

Summary of the High-level Dialogue on Energy and Energy Action Days: 22-24 September 2021

The first high-level meeting to tackle energy issues under the United Nations General Assembly in 40 years demonstrated broad interest in accelerating ambition towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7) on affordable and clean energy and the net-zero emissions by 2050 goal of the Paris Agreement on climate change. Forty-three Heads of State and Government and over 100 other high-level leaders from governments, UN entities, other intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, and civil society participated in the High-level Dialogue on Energy (HLDE), announcing over 137 commitments called “Energy Compacts.”

Convened by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the HLDE was organized around four thematic “leadership dialogues”:

- accelerating action to achieve universal energy access and net-zero emissions;
- ensuring just and inclusive transitions to leave no one behind;
- catalyzing finance and investment; and
- scaling up action through energy compacts.

The day also featured two “special events” on the theme “raising collective ambition.” Beyond the announcement of Energy Compacts, the chief outcome of the HLDE will be a global roadmap on achieving SDG 7, to be unveiled as part of the UN Secretary-General’s summary of the HLDE, which will be presented to the UN General Assembly.

The HLDE convened virtually on Friday, 24 September 2021 from 9:30 am to 8:06 pm EDT (UTC-4). It was preceded by two “Energy Action Days” that featured panels and presentations of a selection of Energy Compacts.

A Brief History of the High-Level Dialogue on Energy

UN General Assembly resolution 74/225 invited the UN Secretary-General, with the support of the relevant UN system entities, to convene a high-level dialogue in 2021 to promote implementation of the energy-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in support of implementation of the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014-2024), including the Global Plan of Action for the Decade and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, was appointed HLDE Secretary-General. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through the Division for Sustainable Development Goals, served as the Secretariat for the Dialogue and engaged the UN-Energy Secretariat in preparations. The UN-Energy Co-Chairs—Achim Steiner, Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and Damilola Ogunbiyi,

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Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL)—served as Dialogue Co-Chairs.

The High-level Dialogue was structured around five overarching themes, each of which was supported by a multi-stakeholder Technical Working Group (TWG). The Groups produced Thematic Reports containing substantive recommendations on issues related to their themes: energy access; energy transition; enabling the SDGs through inclusive, just energy transitions; innovation, technology, and data; and finance and investment. The TWGs were each supported by three or four UN agencies (“co-leads”), a number of national governments serving as “Global Theme Champions,” and numerous experts who participated in a series of three meetings for each TWG.

The TWGs’ work fed into the Ministerial Thematic Forums held in June 2021, which were intended to provide insights on priority issues under the five themes and inputs into the Dialogue itself. The Forums endorsed the TWGs’ reports as the basis for an action-oriented SDG 7 roadmap to 2030 in support of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Additional outcomes from the Dialogue include voluntary commitments from Member States and other stakeholders in the form of “Energy Compacts.” These compacts identify key outcomes, milestones, and implementation timelines, with clear tracking frameworks towards 2030.

The Dialogue’s outcomes are expected to inform forthcoming intergovernmental processes, including the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs and the 2021 Glasgow Climate Change Conference, as well as follow-up actions from the 2021 Global Sustainable Transport Conference, the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, the 2021-22 UN Biodiversity Conference, and the 2021 Food Systems Summit.

Energy Action Days Report

Energy Action Days convened virtually for 2.5 hours each day on 22-23 September 2021 in advance of the HLDE. Representatives of business, foundations, cities, youth, and other segments of civil society announced “Energy Compact” commitments and mobilized partnerships for transformative action toward achievement of SDG 7 and achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

The Energy Action Day on 22 September featured high-level panels organized on the theme, “The Power of SDG 7 to Create a Better Future for People and Planet.” On 23 September, high-level panels focused on the theme, “Let’s Get it Done! Catalytic Finance for Universal Energy Access and Advancing the Energy Transition.”

The Power of SDG 7 to Create a Better Future for People and Planet

Nisha Pillai, BBC, moderated this event. Noting that 800 million people do not have access to electricity and 2.8 million have no access to clean cooking fuels, she opened the first section on people and planet at the heart of SDG 7.

Participants then watched a video on the work of the Self-Employed Women’s Network of India (SEWA) Grassroot Trading Network for Women in disseminating clean cooking devices.

Energy as a Golden Thread: A Means to Deliver on Domestic and International Priorities and Goals: HLDE Co-Chair Damilola Ogunbiyi said up to four million people die annually from energy poverty and that two-thirds of greenhouse gas emissions come from energy, thus a two-part solution is needed for reaching the

SDG 7 targets and the 2050 climate change goal. She commended UN Member States acting as global champions for change, calling energy a golden thread to deliver on both domestic and international priorities and goals.

Alok Sharma, President, 26th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 26) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), noted the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) warning that the chances of limiting global warming to 1.5 or even 2°C are receding and require an urgent response so as to eliminate one-quarter of emissions by transitioning to clean energy. He noted that renewable energy prices have plummeted and can deliver affordable power to communities for the first time, and that coal energy is “going up in smoke.” He called on countries to stop issuing coal power permits and to carry forward the momentum created on SDG 7 to COP 26 and beyond.

Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President, European Commission, said the European Union (EU) has put its 2050 climate neutrality goal into law, decoupled economic growth from emissions, and is supporting Africa’s goal for universal energy access by 2030. He said all countries must stop funding overseas coal power and phase out existing plants.

Vera Songwe, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa, said Africa faces economic, health, and climate change crises, noting:

- the new African Continental Free Trade Area agreement cannot be implemented without energy for industry;
- Africa faces a third COVID-19 wave, with only 5.5% vaccinated and many hospitals without power; and
- coal power is not competitive.

She noted Africa’s commitment to net-zero emissions by 2050, but stressed it must use natural gas during the transition.

Nisreen Elsaïm, Chair of UN Secretary General’s Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change, said climate justice requires development alongside emissions reductions, since there is no development without energy, and that youth needs energy for developing new innovations to tackle climate change. Noting several reports produced since 2019 show that climate change is devastating for humanity and biodiversity, she said Africa needs investment in renewable energy now; it cannot wait until 2050.

Ikal Angelei, Indigenous Peoples Major Group, noted that energy is often generated from Indigenous Peoples’ lands, yet they often lack access to modern power connections. She called for a rights-based approach to energy development, saying the energy transition is an opportunity for others to partner with Indigenous Peoples to effectively combat climate change and achieve sustainable development for all.

Celebrating Bold Ambition: Energy Compacts I: Benigno López Benítez, Vice President for Sectors and Knowledge, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), announced the Renewable Energy for Latin America and the Caribbean (RELAC) compact, which sets the regional goal of 70% renewable energies participation in installed capacity and electricity generation.

Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development Cooperation, ICELAND, and Ása Regnér, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women, announced a Gender and Energy Compact to catalyze action towards giving women an equal opportunity to lead, participate in, and benefit from a just, sustainable and inclusive energy transition.

Miguel Stilwell de Andrade, CEO, Energias de Portugal (EDP), said his company pledges to be coal-free by 2025, and to be green and carbon neutral by 2030.

Surdeep Singh, Chairman and Managing Director of India's largest utility, NTPC, committed to a compact to install 50+ gigawatts (GW) renewable energy capacity by 2030 and reduce his company's net energy intensity.

Nandita Parshad, Managing Director, Sustainable Infrastructure Group, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), said EBRD has committed to produce 50 Green City Action Plans by 2023, and to put around EUR 1.9 billion into Green Cities priority investments.

Elisabeth Brinton, Executive Vice President, Renewables and Energy Solutions, Royal Dutch Shell, said her company has committed to net zero emissions by 2050 and to provide reliable electricity to 100 million people in emerging markets by 2030.

Alhaji Kanja Sesay, Minister of Energy, SIERRA LEONE, announced a comprehensive clean cooking compact.

Special Keynote: UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed noted that achieving SDG 7 is crucial for meeting the 2050 net zero emissions goal and poses two key challenges: access to modern, affordable and sustainable energy and clean cooking; and decarbonizing our energy systems. She declared "failure is not an option." Mohammed called for using the HLDE to create a just and equitable energy transition for all and for future generations.

Disrupting Energy Markets: Financing the Off-Grid Opportunity: Usha Rao-Monari, Associate Administrator, UNDP, moderated this panel. Kerrie Symmonds, Minister of Energy, BARBADOS, called Barbados the world's first fossil-free island, being universally electrified and aiming for 100% renewable energy by 2030. He stressed an energy mix of solar, wind, ocean energy, and biomass, and highlighted an accelerated investment premium programme for renewable energy that offers high returns for investments in solar and wind technology systems as a mechanism to "quicken the pulse of the investor."

Kate Steel, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, Nithio, said her company found that the private sector was not creating a market for already available and affordable technical solutions for off-grid energy because it could not translate household credit risk into banking terms for investors. She said her company used artificial intelligence models to help companies understand credit risk and cash flows and get solutions into the market, identifying regions needing grant capital or concessional loans versus those that can take on commercial loans with no risk to private capital.

Ryan Levinson, Co-Founder and CEO, SunFunder, said his company's mission is to provide access to renewable energy loans in emerging markets. He said 50% of its capital comes from commercial investors and 50% from donors and funding agencies that take more risk, catalyzing the de-risking of private investment. Lamenting that public institutions too often want zero risk, he highlighted his company's goal to "unlock the capital pipeline" through packaging clean companies and projects in the right investment vehicles.

Javier Manzanares, Deputy Executive Director, Green Climate Fund (GCF), highlighted the GCF's role as the world's largest climate fund, providing blended public-private finance, particularly in least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS) for climate disruptive technologies and innovative solutions, de-risking market-creating projects, and aligning finance

with sustainable development. He said the GCF's wide range of products, such as grants, equity, and concessional loans, encourage private finance to bring solutions to scale.

Celebrating Bold Ambition: Energy Compacts II: Patrick Pouyanné, Chair and CEO, TotalEnergies, committed his company to install 100 GW gross capacity of renewable energy by 2030, providing sustainable electricity to about 80 million people.

Mark Carrato, Coordinator, Power Africa, announced a multi-stakeholder compact to provide 25,000 health facilities in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia with sustainable access to a clean and reliable power source.

Francesco La Camera, Director-General, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), announced a Multi-Stakeholder Green Hydrogen initiative, currently bringing together 29 compacts, with more expected later, for 268 GW of new renewable energy capacity by 2030 and more than 25 million tonnes of green hydrogen.

Ben Backwell, CEO, Global Wind Energy Council, announced a compact with IRENA to increase offshore wind power to 380 GW by 2030 and 2,000 GW by 2050.

Knowledge into Action: Advancing a Just and Inclusive Energy Transition that Also Addresses Achieving Universal Energy Access: Jason Bordoff, Co-Founding Dean, Columbia Climate School, Columbia University, US, moderated this panel. He observed that while most agree that we must transition our energy system, it needs to be done faster and with justice and equity at the center. Bordoff cautioned that enabling economic growth while meeting climate goals "is a staggering challenge."

Kadri Simson, Commissioner for Energy, European Commission, noted that the Commission has proposed an historic legislative package on energy, has joined IRENA's Green Hydrogen initiative, and will announce an ambitious renewable energy compact with IRENA.

Dymphna van der Lans, CEO, Clean Cooking Alliance, discussed how important clean cooking is to meeting health, development, energy, and inclusion goals, but often overlooked in national energy planning stages.

Jules Kortenhorst, CEO, Rocky Mountain Institute, noted that while renewable energy costs have plummeted, capital costs of installation are still high, investment is not meeting the scale needed and finance is poorly organized. He stressed that public finance alone will not suffice to meet SDG 7, so more is needed to reduce the risks for private capital to be deployed through astute use of public finance.

The International Trade Union Confederation said that, if done right, a just transition to decarbonized energy would be a significant jobs generator and build energy security and resilience.

Summary of the First Day: Ogunbiyi summarized the proceedings, highlighting that the 2030 and 2050 goals require urgent action now. She called the Energy Compacts critical short-term actions for achieving the long-term goals, showcasing what is possible. She underscored the strong roles of women in many of the compacts and the critical necessity of bold commitments from the private sector. She called for all to act together to accelerate and scale up the energy transition, welcoming the announcement on the EU's Africa Green Energy Initiative and commitment to support countries with a clean energy roadmap to shift away from coal. Reiterating the call for a just, inclusive transition, she said that with the mobilization of financing for countries, China's announcement

on coal, and the US doubling of climate financing to USD 11 billion, the global horizon on energy looks promising.

Let's Get it Done! Catalytic Finance for Universal Energy Access and Advancing the Energy Transition

On Thursday, 23 September, Moderator Nisha Pillai opened the second day by introducing Paula Flores, Regional Coordinator, Global Youth Energy Outlook, Student Energy. Flores highlighted the need of Indigenous communities for energy for education, health, and a better quality of life. She urged world leaders to make communities more secure with affordable access to energy. HLDE Co-Chair Ogunbiyi called on all to join the nine-year journey to SDG 7 through inclusive processes, and urged world leaders to demonstrate what leadership looks like.

Samantha Power, Administrator, US Agency for International Development (USAID), noted a forthcoming announcement of a new US partnership with countries in Africa and elsewhere for clean energy and new technologies to show that societies can grow while “growing green.” She said the world can, and must, do both.

