

[The world banks on sunshine, UN says in renewable energy report](#)

In 2017, solar energy dominated global investment in new power generation like never before, according to a new United Nations-backed report, which shows a steady move away from fossil fuel-based power production to 'green' power sources.

Last year, the world installed a record 98 gigawatts of new solar capacity, far more than the net additions of the rest – other renewables, fossil fuel and nuclear, according to the [Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2018](#) report, released Thursday by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and its partners.

Solar power also attracted far more investment than any other technology, at \$160.8 billion, up 18 per cent.

A driving power behind last year's surge in solar was China, where an unprecedented boom saw some 53 gigawatts added – more than half the global total – and \$86.5 billion invested, up 58 per cent.

The extraordinary surge in solar investment shows how the global energy map is changing and, more importantly, what the economic benefits are of such a shift – *UNEP chief*

"The extraordinary surge in solar investment shows how the global energy map is changing and, more importantly, what the economic benefits are of such a shift," said UNEP chief Erik Solheim.

"Investments in renewables bring more people into the economy, they deliver more jobs, better quality jobs and better paid jobs. Clean energy also means less pollution, which means healthier, happier development," he said.

Last year was the eighth in a row in which global investment in renewables exceeded \$200 billion – and since 2004, the world has invested \$2.9 trillion in these green energy sources.

Overall, China was by far the world's largest investing country in renewables, at a record \$126.6 billion, up 31 per cent on 2016. There were also sharp increases in investment in Australia, up 147 per cent to \$8.5 billion; Mexico, up 810 per cent to \$6 billion; and Sweden, up 127 per cent to \$3.7 billion.

UN Asia-Pacific forum adopts declaration to accelerate transition to sustainable energy

Meanwhile, countries in the Asia-Pacific region, which is projected to

account for two-thirds of global energy use between now and 2040, committed to accelerate the transition to sustainable energy by scaling up their share of renewables, as a United Nations forum in Bangkok wrapped up on Thursday.

“There is a palpable sense of the enormous opportunities ahead that can transform the energy scene,” Shamshad Akhtar, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)), told the two-day forum, acknowledging the growing recognition by governments, the private sector and investors, that a sustainable, low carbon energy system is the only option to safeguard the future.

The highlight of the Second [Asian and Pacific Energy Forum](#) was the adoption of a ministerial declaration, which lays out a series of actions to encourage the sustainable use of energy, including through greater regional cooperation to facilitate cross-border infrastructure and energy trade to advance [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

Organized by ESCAP, the Forum provided a platform for governments, the UN system, private companies, international organizations, and civil society organizations to review the region’s implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 7 ([SDG7](#)) on affordable and clean energy.

Delegates concluded that Asia and the Pacific has made remarkable progress on universal access to electricity, with renewable energy surpassing price benchmarks that were only expected in 2020. However, greater efforts are needed throughout the region to achieve targets on reliance on clean fuel and renewable energy, and energy efficiency.

[Global food price index rises for second consecutive month – UN agency](#)

Global food prices rose for the second consecutive month with the index for these commodities averaging 172.8 points in March, 1.1 per cent higher than in February, the United Nations food security agency announced Thursday.

[According](#) to the UN [Food and Agriculture Organization](#), the rise was driven by “[robust increases](#)” in the prices of cereals (165.6 points) and dairy products (197.4 points), averaging 2.7 per cent and 3.3 per cent higher, respectively, than their prices the previous month.

Wheat prices increased mostly on weather worries, including prolonged dryness in the United States of America and cold wet conditions in parts of Europe. Similarly, maize – another major cereal – saw its prices rise on back of strong global demand and deteriorating crop prospects also in Argentina.

FAO also [anticipates](#) that 2018 world maize and wheat production could decline based on early forecasts. Worldwide wheat output could drop to 750 million tonnes, about 1 per cent below its near-record level of the previous year.

In 2017, worldwide cereal production, including wheat, hit a record level, up 33 million tonnes from 2016, to nearly 2,646 million tonnes globally.

Price indices for sugar and vegetable oils, however, recorded declines in March, averaging 186 points and 156.8 points, respectively. The meat price index (169.8 points) remained almost unchanged from February.

