



Report

Thirteenth session of the Committee on Energy Online, 20-21 September 2021

Summary

The Committee on Energy of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its thirteenth session virtually on 20 and 21 September 2021.

The session agenda covered several priority topics, including follow-up on the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee on Energy at its twelfth session, and progress in implementing energy-related activities under the ESCWA programme plan between the twelfth and thirteenth Committee sessions. The session also included discussions on key issues related to sustainable energy, extractive industries, the possibility of using hydrogen as an engine for sustainable development, implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and regional energy priorities for the period 2021-2025.

The present report summarises key interventions and discussions, and sets out the recommendations made by the Committee.

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Introduction

1. The Committee on Energy of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its thirteenth session virtually on 20 and 21 September 2021, pursuant to ESCWA resolution [204 \(XVIII\)](#) of 25 May 1995 on the establishment of a Committee on Energy in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which was adopted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in resolution [1995/25](#) of 24 July 1995.

2. The following sections set out the key recommendations adopted by the Committee at its thirteenth session.

I. Recommendations by the Committee on Energy at its thirteenth session

3. The Committee issued the following recommendations at its thirteenth session, some addressed to member States and others to the ESCWA secretariat.

A. Recommendations to member States

(a) Welcome progress in implementing the recommendations made by the Committee on Energy at its twelfth session, and the activities carried out by the ESCWA secretariat between the twelfth and thirteenth Committee sessions; and take note of the activities and recommendations of the Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels;

(b) Integrate the energy-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets and indicators into national and sectoral development plans by adopting an integrative approach; and monitor progress in their implementation;

(c) Focus on supporting the energy-water-food nexus and on developing relevant institutional capacity, while ensuring coordination and integration across sectors in the formulation of national strategies, policies, plans and programmes;

(d) Develop policies on the localization of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies, and mainstream an integrated approach that combines field projects, capacity-building and policy formulation on these issues, especially with regard to small-scale renewable energy systems and their contribution to the advancement of rural communities and the empowerment of rural women;

(e) Formulate programmes that contribute to the development of local industries that manufacture renewable energy equipment and devices, produce green energy and improve energy efficiency; develop short and long-term plans in the field of renewable energy; and establish research, innovation and manufacturing centres to support a broader local component;

(f) Focus on sustainable energy issues, including the energy valuation of waste, hydrogen and marine energy;

(g) Build national capacity in collecting and analysing information and statistics on energy production and distribution, and on the consumption methods of various end consumers and other relevant data;

(h) Inform the ESCWA secretariat, whenever possible, of member States' efforts to implement the energy-related SDGs, so as to monitor progress in their implementation.

B. Recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat

(a) Continue studying issues related to sustainable energy management, the optimal use of natural resources, and the opportunities available in promising sectors at the national and regional levels, so as to achieve the SDGs, support Arab countries in their plans to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and enable them to restore the momentum witnessed in the renewable energy sector and in the efficient use of energy in the region in recent years;

(b) Build the capacity of member States in formulating sustainable energy policies and addressing vulnerabilities, especially in diversifying the energy mix, improving the efficiency of its use, identifying new renewable energy uses, developing technologies that apply the principles of the circular carbon economy, and integrating them in nationally determined contributions;

(c) Focus on studying the priority areas of the energy transition in the Arab region, including maximizing the use of local energy resources; storing energy and hydrogen; linking the expansion of all types of hydrogen energy to water resources; developing electric transport and smart grids, and regional and international electricity interconnection projects; and establishing flexible, safe and fair mechanisms for energy transition, in coordination with international organizations, to mitigate the negative effects of this transition on Arab countries;

(d) Mainstream the work model of the Regional Initiative to Promote Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region (REGEND), and adopt regulatory and institutional tools and frameworks emanating from REGEND and targeting policymakers, with a special focus on rural women and young people;

(e) Strengthen collaboration to benefit from achievements and innovations in the natural sciences, and from progress in applications related to carbon capture, use and storage and to hydrogen use; and support plans to transform extractive industries as a driver of the transition to sustainable systems, in line with global trends;