Riccardo Puliti, Vice President for Infrastructure, World Bank, spoke on efforts to help meet growing demand for energy access while reducing emissions, including through support for:

- scaling up energy efficiency;
- managing coal and other power plants well;
- increasing solar and wind energy; and
- creating energy efficiency targets.

He said the World Bank is increasing its investment in renewable energy to USD 2 trillion annually and halving investments in coal power plants while working to protect the livelihoods of communities dependent on coal.

Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), called for addressing climate change and energy poverty through accelerating the transition to clean, efficient, and affordable energy, noting that such investment will produce three times as many jobs as investing in fossil fuels. She invited everyone to join the Urban Energy Coalition for reducing cities’ energy use and called for nature-based solutions, including greenery and green infrastructure, underscoring the world’s duty of care.

Sharon Ikeazor, Minister of State for Environment, NIGERIA, reaffirmed Nigeria’s commitment to just and equitable transition to clean energy through:

- electrifying five million households with decentralized renewable energy by 2030;
- expanding use of natural gas to increase electricity generation capacity and then integrating renewables; and
- converting 50% of the national grid to renewable energy.

She warned that reaching net zero emissions by 2050 requires achieving SDG 7 by 2030 and called for increased ambition, financial support, and global political alignment on the role of natural gas as an interim step.

HLDE Co-Chair Steiner said the world is on the cusp of an energy revolution. He stressed shifts are already occurring, along different pathways in different countries. He questioned a world where health facilities cannot function during a pandemic and affirmed the UN’s support for countries and communities, saying UNDP aims to provide energy access to 500 million people by 2026.

Celebrating Bold Ambition: Energy Compacts I: Ignacio Galán, Chair and CEO, Iberdrola, announced his company’s commitments to double renewables’ capacity by 2025, cut emission

intensity, and increase electricity access, green hydrogen, and electric vehicle charging stations.

Gustavo Montezano, President, Brazilian National Development Bank, announced the Bank’s joint commitment with the Eletrobras utility to substitute diesel generation in Amazon Isolated Systems with clean, renewable, and affordable energy by 2030.

Arantxa Tapia, Minister for Economic Development, Sustainability and the Environment, Basque Country, Spain, announced two compacts, one on green hydrogen and a second on creating distributed pro-consumer energy co-ops.

Dan Jørgensen, Minister of Climate, Energy and Public Utilities, DENMARK, announced his country’s commitments to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 70% by 2030, generate 100% power from renewables by 2028, upscale offshore wind power to 12 GW, and increase climate finance to at least USD 500 million by 2030.

Khaled Al Huraimel, Group CEO, Bee’ah, announced his company’s compact on creating a waste-to-energy facility, putting a solar power station on a capped landfill, and creating a green hydrogen fueling station to supply a fleet of hydrogen-powered vehicles.

Tomas Anker Christensen, Ambassador for Climate Change, DENMARK, announced a compact with the Cool Coalition to accelerate global transition to efficient and climate-friendly cooling consistent with commitments under the Paris Agreement and the Montreal Protocol’s Kigali Amendment on Hydrofluorocarbons.

Global Dialogue: Advancing the Energy Transition in End Use Sectors – Electrification, Greening End-use Sectors, and Energy Efficiency: This panel was moderated by Nawal Al-Hosany, United Arab Emirates (UAE) Permanent Representative to IRENA.

David Marchick, Chief Operating Officer, US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), called energy poverty a significant hurdle for emerging economies. He noted DFC’s goal to provide energy access to 10 million by 2025.

Patricia Scotland, Secretary-General, The Commonwealth, announced the forthcoming launch of a new toolkit during COP 26, to help SIDS develop business cases for investment in clean energy. She called for strong political will to establish enabling frameworks to attract finance, scale up technology, and lower costs for renewable energy.

Olivier Blum, Chief Strategy and Sustainability Officer, Schneider Electric, noted three best business practices toward global energy transition:

- strategizing one’s trajectory with a roadmap, milestones, and engaged leadership;
- digitizing sustainability management to track and measure energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions; and
- decarbonizing through engaging entire business “ecosystems” and supply chains and reinventing existing processes and business models.

He said innovations are already available; the question is willingness.

Alexander Kormishin, Chair, BRICS (Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China, South Africa) Youth Energy Agency (YEA), said YEA brings BRICS youth perspectives to international platforms such as COP 26. He noted that YEA’s annual Energy Outlook is reviewed by the BRICS energy ministers and that Heads of State highlight YEA’s declarations in their documents, with YEA having become a global platform for youth from the developing world to promote their positions on energy issues.

Celebrating Bold Ambition: Energy Compacts II: David Lecoque, CEO, Alliance for Rural Electrification, said his organization pledged to deliver sustainable energy services to more than 500 million additional people in rural Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

- Sumant Sinha, CEO, ReNew Power, committed his company to:
- provide around-the-clock power from renewables at 20% cheaper tariffs than conventional power;
 - increase renewable energy generating capacity;
 - improve operational efficiency through digital interventions;
 - manufacture solar modules and wind turbines; and
 - become a net-zero organization by 2050.

Koen Peters, Executive Director, GOGLA, the global association for the off-grid solar energy industry, announced his organization's compact to seek off-grid solutions to power one billion lives.

Francesco La Camera, Director-General, IRENA, and Qu Dongyu, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), announced their joint compact to help five countries energize their entire agri-food systems with renewable energy.

Knowledge into Action: Financing Energy Access in Developing Countries/Small Island Developing States: Pillai moderated this panel. Ashvin Dayal, Senior Vice President (Power and Climate), Rockefeller Foundation, and Interim CEO, Global Energy Alliance, explained the Alliance seeks to integrate, better coordinate, and mobilize the many funding sources for energy access and clean energy.

Kevin Kariuki, Vice President for Power, Energy, Climate, and Green Growth, African Development Bank (AfDB), discussed how the AfDB seeks to de-risk energy investment through funding of upstream work on establishing regulatory and institutional frameworks that will attract private investment, catalytic financing to unlock private funds, and promotion of green mini-grids.

Saying that commercially viable clean energy technologies are readily available, and that the problem is operationalizing them, Andrew M. Herscowitz, Chief Development Officer, US DFC, said the DFC is working with the Rockefeller Foundation among others to de-risk investments and is looking into how to promote distributed networks.

Alfonso Rodríguez, Vice Minister for Energy Savings and Efficiency, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, explained that for many SIDS the problems are to have enough backup power capacity to deal with natural emergencies and technical issues with connecting renewable sources, such as solar, to the national grid.

