

Global shift to clean, affordable energy critical to attaining Global Goals – UN officials

1 November 2017 – To tackle the double challenge of energy poverty and climate change – producing clean, affordable energy at a pace that will meet rising demand without environmental detriment – all stakeholders must step up efforts to transform the world’s energy systems for everyone’s benefit, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Wednesday.

“Energy is the [golden thread](#) that connects all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” the Secretary-General told a [High-Level Symposium](#) on Global Energy Interconnection, at UN Headquarters today, where participants gathered to discuss ways to advance the 17 globally-agreed Goals.

Modern energy services are integral to poverty reduction, food security, public health and quality education for all. Moreover, they are the key to sustainable industrialization, healthier more efficient cities and successful climate action.

Despite this understanding, Mr. Guterres said the world is still far from achieving the vision of [SDG7](#) on affordable and clean energy for all. Indeed, some one billion people still live without any access to any electricity at all – 500 million in Africa and more than 400 million in the Asia-Pacific region. And three billion still cook and heat their homes without the benefit of clean fuels and more efficient technologies.



Secretary-General speaking at Energy Interconnection: Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals”, organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), in collaboration with the Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

“So, the world needs more energy, and – in particular – more clean energy,” Mr. Guterres continued, but stressed that as this need rises, the world is experiencing rising temperatures and in 2016, atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide [surged to a new high](#). Recalling the [sobering report](#) issued just yesterday by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) which found that pledges made under the [Paris Agreement](#) are only a third of what is required by 2030 to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, the Secretary-General said falling short of the agreed 2 degrees Celsius temperature rise would be “catastrophic.” Against this background, and in light of the devastating hurricane season that had just battered the Caribbean and similar extreme weather events elsewhere, urgent climate action is needed. “That means transforming the world’s energy systems. It means promoting modern

technologies than can fulfil energy needs without polluting the environment and pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere,” Mr. Guterres explained. He said today’s Symposium could help point the way, as it would feature both policy- and technical-level presentations on how to strengthen global energy interconnection through the deployment of smart grids.

“With smart grids it is now feasible to generate, transmit and distribute power efficiently, cutting transmission losses and providing clean, affordable, economically viable and environmentally sound energy services,” he stated.

Echoing the Secretary-General’s sense of urgency, Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, with its 17 [SDGs](#) and 169 targets, puts a strong emphasis on inter-linkages. As such, progress in implementing SDG7 on energy is bound to impact delivery on other Goals.



Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Liu Zhenmin speaks at Energy Interconnection: Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals”, organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), in collaboration with the Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

“Likewise, without [increased access to modern energy](#), energy efficiency and renewable energy, there will be no progress on climate action,” he said, emphasizing: “So, we need to move from silo to synergy.” And in that regard, the UN is reforming its development system in response to the 2030 Agenda to provide more coherent support to Member States.

Turning to the role of SDG7 in the broader context of the 2030 Agenda, Mr. Liu highlighted three key points:

- Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all is fundamental to a peaceful, inclusive and sustainable work, and a necessary investment in our collective future;
- Energy is inextricably linked to most of the global challenges now and in the future, including poverty, food security, clean water, infrastructure, public health, education, economic growth, youth’s and women’s empowerment, and climate change; and
- Access to modern energy must go beyond residential power access. It must aim to unlock new entrepreneurial opportunities for the growing workforce, so that they can become the next global engine for the new economies of the future.

“New technologies, new business models, and new approaches to capacity building are all needed to transform the world and achieve global sustainable development. The global energy interconnection, through smart grids, offers one such avenue,” he said.

But such global energy interconnection, or GEI, can only work in partnership.

“The technology for worldwide energy connectivity is there. The barriers are institutional, not technological,” stated Mr. Liu, calling for a change in mindset, and stressing that decisive progress can only be made through partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources are indispensable to succ

[South Sudan: UN Mission weighs re-establishing presence in north-eastern town](#)

1 November 2017 – The United Nations peacekeeping mission is expected to reach vulnerable people in remote parts of South Sudan, as it takes a more “nimble and proactive” approach, the head of the operation said Wednesday during a visit to a hard-to-reach area in the country’s north-east.

“It’s clear that the needs of people in this location are immense,” said David Shearer, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative and head of the UN Mission in South Sudan ([UNMISS](#)), adding that UNMISS is looking at ways of extending a presence in Akobo, a town near the border with Ethiopia.