[UN chief honours enduring legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King](#)

Recalling the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was assassinated 50 years ago today, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres urged the world to build on the civil rights leader's work for equality and social justice.

"Dr. King was one of the [moral giants of the 20th century](#). He devoted his life to equality, justice, and non-violent social change," said the UN chief in a statement attributable to his spokesperson.

"Decades after his death, he continues to inspire all those around the world who are struggling for human rights and human dignity in the face of oppression, discrimination and injustice."

Dr. King's advocacy and pronouncements against discrimination, and in favour of social justice, of global understanding and the virtues of diversity are more relevant today than ever, added the Secretary-General.

Born in January 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. King was shot and killed on the evening of 4 April 1968 while standing on the balcony the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was to lead a protest march in sympathy with striking garbage workers of that city.

In 1978, ten years after his death, the civil rights leader was posthumously awarded the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights, honouring him for his outstanding contribution to the promotion and protection of the human rights embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments.

Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

[Business leaders at UN forum challenged to invest in a more sustainable future for all](#)

Three years into the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, the United Nations continues brokering new partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), participants told a forum at UN Headquarters on Wednesday.

“Business as usual approaches [won’t work](#),” said Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed at the 2018 ECOSOC [Economic and Social Council] [Partnership Forum](#), an annual event promoting inclusive societies, including through innovative business models and mobilizing big data for public good.

“We need action – and bold action – to build an inclusive, resilient and sustainable future that leaves no one behind,” she continued.

Ms. Mohammed shared a snapshot of today’s world, pointing out that more than eight per cent of the population lives in poverty; 192 million are unemployed; and young people are three times more likely to be jobless.

“Their voices in many places are stifled and leading to a greater sense of disenfranchisement and disillusionment,” she underscored.

Calling the private sector “an indispensable partner,” Ms. Mohammed stressed the need to work together “to reduce inequalities, end discrimination, empower people and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all.”

Partnering with the private sector is essential to pursue common goals and to align their business models with the 2030 Agenda.

“Sustainable business makes business sense,” she continued. “Better engagement with the private sector requires an enabling policy environment and dialogue mechanisms that encourage firms to do business in a way that works for global good, and for the bottom line.”

She said that both the Organization and the private sector need to step up efforts and scale up partnerships to generate results that would “reach the furthest communities and villages.”

“Our ambition is nothing less than ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment,” she underscored.

A win-win partnership

Opening the annual forum, Marie Chatardová, [ECOSOC](#) President, pointed out that inclusive development models and combatting inequality was critical to achieving the SDGs, which aim to wipe out poverty and boost equality by putting the world on a more sustainable economic, social and environmental path by 2030.

“It also requires building the resilience of societies, communities and people to cope with shocks – be it natural disasters, economic shocks, conflicts or others,” she said. “To do so, we must reach out to ‘those furthest behind first,’ including women, youth, indigenous peoples and persons living with disabilities.”

Citing research by the Business and Sustainable Development Commission, she argued that sustainable business models could unlock economic opportunities “worth up to \$12 trillion and increase employment by up to 380 million jobs by 2030.”

“The study also shows the majority of companies are already aware that investing in sustainable development goals is a ‘win-win partnership,’” she stressed.

Ms. Chatardová said the private sector can contribute to more inclusive value chains, diversity policies – including marginalized groups in decision-making processes.

“I would also like to take the opportunity to challenge the business leaders present here today to consider making bold commitments to act and invest towards co-designing a more inclusive future for all,” she concluded.

This forum will contribute important elements to a special ECOSOC meeting York in May, which will inform discussions at the [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) in July 2018.

[Security Council condemns terrorist attack against African Union mission in Somalia](#)

The United Nations Security Council on Wednesday strongly condemned the terrorist attack on 1 April perpetrated by the Al-Shabaab group against the Ugandan contingent of the African Union mission in Somalia.

“The members of the Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its

forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security," said a statement issued to the press.

The Council underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice.

The attack reportedly killed and injured a number of soldiers belonging to the mission, known as AMISOM.

The Council underscored its full support to AMISOM in delivering their mandate to reduce the threat posed by the terrorist group Al-Shabaab and armed opposition groups in Somalia, and paid tribute to all international actors working to bring peace and stability in Somalia.