Noting that the finance levels estimated to be needed for the energy transition are immense, Pillai asked panelists where it will come from. Kariuki responded that with the right enabling frameworks and projects that are structured properly, getting the investment funds will not be a problem. Herscowitz concurred, saying "there is no shortage of money that wants to get into this space," that it simply requires developing good frameworks, building capacity, helping people understand the technologies involved, occasionally dealing with entrenched local interests, and working to increase the buy-in from everyone in the recipient country.

Closing: Ogunbiyi reflected on the rich discussions that covered the full scope of the challenges the world faces, and the Energy Compacts that show pathways from ambition to action. She echoed the concerns of youth representatives that we have everything to play for; the fate of humanity lies in our hands.

Report of the High-level Dialogue on Energy

UN Secretary-General António Guterres opened the HLDE on Friday, 24 September 2021. He stressed the need to end energy poverty and limit climate change while providing affordable, renewable, and clean energy for all, and to do this by decarbonizing rapidly and radically over the next decade to achieve the objectives in the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. Guterres highlighted four priorities in this regard:

- closing the energy access gap;
- decarbonizing energy systems;
- mobilizing predictable finance at scale; and
- ensuring no one is left behind through a just and equitable transition.

Abdulla Shahid, President, UN General Assembly, noted that energy is a luxury for millions of people and stressed the need to ensure energy access. He said the Energy Compacts are key mechanisms to drive leadership and action on SDG 7 and encouraged leaders to continue announcing such commitments.

Chebet Lesan, CEO, BrightGreen Renewable Energy, Kenya, reported her company's efforts to provide safer, cheaper cooking fuel from agricultural residues and organic waste and to distribute critical survival products while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. She called for USD 42 billion for the clean cookstove industry to facilitate innovation, build data, and make a strong case for this sector.

Francesco Starace, CEO and General Manager, Enel Group, and President, Enel Foundation, said technology now makes renewable energy the most competitive, convenient energy source, aligning economic growth with preserving the planet's resources. He urged aligning pandemic recovery funds with climate transition goals and not financing energy systems that can become stranded assets.

Leadership Dialogue 1: Accelerating Action to Achieve Universal Energy Access and Net Zero Emissions

HLDE Co-Chair Achim Steiner chaired this dialogue. Steiner said the lack of access of so many to modern and affordable energy is an unacceptable situation and one that can be solved with the tools at hand if the necessary will and resources are applied. He announced UNDP's commitment to mobilize partners to provide access to clean and affordable energy to 500 million additional people.

Global Champions of the HLDE: Uhuru Kenyatta, President, KENYA, described his country's Energy Compact on clean cooking. He called for an international day on clean cooking to raise awareness, political will, and resources for clean cooking, urging everyone to sign on.

Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, President, MALAWI, reported his country's Energy Compact to promote cleaner biomass cookstoves and disseminate them *en masse* to transition to clean cooking and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. He called on everyone to pledge to achieve clean energy and clean cooking by 2030.

Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister, DENMARK, outlined her country's plans to cut emissions 70% by 2030, generate 100% power from renewables by 2028, upscale offshore wind power to 12 GW, and increase climate finance to at least USD 500 million by 2030.

Alexander Novak, Deputy Prime Minister, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, said his country's compact prioritizes eliminating energy poverty and reliably providing consumers in all countries with affordable sources of energy. He cautioned that climate issues should not be used as an argument when competing for markets.

Frans Timmermans, Vice President, European Commission, reported the EUROPEAN UNION's commitment of EUR 4 billion to climate finance for the most disadvantaged countries and its work with IRENA to create roadmaps for industrial-scale access to renewable energy for Africa. He called for industrialized countries to phase out coal and stop its overseas financing.

Tom de Bruijn, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, the NETHERLANDS, reported his country's compact will support low-income countries' energy transition and provide a USD 100 million contribution to the Climate Investment Funds. He also noted the Netherlands' SDG 7 Results facility provides grants supporting access to renewable energy.

Eiichiro Washio, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, JAPAN, characterized SDG 7 as a mountain summit everyone seeks to climb, but for which each climber must take his own route to the top. He said his country will support SDG 7 by providing technology and innovation tailored to the circumstances of each recipient country.

Zhang Jianhua, Director, National Energy Administration, CHINA, said his country will contribute to global access efforts by sharing Chinese experience and wisdom and innovations in energy storage and hydrogen technologies. He called on the world to promote the development of energy technologies in a more open, inclusive and balanced manner that allows all countries to benefit from the latest technologies.

Heads of State or Government: Gaston Browne, Prime Minister, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), said SIDS must shift from fossil fuel dependency to an energy mix based on renewables, but to do so they require access to affordable financing and a level playing field. He called for shifting fossil fuel subsidies to renewables as a transition measure and highlighted the SIDS Lighthouses Initiative.

Sebastian Kurz, Federal Chancellor, AUSTRIA, said his country has largely achieved SDG 7 and intends to become the innovation leader in sustainable energy. He explained his country will focus its international energy aid on helping SIDS.

Co-Lead Organizations of the Technical Working Groups: David Malpass, President, World Bank Group, underscored the Bank's commitment to help client countries achieve SDG 7.

Courtenay Rattray, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, urged greater international focus on helping LDCs.

Francesco La Camera, Director General, IRENA, highlighted his agency's compact to mobilize USD 3 billion for financing and implementation of low-carbon and climate-resilient renewable energy projects. He also mentioned IRENA's work with the EU to provide clarity on renewable investment priorities and costs in Africa and Latin America.

Member State and Multi-stakeholder Leaders: Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (IMF), noted an IMF staff proposal for a global carbon price floor.

Per Heggnes, CEO, IKEA Foundation, and Rajiv Shah, President, Rockefeller Foundation, discussed their foundations' joint commitment to invest USD 1 billion over 10 years to bring distributed renewable energy access to one billion people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Abigail Binay, Mayor of Makati, Philippines, stressed the role local and regional governments should play in the energy transition.

Statement by the Dialogue Secretary-General: Encouraged by the level of engagement, HLDE Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin called for scaled-up efforts toward achieving SDG 7. He said key elements of a global roadmap are clear, including:

- closing the energy access gap for the 760 million who lack access;
- ensuring clean cooking solutions;
- scaling up financing for clean energy solutions;
- leveraging synergies with other SDGs to pursue a just and inclusive energy transition; and
- dramatically scaling up action.

Leadership Dialogue 2: Ensuring Just and Inclusive Energy Transitions to Leave No One Behind

HLDE Co-Chair Damilola Ogunbiyi chaired this dialogue. She said a just and equitable transition must factor in the aspirations of all energy-poor people and provide clean, affordable energy, noting the transformative effect of energy on quality of life for people and communities. Ogunbiyi called on everyone to form an Energy Compact network to build momentum, deliver progress on the ground, and capitalize on renewable energy investments.

