance of the ICC should

reflect on the Mladic case, Mr. Zeid also underscored that all those who are committing serious international crimes in so many situations today across the world should fear this result.