

# UN report assesses 'huge benefits' and challenges of green energy revolution

12 May 2017 – The latest United Nations report on energy-efficiency technologies shows that low-carbon technologies apparently aid clean air, save water and cut land use, and could reduce 25 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions and 17 million tonnes of particulates a year.

“We are on the right track. We know that cleaning up the air we breathe gives rise to huge benefits to both human and environmental health, and we know, too, that low-carbon energy efficiency technologies can help us reduce damaging climate change,” said Erik Solheim, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) in a [press release](#) on the new report.

At the same time, the UN Environment chief said: “[We are] also clear on the need for greater action on building a circular economy that cuts waste, and on production innovations that could also create new, green jobs.”

Entitled “[Green Technology Choices](#): The Environmental and Resource Implications of Low-Carbon Technologies,” the report, released today at the Vienna Energy Forum, was compiled by a group of eminent experts in natural resource management hosted by UN Environment.

The panel examined eight energy efficiency technologies and 36 sub-technologies across buildings, industry and transportation and provided a global assessment of the benefits, risks and trade-offs encountered when energy efficiency technologies are deployed alongside low-carbon electricity supply technologies.

Among its findings, the report notes that research confirms that demand-side technologies reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as many other environmental impacts. However, the magnitude of those improvements varies widely among technologies and regions.

Indeed, in some cases, say the experts, demand-side technologies may increase resource consumption and even greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, it is crucial to understand where, when, and with which technology investment should be placed to maximize benefits.

The report compared two scenarios – one for a global temperature rise of 6 degrees Celsius and the other assuming that the global target of 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels is achieved.

Key findings of the analysis include:

- Under the 2-degree scenario, low-carbon energy production and energy efficiency technologies have the potential to cut about 25 billion tonnes a year of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, which is about 34 per cent lower than the emissions under business-as-usual.

- under the 2-degree scenario more than 17 million tonnes per year of particulate matter and over 3 billion tonnes of emissions toxic to humans could be avoided through the use of low-carbon energy technologies
  - Low-carbon energy technologies could save more than 200 billion cubic metres of water a year and nearly 150,000 square kilometres of land occupation by 2050.
  - Transformation to low-carbon energy technologies will require over 600 million tonnes of metal resources by 2050 for additional infrastructure and wiring needs.
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## [Amid widening needs for displaced Somalis, UN refugee agency revises funding appeal](#)

12 May 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency has increased its funding appeal by \$91 million to meet the humanitarian needs of Somali refugees in the region and the people displaced inside the Horn of Africa country.

“We are seeking some \$488 million to provide continued support to displaced Somalis in 2017,” [said](#) Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), at the regular bi-weekly press briefing in Geneva.

The update includes an additional requirement of \$91 million for Somali refugees in Ethiopia, Kenya, Yemen and those displaced inside Somalia, he added.

“Insecurity, capacity of Government institutions, curtailed humanitarian access, limited livelihood opportunities, lack of basic services and poor infrastructure are some of the key challenges in Somalia,” added Mr. Mahecic, and the current risk of famine with reports of deaths and illnesses caused by drought-related factors is further complicating daily lives of Somalis.

More than two million Somalis are currently displaced by conflict, which has lasted for more than two decades. Some 1.5 million people are internally displaced and nearly 900,000 have crossed the national borders to Kenya, Yemen, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

RELATED: [International support for Somalia must focus on rebuilding security, averting famine – UN chief](#)

The ongoing drought also increases risk of famine-induced displacement in the region. Since November 2016, more than 683,000 people in Somalia have been

internally displaced by drought, including more than 377,000 displaced during the first quarter of 2017.

UNHCR also needs resources to address return and reintegration of 50,000 returnees from Kenya and 10,000 from Yemen.

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## [Attack on Yemeni city could overwhelm humanitarian capacity, warns UN migration agency](#)

12 May 2017 – Warning of the disastrous impact of an imminent attack on a western city and port in Yemen, the United Nations migration agency has called on all actors to use dialogue and talks rather than military force, which will put more civilians in danger.

According to the UN International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), there are grave fears that humanitarian capacity would be overwhelmed once Al Hudaydah port and city are attacked and relief agencies could be forced into a situation to prioritize their efforts in the war-torn country where every single person should be a priority.

A minimum of 400,000 people will flee the city eastwards, once Al Hudaydah is under attack [adding to] the already desperate situation of more than two million displaced people and their conflict-affected host communities, said Mohammed Abdiker, the Director of Operations and Emergencies at IOM, in a [news release](#) today.

In addition to that number, the attack will also severely hamper the UN agency's efforts to evacuate vulnerable migrants through Al Hudaydah Port.

Even without the attack, emergency response in Yemen has been facing immense challenges relating to access, financial resources and the sheer scale of humanitarian need – nearly 19 million people require assistance, more than half of them depend on it for their lives.

The conflict, now into its third year, has pushed the country to the brink of famine with more than eight million facing acute shortages of clean water and sanitation. Healthcare system has virtually collapsed over half of the health facilities not functioning.