Global Champions of the HLDE: Jair Bolsonaro, President, BRAZIL, noted his country's compact to increase production and use of biofuel and create a biofuels carbon market, as well as a commitment to provide solar energy to 100 million Indigenous and riparian families.

Ivan Duque Marquez, President, COLOMBIA, cited his country's participation in the RELAC energy compact, which commits countries to a 70% renewables target by 2030.

Andrzej Duda, President, POLAND, noted post-COVID 19 challenges while pursuing a low-emissions economy. He cited his country's action plan to diversify its energy matrix to increase the share of low-emissions sources, including nuclear, along with natural gas during the transition.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President, PORTUGAL, said his country's compact devotes attention to green hydrogen and mobilizing international financial flows to green energy. He noted Portugal's additional contribution of EUR 20 million by 2030 towards projects on safe and accessible energy for everyone.

Teresa Ribera, Vice President and Minister for the Ecological Transition, SPAIN, called on countries to take responsibility for energy-poor countries and noted the need for training and new jobs for workers from fossil fuel sectors.

Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development Cooperation, ICELAND, cited his country's compact to become carbon neutral and independent of fossil fuels by 2050 and noted Iceland's intent to pursue an Energy Compact on geothermal energy.

Raj Kumar Singh, Minister of Power, INDIA, reported his country's compact on green hydrogen and increasing and exporting renewable energy. Noting common but differentiated responsibilities and different national circumstances, he called for technology and affordable finance from developed countries.

Greg Hands, Minister of State for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change, UNITED KINGDOM, reported his country's commitments on:

- phasing out electricity generation from coal;
- GBP 200 million in support for wind energy; and
- a COP 26 Energy Transition Council for providing more coordinated support for the clean energy transition worldwide.

Sharon Ikeazor, Minister of State for Environment, NIGERIA, said the energy transition “will and must look different” in developing countries. She noted her country’s compact commits to provide electricity access to 25 million people by 2023 using solar technologies. She cautioned Nigeria would use natural gas for some time to come during the energy transition.

Heads of State and Government: Gotabaya Rajapaksa, President, SRI LANKA, noted his country is co-leader of an Energy Compact for No New Coal Power and seeks to source 70% of its power from renewable sources by 2030. He said its nationally determined contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement commits it to not construct any new coal-fired power plants.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President, TURKEY, cautioned against “universal and prototyped” solutions and called instead for adapting to each country’s circumstances.

Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President, UGANDA, supported a focus on modern sources of energy, stressing that electricity is crucial for the production of affordable goods and services. He said natural gas will serve as transitional energy and concessional loans are needed for developing countries.

Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister, BELGIUM, noted his country is in the top five for offshore wind energy production. He announced Belgium will present its hydrogen vision in the coming weeks, saying it will foster partnerships for green hydrogen networks.

Moeketsi Majoro, Prime Minister, LESOTHO, stressed the need for grid extension and off-grid solutions, and noted efforts to build a hydropower plant, two solar stations, and a wind energy plant.

Co-Lead Organizations of the Technical Working Groups: Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), said ESCAP’s compact will assist member countries with energy access, grid connectivity, and investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General, World Health Organization, discussed a strategic roadmap endorsed in June 2021 by the High-level Coalition on Health and Energy that calls for:

- dramatically increasing investment in electrifying health care facilities and clean cooking;
- providing human and financial resources for clean energy actions for the health sector and households; and
- developing tailored policy and financing schemes to unlock the potential of clean and sustainable energy solutions and address health sector needs.

Mounir Tabet, Deputy Executive Secretary, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), highlighted ESCWA’s compact on enabling the SDGs in the region through inclusive, just energy transitions that are “gender-responsive, locally led, and globally connected.”

Member State and Multi-stakeholder Leaders: Pyon Debye, Deputy Minister for Health and Medical Services, NAURU, on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States, stressed the need to raise the level of ambition for national climate action, including for renewable energy targets, and called attention to the commitment to achieve 10 GW installed renewable energy in all SIDS.

Dag Inge Ulstein, Minister of International Development, NORWAY, recalled his country’s recent pledge to provide USD 1.2 billion in funding for renewable energy projects in developing countries over five years.

Numar Alfonso Blanco Bonilla, Executive Secretary, Latin American Energy Organization, discussed the regional commitment under RELAC to bring renewable installed capacity to 70% by 2030.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA described ways in which it has institutionalized global commitments through national legislation and implementing policies.

Leadership Dialogue 3: Catalyzing Finance and Investment

This dialogue was chaired by HLDE Co-Chair Steiner. Saying the USD 400 billion in commitments already catalogued by the HLDE “is just the beginning,” Steiner called for scaled-up and innovative financing for sustainable energy. He noted that just 1% of the USD 400 trillion held by private capital today would be enough to realize the energy transition and called on all to decide on the future they want.

Global Champions of the HLDE: Roberto Cingolani, Minister for Ecological Transition, ITALY, urged everyone to “build forward better” and avoid locking in carbon-intensive energy structures. He noted his country’s efforts as Chair of the G20 to get commitments on climate and energy.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, PAKISTAN, noted his country’s commitments to reach universal access, double its renewable energy generation and energy efficiency rates, and place a moratorium on coal-fired power plants. He highlighted the investment potential in solar and wind in Pakistan.

Norbert Barthle, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, GERMANY, said it is time to act on phasing out all fossil fuels and massively expand renewable energy. He said his country’s compact will support partner countries in expanding the use of decentralized energy and green hydrogen.

Heads of State and Government: Taneti Maamau, President, KIRIBATI, noted his country is drafting an energy act to enable more investment in renewables and invited development partners to support “our march to net zero by 2050.”

Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President, ZIMBABWE, highlighted his country’s domestic efforts to foster renewable energy and welcome investment in the sector.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister, GREECE, said his country plans to switch from coal by 2025 and is seeking to double wind and solar generating capacity by 2030, while increasing energy efficiency efforts.

Sher Bahadur Deuba, Prime Minister, NEPAL, noted 90% of Nepalese have access to electricity and the country has committed to realizing climate-resilient power through hydropower and other renewable sources, and to become net-zero by 2050.

Co-Lead Organizations of the Technical Working Groups: Werner Hoyer, President, European Investment Bank (EIB), noted the EIB is the first multilateral development bank aligned with the Paris Agreement and phasing out financing of fossil fuel projects. He called for a just transition to green economies and for tripling energy investments in developing countries and emerging markets by 2030.

