

Ninth session of the IRENA Assembly

2019 Legislators Forum

10 January 2019, 09:00 – 14:00, Room A2
St. Regis Hotel, Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi

Catalysing Parliamentary Action to Accelerate the Global Energy Transformation and Implement the Sustainable Development Goal on Energy

Background

As important actors participating in the decision-making process in the field of energy, legislators play an increasingly significant role in supporting the uptake of renewable energy. IRENA has been engaging with key members of parliament around the world, who have an interest in renewable energy and its interlinkages with socio-economic development, technology, policy and finance.

For the past four consecutive years, IRENA hosted a Legislators Forum in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on the side-line of its annual Assembly meeting. The forum serves as a platform for a substantive dialogue amongst legislators, and between them and renewable energy experts on the acceleration of the deployment of renewables.

Objectives

The 2019 IRENA Legislators Forum is focused on the overall theme of parliamentary actions to accelerate the energy transformation in reaching the goal of universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 as set forth in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the context of the post-SDG7 review by the UN High-Level Political Forum last July, the parliamentarians will discuss their role in the implementation of this goal.

Legislators will have the opportunity to conduct an in-depth discussion on the topic, and IRENA, as one of the custodian agencies for SDG7 indicators, will share its expertise and policy recommendations in this regard. A session focusing on the energy access gap in Africa, will facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices with parliamentarians from all over the world and among peers from African countries. Participants in the Legislators Forum will also be able to attend the Africa Ministerial meeting to gain further insight, in addition to the different meetings held during the Assembly sessions.

Building on the success of the first edition of a Public-Private Dialogue, held last year between members of the Coalition for Action (an international network of over 80 leading renewable energy players including private sector companies, industry associations, civil society research institutes and intergovernmental organisations), participants in the Legislators Forum and government representatives are invited to take part in a second Public-Private Dialogue on actions to accelerate the energy transformation.

Post SDG 7 Review – Parliamentary Actions to Achieve the Goal of Universal Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy

The energy sector is undergoing rapid changes - a global energy transformation is well underway, driven by technological innovation, enabling policy framework, socio-economic benefits, and the imperative to decarbonise the energy system. Renewables have now emerged as a cost-competitive option for meeting energy demand.

In the power sector, renewables capacity additions have exceeded those from conventional sources every year since 2011, and over 50% of renewables additions came from developing countries, which is a remarkable change. Renewables are now a viable energy choice for a growing number of countries, cities, companies and individuals.

Recognising the pivotal role of energy in reaching the objectives of sustainable development, SDG7 calls for universal access to modern energy services, substantially increasing the share of renewables in the world's energy mix and doubling the rate of energy efficiency improvements.

Last July, the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development reviewed, among others, the implementation of SDG7, under the theme 'Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies'. IRENA, as official custodian agency tracking progress on SDG7 indicators, published [Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report](#).

The report highlights that despite unprecedented progress, achieving SDG7 by 2030 would require the current pace of expansion to almost double. This will require greater policy commitment and increased funding, as well as a willingness to embrace new technologies on a much wider scale.

Parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to play a significant role in supporting and monitoring SDG7 implementation, and in ensuring an integrated approach, facilitating partnerships and collaboration through inclusive political processes, and effective and accountable institutions.

The discussion, based on the results of the Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report, will offer parliamentarians from different regions of the world the opportunity to discuss and share their national experience and concrete engagement on achieving this common goal.

Questions for Discussion

- What are the key challenges that your country is facing in achieving SDG7? What are your suggestions as parliamentarians to address those challenges?
- How can parliamentarians accelerate efforts and help promote policies to encourage innovation in energy services and expand energy access?
- How can IRENA support more proactively the work of parliamentarians at national and regional levels to promote universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all?

Bridging the Gap of Access to Energy – Focus on Africa

Universal access to energy is a development imperative. Energy is a catalyst and an enabler of development - societies need reliable, adequate and affordable energy services for their sustainable development. Decades of national and international efforts have yielded impressive gains in access to modern energy. While the population without electricity access has fallen below 1 billion in 2018, estimates suggest that under a business-as-usual scenario around 600 million people will still not have access to electricity by 2040.

For example, the number of people without electricity access in sub-Saharan Africa has recently begun to fall in absolute terms with progress overtaking population growth for the first time, driven by strong performers in East Africa. Still, the region as a whole continues to have the largest deficit in access to electrification and clean cooking, which exacerbates health and welfare challenges, with women and children at most risk. Its growing population and economic progress have sent energy demand soaring. This calls for a rapid increase in energy supply on the continent in the decades ahead. Africa therefore has a unique opportunity to pursue sustainable energy development as a basis for long-term prosperity.

Several African countries have already succeeded in taking the necessary steps to scale up renewables, such as adoption of support policies, investment promotion and regional collaboration, but with 2030 just over 12 years away, most of the continent is still shy of achieving all the SDG7 targets, and especially for universal access and energy efficiency.

Questions for Discussion

- Off-grid solutions are playing an increasing role in achieving the goal of universal access to energy. How can parliamentarians from African countries contribute to providing an enabling environment to accelerate the deployment of off-grid renewables and boost investments in the sector?
- What role can parliamentarians play to maximise socio-economic benefits associated with access to electricity?
- How can IRENA support parliamentarians to promote collaboration at the regional level, and how best can parliamentarians collaborate with IRENA in capturing and sharing experiences and lessons learnt?

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