Underscoring that humanitarian action, by itself, can never bring peace, IOM has been advocating that violence will only deepen the suffering of Yemeni people.

If all parties to the conflict do not come around the negotiation table

to prevent further military escalation and end violence, humanitarian workers will not be able to continue to respond to increased needs, while helping those already greatly affected by the conflict,&#8221 noted Mr. Abdiker.

***No contingency plan will ever be able to fully respond to the scale of needs &#8211 IOM***

The news release also noted the worsening humanitarian situation across the country, coupled with the unending ground fighting and air strikes, are causing major issues in reaching the most vulnerable people.

Expressing concern that with the scarce resources it has received so far to help the two million displaced people and hundreds of thousands of stranded migrants, IOM warned that no contingency plan will ever be able to fully respond to the scale of needs induced by escalated and even continued fighting.

At the same time, additional financial support is needed to cope with the current and projected needs.

At the recent High-Level Pledging Event on Yemen, the [international community pledged \\$1.1 billion to support the humanitarian response](#). But this just over half of the [\\$2.1 billion needed for 2017](#).

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## **Syria: Agreement on 'de-escalation zones' could lift UN-facilitated political talks**

11 May 2017 – The United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, said today that next week's UN-facilitated talks in Geneva will benefit from the dynamics of the negotiations which began in Astana, Kazakhstan, earlier this month, which saw an agreement between Russia, Iran and Turkey on 'de-escalation zones' in war-torn Syria.

"It is necessary to beat the iron while it is hot," Mr. de Mistura told reporters Thursday in Geneva, where he confirmed that a new round of [intra-Syrian talks](#) is set to run from 16 to 19 May. The idea is also to bring together the Syrian belligerents before the beginning of the month of Ramadan, which begins at the end of May.

He said the new round "will be a rather business-like, rather short comparing to other meetings" and "with more intimate meetings in smaller rooms, in which we can look each other in the eyes."

The UN mediator admitted that under current conditions, "one can advance more with discussions of proximity than with a formal meeting with all the parties

in the same room. Of course, we intend to find a time when we can return to this format," he said.

In any case, "the priority now is to consolidate a cessation of hostilities." According to the Mr. de Mistura, the agreement reached in Astana is a step in the right direction as it pushes towards "a concrete de-escalation in four zones, in addition to the ceasefire."

He went on to say the UN is in discussions with Iran, Russia and Turkey over the control of safe areas in Syria. He recalled that the UN has "a lot of experience" in monitoring, referring to the implementation of the de-escalation zones. He added that it was important that de-escalation in the four zones be followed by much greater humanitarian access.

In accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 on these inter-Syrian discussions, the parties will continue to negotiate on four issues, including governance (political transition), a new constitution, Elections and the fight against terrorism.

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## **Panama's financial reform agenda must prioritize combating tax evasion – UN expert**

11 May 2017 – Following last year's leak of confidential financial documents from a Panama law firm, a United Nations rights expert yesterday called on the countries' authorities to continue to impose greater due diligence on financial and banking institutions.

Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky [said](#) that such reforms would enable parties to prevent and denounce tax fraud, rather than facilitating or taking advantage of them.

"The main component of illicit cash flows at the global level is tax fraud. These funds, which circulate and are deposited in the shadows of the financial and corporate systems, consolidate poverty and inequality in the world," the UN Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights stressed.

Asked by *UN News* if this lack of regulations on taxes is what made Panama appear to some as a "fiscal paradise," Mr. Bohoslavsky noted that the tax component is the most important when companies and wealthy people choose to do business in one country or another, or when simply transferring their funds between countries.

Previously revealed documents, which popularly have been associated with the 'Panama Papers,' have shown how corporations, wealthy individuals and politically exposed persons have systematically hidden assets in more than 21

offshore jurisdictions.

While the expert said the focus of the Panamanian authorities should be on the fight against tax evasion, he also acknowledged their efforts to promote financial and corporate transparency and to strengthen the financial regulatory system, adding that Panama now has a more robust system than it did a few years ago.

As for his eight-day Panama visit, he said: “The most onerous tax evasions must be severely punished within the framework of a comprehensive strategy covering all dimensions of tax fraud.” He added that financial and non-financial intermediaries have the ‘duty of knowing the client’ and should have the obligation to report suspicious transactions.

In the briefing the expert further advocated for the adoption of clear legislation “to prevent conflicts of interest of public officials and to ensure the autonomy of regulatory agencies.”

He added that such evasion consolidate poverty and inequality because it deprives social programs and services of resources, and does not allow public investment in productive infrastructures that drive development.

In this regard Mr. Bohoslavsky recalled that reducing illicit financial flows is clearly linked to reducing poverty and social inequality and will advance the [2030 Agenda](#) and the corresponding Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

Curbing such flows was also agreed to at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development held in July 2015 in Addis Ababa. The outcome, referred to as the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) calls for strengthening support for the work of the [UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters](#) to improve its effectiveness and operational capacity, and engagement with the UN Economic and Social Council.

Independent experts or special rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.