Fatih Birol, Executive Director, International Energy Agency (IEA), noted IEA’s global roadmap shows it is possible to achieve deep emissions reductions alongside the SDGs and universal access

to clean, modern energy by 2030. He said the race to net-zero is a race against time, and unless all nations finish the race nobody wins, so international collaboration is essential.

Member State and Multi-stakeholder Leaders: John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, US, said the US Energy Compact calls for:

- reducing carbon emissions by 50-52% by 2030 and making the power sector carbon-zero by 2035;
- 80% of its electricity to come from clean sources by 2030, with 450 GW from renewable energy;
- supporting energy transitions in emerging economies including India, Indonesia, and South Africa; and
- aid to increase access to electricity in sub-Saharan Africa.

Eric Garcetti, Mayor, City of Los Angeles, US, on behalf of the C40 coalition of cities, called on national leaders, investors, and entrepreneurs to help cities accelerate the clean energy transition and address energy inequality. Citing findings that 100% clean energy grids are possible, affordable and equitable, he requested national governments' support for C40 cities to reduce emissions to net-zero by 2050.

Agnes Kalibata, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy to the 2021 Food Systems Summit, said addressing the food-energy nexus is critical, noting that together these sectors are today's biggest emitters.

Yannick Glemarec, Executive Director, GCF, called for ambitious decarbonization across all sectors. He said the GCF has raised USD 10 billion, which in turn has mobilized USD 30 billion to accelerate the energy transition through renewable energy generation, efficient and reliable energy transmission, access to clean energy, and de-risking market-creating projects

Leadership Dialogue 4: Scaling Up Action Through Energy Compacts

This dialogue was chaired by HLDE Co-Chair Ogunbiyi. She reported that along with identifying the scale of the problem and the ambition needed, speakers at the HLDE had announced commitments and actions they would undertake to address them, including 137 Energy Compacts as of 20 September. She said further ambition is particularly needed to achieve clean cooking, and she looked forward to more commitments and action on the ground during the coming decade to achieve SDG 7.

Global Champions of the HLDE: Lionel Rouwen Aingimea, President, NAURU, said his country would submit a national compact to increase to 50% its renewable energy capacity, while also enhancing energy efficiency and increasing electrification in transport.

Raquel Peña, Vice President, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, said her country supports the commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Juan Carlos Jobet, Minister of Energy, CHILE, said his country is committed to closing coal plants by 2040 and will electrify its urban transport by 2035. He noted Chile is also co-leading a global green hydrogen compact.

Mika Lintilä, Minister of Economic Affairs, FINLAND, said his country aims to be climate neutral by 2035.

Roberto Ordoñez, Minister of Energy, HONDURAS, reported his country had submitted 13 Energy Compacts, including on energy efficiency and inclusion of women in the energy sector.

Georges Pierre Lesjongard, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, MAURITIUS, said his country would phase out coal plants by 2030. He urged finding ways to recycle all renewable energy equipment.

Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, MOROCCO, said his country is seeking to be key actor in the green hydrogen sector and has developed a partnership with Ethiopia on access to renewable energy as part of Morocco's commitment to Africa.

Abdullah Bin Mohammed Al Nuaimi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE), highlighted that the UAE is home to three of the largest solar plants in capacity and said Masdar continues to lead the energy sector at home and abroad.

Jorge Rivera Staff, National Secretary of Energy, PANAMA, said his country is part of a regional hub for green energy and highlighted Panama's compact on innovation contests to support SDG 7 and energy transition.

Heads of State and Government: Milo Đukanović, President, MONTENEGRO, reported his country had updated its NDC for UNFCCC COP 26.

Hakainde Hichilema, President, ZAMBIA, said his country aims to become a net exporter of renewable energy and is initiating an ambitious plan to enhance its capacity.

Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister, BARBADOS, said coal "must go immediately." She said her country has submitted an ambitious NDC and encouraged all to move toward more renewable electricity and rapidly decarbonize.

Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister, SERBIA, said her country has started the green energy transition with new installed renewable energy and the adoption of a new law on renewable energy sources that permits citizens to install solar on their rooftops, among other actions.

Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister, THAILAND, said his country has a bio-circular green plan and aims to have 30% electric vehicles by 2030.

Nicolae Popescu, Deputy Prime Minister, MOLDOVA, reported his country has updated its national energy efficiency legislation.

Co-Lead Organizations of the Technical Working Groups: Qu Dongyu, Director General, FAO, emphasized the need for innovative, clean energy solutions to achieve SDGs 7 and 2 (zero hunger).

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-HABITAT, said cities consume two-thirds of energy but urban poor have no access to basic services.

Li Yong, Director General, UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), said local innovators and entrepreneurs must be supported to develop clean solutions that support green incomes. He called for green hydrogen use in industry, low-carbon agendas, and gender empowerment.

Member State and Multi-stakeholder Leaders: Seleshi Bekele, Minister for Water, Irrigation and Energy, ETHIOPIA, cited his country's commitments to, by 2030:

- achieve 100% universal electricity access;
- increase biogas access for clean cooking; and
- increase the level of renewables overall while reducing the share of hydropower in the energy mix.

Walid Fayad, Minister of Energy and Water, LEBANON, said 99% of Lebanese have energy access but with continuous brownouts, and reported Lebanon's Energy Compact will increase renewables and natural gas under a new legal framework, while increasing energy efficiency.

Akinwumi Adesina, President, AfDB, said three-fourths of the world's population without energy access is in Africa and the AfDB is putting USD 7.2 billion into the energy sector to increase access, unlock Africa's potential in renewables, and leverage co-financing from the private sector.

Ruth Porat, Chief Financial Officer, Google, said her company is building a carbon-free future for its operations, its users, and the broader global community. She stated that by 2030 100% of its data centers and campuses will use 100% carbon-free energy. She also noted her company's compact with SEforALL to drive investment in carbon-free grids.

Closing of the Leadership Dialogues: HLDE Secretary-General Liu and UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed closed the leadership dialogues on behalf of UN Secretary-General Guterres. Liu said the level of energy and commitment shown at the HLDE has given him new optimism about the prospects for achieving SDG 7. He reported the UN Secretary-General's summary of the HLDE will contain a roadmap. He praised the Energy Compacts for "setting the bar high," and said UN-Energy will continue to support mobilization of more Energy Compacts in the years to come.

Mohammed said the HLDE was just the start of a nine-year journey. She stressed four pillars of the effort to kickstart action toward achieving SDG 7: closing the energy access gap; decarbonizing the energy sector; mobilizing predictable finance at scale and promoting the transfer of technology to the developing world; and leaving no one behind.