The mission had operated a base in the town but it was closed following an attack in December 2013 in which two Indian peacekeepers and thirty civilians were killed.

Some 71,000 displaced people are currently living in Akobo and the surrounding area after fleeing fighting between the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and opposition forces in the north-east.

About 10 to 15 humanitarian agencies are working in Akobo, which lies in an opposition-held part of South Sudan. “As UNMISS, we need to reach communities in need in all parts of the country, regardless of their ethnic or political background,” Mr. Shearer said.

The UNMISS mandate is to protect civilians and help create an environment conducive to the delivery of humanitarian aid, he added, “so it was important to hear from the humanitarians working here how the presence of peacekeepers and other mission personnel can help.”

UN agency and EXPO Dubai 2020 agree on strengthening cooperation for Global Goals

1 November 2017 – The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and EXPO Dubai 2020 signed Wednesday a Memorandum of Understanding on strengthening joint cooperation, including hosting the World Entrepreneurs Investment Forum (WEIF) 2020 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

“This partnership proves that the private sector can make significant contributions toward inclusive and sustainable development,” said Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the UN General Assembly, welcoming the signing in Bahrain.

“I also welcome the parties’ intention to share knowledge around investment and entrepreneurship for development to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)),” he added.

Mr. Lajčák arrived in the capital, Manama, Wednesday to attend the ongoing WEIF 2017, organized by UNIDO in partnership with the Government of Bahrain.

In his remarks at the signing ceremony, Mr. Lajčák noted that the hosting of the 2020 edition of WEIF in Dubai is further proof of the region’s interest and commitment to encourage all stakeholders to work together with UNIDO to strengthen the implementation of the [SDGs](#) through promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation.



Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly (left), congratulates Manal AlBayat, Senior Vice President at EXPO Dubai 2020 (right) and Hiroshi Kuniyoshi, Deputy Director General of UNIDO (centre) after the signing of the memorandum of understanding. Photo: UN News/Vibhu Mishra

This year’s WEIF, as well as the one in 2015, have been held in Manama.

Prior to his arrival in Bahrain, the President of the General Assembly was in Paris, France, where, among other engagements, he addressed the Leaders’ Forum of the 39th UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) General Conference, held under the theme of *SDGs and the role of UNESCO in the multilateral system*, Tuesday.

“We need multilateralism – more than ever before [...] If we want the next generation to be born into a better world, we only have one option. And that is strong multilateralism, with the UN System at its core,” Mr. Lajčák said in his remarks at the occasion.

While in Paris, Mr. Lajčák also held meetings with senior officials from the

European Union, Bosnia and Herzegovina and France, and discussed issues including his priorities for the 72nd session of the General Assembly, climate change, sustainable development, biodiversity and regional matters, according to a news release from his Office.

UN News is in Manama, Bahrain, covering the Forum and its associated events. Follow [@UN_News_Centre](#) and [@UNNewsArabic](#) for up to date news and highlights from WEIF 2017.

UN General Assembly again calls for lifting US embargo against Cuba

1 November 2017 – The United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday adopted a resolution underlining the need to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba.

In the resolution, the Assembly reiterated its call to all UN Member States to refrain from promulgating and applying laws and measures not conforming with their obligations under the UN Charter and international law, which reaffirm freedom of trade and navigation. The Assembly “once again urges States that have and continue to apply such laws and measures to take the necessary steps to repeal or invalidate them as soon as possible,” the resolution added.

The resolution enjoyed favorable votes from 191 of the 193 UN Member States. The United States and Israel opposed the text.

Last year, these two countries, for the first time in the 25-year history of the annual review of the issue, abstained in the vote rather than rejecting the text.

UN chief contacts New York City Mayor, US Ambassador to extend condolences in wake of deadly attack

1 November 2017 – A day after the deadly attack in New York City, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres spoke to Mayor Bill di Blasio and reaffirmed his solidarity with the people of New York.

According to his spokesperson, the Secretary-General has also contacted the Permanent Representative of the United States to the UN, Nikki Haley, to express his condolences.

In a [Tweet](#) yesterday, Mr. Guterres said that “our hearts go out to the people of our great host city; today all of us at UNHQ are New Yorkers.”

A [statement](#) from his spokesperson says Mr. Guterres was “shocked and deeply saddened” to learn of the attack.