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UN advisory group seeks to enhance public-private links to boost access to energy



UNIDO chief Kandeh K. Yumkella (standing) during a meeting of the Advisory Group on Energy and Climate Change

15 July 2010 – The potential of new public-private partnerships to enhance energy access and efficiency topped today’s discussions by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s high-level advisory group on the nexus between energy and climate change.

“Governments alone will not be able to deal with the challenges,” said Kandeh K. Yumkella, Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization ([UNIDO](#)), at the latest meeting of the Energy and Climate Change Advisory Group.

“We need a commitment from all sectors of society, including the private sector, academia and civil society, as well as from international organizations and NGOs [non-governmental organizations],” he added.

The meeting in Mexico City was hosted by Carlos Slim Helú, Mexican businessman and one of the world’s wealthiest people, who is also a member of the Group, set up by Mr. Ban last year and comprising 20 business leaders, academics and representatives of the UN and civil society.

In April, the Group launched a [report](#) calling on nations to commit themselves to two complementary goals.

First, it urged universal access to modern energy services that are reliable, affordable, sustainable, and, if possible, from low-emissions sources by 2030.

It also underlined the need to slash global energy intensity, measured by the quantity of energy per unit of gross domestic product (GDP).

Currently, some 3 billion people worldwide rely on traditional biomass for cooking and heating, resulting in adverse health effects if used in inadequately ventilated buildings, with 1.6 billion having no access to electricity.

“This is why we are looking at launching a worldwide campaign to ensure that access to modern energy services no longer represents a barrier to development,” Mr. Yumkella said. “A reliable, affordable energy supply is the key to economic growth and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals [[MDGs](#)],” the eight anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline.

Private companies, he pointed out, already have the technology needed to make global energy systems less dependent on fossil fuels, while many governments are offering financial incentives and support for this transition.

“What we need today is to forge strong public-private partnerships to tackle these goals,” the UNIDO chief, who chairs the Advisory Group, said.

Today’s meeting, co-hosted by Mexican Energy Minister Georgina Kessel Martínez, drew top UN officials and business executives, while representatives of Sharp and other corporations presented some of the latest renewable technologies.

In a related development, a new report launched today by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) found that the United States and Europe have added more capacity to their electricity supplies from renewable sources, such as wind and solar, for the second consecutive year.

In 2009, renewables accounted for 60 per cent of newly-installed capacity in Europe and more than 50 per cent in the USA.

“The sustainable energy investment story of 2009 was one of resilience, frustration and determination,” said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

The sector was able to weather the global financial downturn, but faced setbacks given that last December’s UN climate change conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, did not achieve the targets that had been hoped for, he noted.

“Yet there was determination on the part of many industry actors and governments, especially in rapidly developing economies, to transform the financial and economic crisis into an opportunity for greener growth,” the official said.

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