Special Event I: Raising Collective Ambition on SDG 7 and Climate Action

Roundtable Discussion: At mid-day, HLDE host Nisha Pillai moderated a roundtable discussion on raising collective ambition, featuring HLDE Co-Chairs Steiner and Ogunbiyi, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinoza, ENERGIA International Coordinator Sheila Oparaocha, ENGIE CEO Catherine MacGregor, and Council on Energy, Environment and Water CEO Arunabha Ghosh.

Statements: The roundtable was followed by a series of statements from countries and other interested parties that have not yet submitted Energy Compacts, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Algeria, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Namibia, Oman, Papua New Guinea and Senegal. All interventions can be viewed in their entirety [here](#). Statements included the following.

Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General, IAEA, said nuclear is and will be part of the solution to climate change and the IAEA is ready to help make it happen.

Nasrul Hamid, Minister of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, BANGLADESH, said his country: is revising its power sector master plan with a view to promoting low-carbon transformation of the whole power supply; has cancelled plans for 10 coal-fired plants; launched one of the biggest home solar systems in the world; and aims to scale up renewables to 45% by 2050.

Suy Sem, Minister of Mines and Energy, CAMBODIA, said his country will increase the share of renewables in the power mix "to the maximum extent possible," but cautioned that some continued dependence on fossil fuels is unavoidable so Cambodia is looking into clean coal and carbon capture and storage technologies.

Andrea Meza Murillo, Minister of Environment and Energy, COSTA RICA, noted her country's plans for green hydrogen and policies and measures targeting end uses and the social dimension of energy and climate policies.

Pohamba Shifeta, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, NAMIBIA, discussed his country's plans to become a regional green hydrogen hub.

Salim bin Naser Al Aafi, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Minerals, OMAN, said his country aims to generate 30% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030 or sooner, and will make affordable, clean energy available to all corners of the country.

Special Event II: Raising Collective Ambition on SDG 7 and Climate Action

The evening special event featured a series of statements by ministers and other representatives of countries that have not yet proposed an Energy Compact, including Bahrain, Burkina Faso, Cuba, Cyprus, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Ghana, Guyana, Holy See, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Micronesia, Mongolia, Mozambique, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Seychelles, Singapore, Sudan, Sweden, Tajikistan, Timor Leste, Tonga, and Trinidad and Tobago.

All interventions can be viewed in their entirety [here](#) (advance to the 8:36 mark). Statements included the following:

Vickram Bharrat, Minister of Natural Resources, GUYANA, noted his country's actions to meet the 2030 and 2050 goals, but reaffirmed Guyana's sovereign right to develop energy resources and define appropriate policies for their production and use.

Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, HOLY SEE, called for reasonable energy pricing, ethical business practices, and subsidies for the poor. Quoting Pope Francis, he said energy use must not destroy civilization.

Arifin Tasrif, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, INDONESIA, said energy transitions need to be undertaken using inclusive processes and public participation. He said his country is transitioning away from coal and promotes innovative financing platforms including green bonds and de-risking activities.

Eamon Ryan, Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, IRELAND, highlighted that the European plan is built around renewable energy and energy efficiency, and said Ireland is cutting emissions in half during the next decade and will be net-zero by 2050.

Karine Elharrar, Minister of National Infrastructures, Energy and Water Resources, ISRAEL, said her country's activities include a carbon tax, investment in electric transportation, and research and development on energy storage solutions.

Magzum Mirzagaliyev, Minister of Energy, KAZAKHSTAN, said his country is striving to enhance energy efficiency and achieve zero emissions.

Aminath Shauna, Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Technology, MALDIVES, said we need the entire world to transition to a world fueled by renewables.

Kandhi Elieisar, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MICRONESIA, said his country will revisit its energy plan to ensure its energy roadmap reflects the urgency of the situation.

Choi Jong-moon, Vice Minister, Foreign Affairs, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, noted his country is: developing e-vehicles; halting construction of overseas coal plants; forming public-private partnerships in the hydrogen economy; and doubling its contribution to the GCF.

Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Trade and Industry, SINGAPORE, reported his country's work to: decarbonize its power grid to today's 95% natural gas; scale up renewables and financing for Asian companies' green solutions; and develop a carbon trading market.

David Abiamofo, Minister of Natural Resources, SURINAME, reported Suriname's aims for 24/7 energy access for everyone, energy efficiency, and use of renewables as part of an optimal energy mix.

Per Olsson Fridh, Minister for International Development Cooperation, SWEDEN, called for naming end dates for fossil fuel production and consumption and noted Sweden's progress toward fossil fuel-free steel production by 2026.

Muhriddin Sirojiddin, Minister for Foreign Affairs, TAJIKISTAN, noted Tajikistan's work with SEforALL to ensure energy access through developing sustainable mechanisms for investment in renewable energy sources and energy-efficient technologies.

Salvador Eugénio Soares dos Reis Pires, Minister of Public Works, TIMOR LESTE, noted his country's policies and investments in improving access to more reliable, sustainable, and clean energy through international and regional partnerships.

Poasi Tei, Minister of Energy, Information, Disaster Management Environment, Climate Change and Communications, TONGA, said the pandemic disrupted Tonga's progress toward achieving 50% renewable energy by 2020 but it still aims to achieve 100% by 2035.

Stuart Young, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, noted his country's unique position with its hydrocarbon economy, saying it is focusing on carbon capture and storage, natural gas, and hydrogen and green hydrogen.

A Brief Analysis of the HLDE

As UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted in his opening remarks, the year-long undertaking to pull countries and others together in a High-level Dialogue on Energy (HLDE) was long overdue, with three-quarters of a billion people still lacking access to electricity, energy production still responsible for 75% of greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution from cooking fuels still killing millions annually, mainly women and children, and one-quarter of health clinics in Africa "grind to a halt" during a global pandemic because they have no power.

Guterres' aim in calling together world leaders for this high-level dialogue was to ensure that we "are not condemned to this dark future." The Dialogue succeeded in attracting 1500 participants and attendees, fostering almost 150 "Energy Compacts" by governments and other entities, with promises of many more to come, and provided a foundation for the Secretary-General to develop a planned "roadmap" toward a better future, which he will then offer to the world.

This analysis will briefly consider what the HLDE accomplished and the prospects for success in achieving the goals that the HLDE process was intended to catalyze.

The Current Situation

Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7) is blunt, directing the world to meet the concrete target of *ensuring* access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. But the world is off track to meet SDG 7 and its targets by 2030. We are also far from meeting the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C by achieving "net zero" emissions by 2050, as starkly illustrated in the UNFCCC Secretariat's just-published [synthesis report](#) on nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. Indeed, in its own recent [report](#) on the physical science basis of climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) finds that without "immediate, rapid, and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions," temperature increases will reach the 1.5°C threshold ten years earlier than previously projected—in just over a decade.

The HLDE process was set out as an urgent wake-up call, not only for meeting the critical SDG 7 goals, but also to keep hope alive for meeting the Paris Agreement goal. Thus, Guterres called on everyone at the HLDE to "begin today" to resolve the problems faced within the next ten years, by decarbonizing rapidly and radically, particularly in our energy systems. Otherwise, he warned, we may deal a fatal blow to the SDGs, ourselves, and the planet, with poverty, disease, and destruction of ecosystems.

A Meeting of Minds

The HLDE's stated purpose was to catalyze voluntary commitments enshrining concrete targets toward achieving the SDG 7 targets and the Paris Agreement's ambition. These voluntary commitments, in the form of Energy Compacts, began to be submitted in July 2021, with the HLDE itself spurring almost 150 world leaders, including Heads of State and Government as well as business and civil society "champions" and others, to announce what their countries, companies, and organizations intend to do to reach these goals. In total, the financial compacts registered with the UN total almost USD 500 billion so far, with more expected. Many indicated that they would introducing additional compacts in the coming months, and the UN has vowed to seek more Energy Compacts and to create a support network for spurring compacts in order to maintain, if not build more, momentum toward achieving the 2030 goal.

Is it Enough?

As with anything, aspirations are only just that. Pledges today may not be fulfilled tomorrow. In many cases, they may represent nothing new beyond what is already being done. Such was the case of many Annex I (industrialized) countries' commitments under the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. Reaching further back, the US "Forests for the Future" pledge of USD 150 million to combat deforestation at the 1992 Earth Summit represented no new money but a re-branding of monies already within the US overseas aid budget and diverted from other, no doubt worthy, causes—a pledge which never became a reality. Will the HLDE Energy Compacts prove equally unsubstantial?

There is reason for some optimism. First, the attention paid to the HLDE from world leaders exceeded all expectations of the organizers, with dozens of requests for time to make a statement still coming in less than 24 hours before the event, ultimately leading the HLDE to expand from a half-day event to eleven straight hours of speeches. Even countries and others not yet prepared to announce

full Energy Compacts wanted to share the spotlight to describe what they were prepared to do or already doing. This is evidence that the multiple crises that the world currently facing may be taken seriously, with a new urgency. The costs of inaction are now being felt in the climate change-linked flooding, droughts, and wildfire events across the world in 2021, and these costs can be compared with the (short-term) costs—and indeed the prospective benefits—of addressing these climate crises through finally overcoming our economic dependence on greenhouse gas-producing energies.

Secondly, the global benefits of the “energy revolution” in transitioning to decarbonization and renewable and sustainable energy are much better recognized today than even a few years ago. As UNDP Administrator and HLDE Co-Chair Achim Steiner put it, it is no longer a question of “economy versus environment or health versus economy.” What is good for the planet is good for people, and projections cited throughout the event about the numbers of new “green” jobs and improved livelihoods that such an energy transition will bring—and is already bringing—seem to bear this out, not to mention the health and survival benefits that a cleaner world brings to humans and nature.

While a high-level “dialogue” to foster voluntary commitments might be seen as something less than negotiating binding commitments, as has been the traditional template for many global environmental issues, the HLDE, like the 2017 UN Ocean Conference, brings an improvement on the traditional template in its recognition that governments alone cannot help us achieve SDG 7 and the Paris Agreement goals, but that partnerships are needed with civil society, the private sector and all levels of governance. The HLDE has thus expanded the number of actors and entities that are not depending on governments to make decisions and take action but are thinking realistically about what they themselves can and will do, and knowing that their actions are appreciated.

In this, it may be perceived that many of the world’s leaders and at least some of the world’s people are recognizing that we are all in the same boat, and that reaching a safe harbor will take all of us acting together. This is perhaps the greatest lesson of the High-Level Dialogue on Energy. Only time will tell if we can reach the safe harbor before it is too late.

Upcoming Meetings

Africa Climate Week 2021: The Africa Climate Week 2021 Virtual Thematic Sessions will take the pulse of climate action in the region, explore climate challenges and opportunities, and showcase ambitious solutions. **dates:** 26-29 September 2021 **location:** virtual **www:** unfccc.int/ACW2021

Youth4Climate - Driving Ambition: The meeting will offer young people worldwide the opportunity to develop concrete proposals ahead of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26). It will have four major themes: youth driving ambition; sustainable recovery; non-state actors’ engagement; and climate-conscious society. **dates:** 28-30 September 2021 **location:** Milan, Italy **www:** minambiente.it/pagina/towards-cop26-pre-cop-and-youth-event-youth4climate-driving-ambition

Pre-COP 26 Summit: The Pre-COP 26 Summit will take place ahead of UNFCCC COP 26. The Conference will be attended by representatives of around 40 states, representatives of the UNFCCC Secretariat, the Presidents of the Subsidiary Bodies of the Convention and a number of civil society actors who play a key

role in the fight against climate change or in the transition towards sustainable development. **dates:** 30 September – 2 October 2021 **location:** Milan, Italy **www:** mite.gov.it/pagina/milan-pre-cop

UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference: The second UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference will provide an opportunity to focus attention on the opportunities, challenges, and solutions towards achieving sustainable transport worldwide with a view to helping achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change in the Decade of Action. **dates:** 14-16 October 2021 **location:** Beijing, China **www:** un.org/en/conferences/transport2021

Glasgow Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 26): COP 26, the 16th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 16), and the third meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 3) are convening one year after the conference was postponed due to COVID-19. **dates:** 31 October - 12 November 2021 **location:** Glasgow, Scotland, UK **www:** unfccc.int/

SEforALL Forum: Originally scheduled for 2020, the Forum has been postponed twice due to the pandemic. Focusing on the theme, ‘Building Speed, Reaching Scale, Closing the Gap,’ this Forum will provide a global platform to mobilize resources, connect partners and showcase action to realize the promise of the sustainable energy revolution for everyone. **date:** 11 January 2022 (TBC) **location:** Kigali, Rwanda **www:** seforall.org/forum/update

12th IRENA Assembly: The twelfth session of the annual meeting of IRENA’s decision-making authority will consider IRENA’s work programme and budget, including any follow-up to the HLDE. **dates:** 15-16 January 2022 **location:** Abu Dhabi, UAE **www:** irena.org/institutionalstructure

For additional meetings, see sdg.iisd.org/

Glossary

AfDB	African Development Bank
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COP	Conference of the Parties
DFC	US International Development Finance Corporation
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GW	Gigawatt
HLDE	High-level Dialogue on Energy
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency
LDCs	Least developed countries
RELAC	Renewable Energy for Latin America and the Caribbean
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEforALL	Sustainable Energy for All
SIDS	Small island developing states
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change