(f) Support member States in assessing progress made in SDG 7 on energy and in other related Goals, especially Arab least developed and conflict-affected countries; and identify regional priority actions for the coming years;

(g) Continue coordinating with United Nations organizations, the League of Arab States and other regional organizations on implementing the energy-related SDGs and their targets; and work on better inclusion of ESCWA energy-related activities on the agenda of the Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity to maximize the impact on decision-making;

(h) Expand the beneficiaries of pilot projects implemented by the ESCWA secretariat, publish the results of related studies, benefit from success stories in Arab countries in the field of energy efficiency and disseminate them for guidance through regional and national introductory workshops, and research ways to use these pilot projects to propagate their mechanisms and activities to other member States within the framework of regional initiatives;

(i) Broaden the work of the Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels to include extractive industries, in support of the global Working Group on Extractive Industries;

(j) Develop an online platform on de-risking renewable energy investment (DREI) aimed at coordinating efforts between the private sector, multilateral development banks and member States, so as to reduce the risks of sustainable energy investments;

(k) Intensify efforts to transform the knowledge produced by the ESCWA secretariat through studies and reports into practical interactive tools and platforms on sustainable energy transition, to be used by willing countries in their decision-making processes.

II. Topics of discussion

A. Implementation of energy-related activities and of recommendations made by the Committee on Energy at its twelfth session

(Agenda item 4)

4. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/3](#) on energy-related activities carried out pursuant to recommendations made by the Committee on Energy at its twelfth session, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat reviewed the activities organized by ESCWA to implement projects funded by the United Nations Development Account and international organizations to promote energy efficiency measures in the construction sector, to encourage investment in renewable energy projects and to disseminate them in rural areas, and to advance women's empowerment policies such as REGEND. She also reviewed ESCWA reports, studies and technical papers in the fields of energy; collaboration between the ESCWA Energy Section, the Water Resources Section and the Food Security Section on the energy-water-food nexus; collaboration and partnerships with regional and international organizations in these fields; and the organization of and participation in national, regional and global events and capacity-building programmes for member States. Moreover, she reviewed intergovernmental meetings, expert group meetings, seminars, workshops and training activities organized by ESCWA under transition programmes to sustainable energy systems.

5. Under the same item, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented the technical cooperation programmes in the field of energy implemented in collaboration with some member States following an official request to ESCWA during the intersessional period, and activities to be implemented in the future. She said that technical support programmes were provided following an official request from a member State, and within the capacity of ESCWA. She added that ESCWA was ready to provide support based on an official request that identified the energy areas in which a country wished to build its national capacity, and the initial timeframe for implementation, in collaboration and coordination with a specialized ESCWA team.

6. The ESCWA secretariat requested that representatives of member States review what had been implemented, and submit proposals and recommendations in that regard. The representatives of Egypt, Morocco, the State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic indicated their interest in disseminating the results of the project on energy efficiency measures in the construction sector and of REGEND, and in maximizing their benefit and disseminating their application on a larger scale in the Arab region.

B. Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region

(Agenda item 5)

7. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented document [E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/4](#) on ESCWA work to disseminate small-scale renewable energy applications in rural areas, and on activities implemented under that framework since 2018 aimed at improving food security, water security and energy security; strengthening capacity to adapt to climate change; and integrating sustainable development goals into regional and national policies. ESCWA worked with various partners and institutions to support the expansion of REGEND and its implementation in other locations in the Arab region.

8. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat reviewed key achievements in the projects under implementation, including 12 field projects in Jordan, six in Tunisia, and seven in Lebanon. ESCWA had also implemented six capacity-building workshops in Jordan, nine in Tunisia, and 11 in Lebanon on good agricultural practices to enhance energy sustainability; food manufacturing and good hygiene practices; packaging and marketing for the food industry; renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies;

distillation of medicinal and aromatic plants; entrepreneurship; financial management and accounting; project design; developing proposals for social media marketing; and knitting and embroidery.

9. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic noted the scarcity of water in the Arab region, and the need to avoid over-pumping water using renewable energy. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat stressed the importance of adopting REGEND, the interdependence of water and energy, and the existence of systems to ensure that water was monitored and controlled to not exceed national quotas. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat also underscored the importance of sustaining REGEND through its monitoring systems and the efficient use of renewable energy.

C. Activities of the Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels (Agenda item 6)

10. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented document [E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/5](#), which covered the scope of work of the Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels and the outcomes of its meetings, which focused on energy-related economic developments, trends and expectations in the Arab region, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector and on financing Arab oil companies and capital markets. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat also reviewed key recommendations approved by the Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels at its second and third meetings.

11. The interventions focused on the importance of the energy transition in the Arab region, especially in oil-producing countries, and the role that hydrogen and natural gas could play in areas other than electricity supply (such as petrochemicals). The interventions also covered the need to benefit from natural resources in the Arab region, and the possibility of maximizing the use of local energy resources and storing energy and hydrogen, with lower emissions. Representatives stressed the importance of further studies on carbon capture, use and storage, the role of the circular carbon economy, and the importance of using clean energy technologies.

D. Extractive industries as a driver of sustainable development: transition to sustainable systems (Agenda item 7)

12. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented document [E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/6](#), which reviewed the status of extractive industries as a driver of sustainable development, and the challenges and opportunities for the sector in the Arab region. The representative noted the United Nations Secretary-General's initiative on extractive industries as an engine for sustainable development, which included holding a [global round table](#) and five regional round tables. ESCWA had coordinated the preparation of the regional report entitled [Extractive Industries: Transition to Sustainable Systems](#) with other regional commissions, [the Arab region round table](#), and [the recommendations of the Secretary-General's policy brief on the virtual global round table](#).

13. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat reviewed key recommendations resulting from the initiative, related to social and environmental sustainability, a just transition to sustainable systems, the green circular economy, economic recycling, technology and innovation, development financing, natural resource management and economic diversification. Participants stressed the importance of extractive industries' sustainability as a driver of sustainable development.

E. Round-table discussion: regional priorities in the field of energy for the period 2021-2025 (Agenda item 8)

14. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat opened the round-table discussion on regional priorities in the field of energy for the period 2021-2025. The representative reviewed document

[E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/CRP.1](#), highlighting the challenges facing the Arab region in terms of its heavy dependence on fossil fuels; lack of economic diversification; uneven access to modern, reliable, sustainable and affordable energy; volatile energy prices; low utilization of renewable energy resources; slow progress towards improving energy efficiency; political instability; worsening environmental degradation; growing carbon footprint; and ambient air pollution.

15. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented regional priorities in the field of energy, with a focus on energy policies in Arab countries, regulatory reform, the green economy, the circular carbon economy, innovation, new technologies, and the empowerment of women, young people and entrepreneurs.

16. The discussions demonstrated Committee members' interest in regional energy priorities. They stressed the need to define timeframes for the implementation of projects and objectives, taking into account the specificities of Arab countries. The discussions also revealed that Arab countries faced the same challenges, but that each country has its own characteristics, which should be taken into account in capacity-building activities.

F. Date and venue of the fourteenth session of the Committee on Energy

(Agenda item 9)

17. The Committee on Energy will hold its fourteenth session in Beirut in 2023, unless another member State requests to host it. The exact date will be determined at a later stage.

G. Other matters

(Agenda item 10)

18. No issues were raised under this item.

III. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee on Energy at its thirteenth session

(Agenda item 11)

19. Pursuant to article 33 of the ESCWA Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure, members of the Committee on Energy agreed, at the closing meeting held on 21 September 2021, to provide time for Committee members to comment on the draft report of the thirteenth session.

IV. Organization of the session

A. Date and venue

20. The Committee on Energy held its thirteenth session in Beirut on 20 and 21 September 2021.

B. Opening

21. The session was opened by the representative of Jordan, Mr. Zeyad Alsaaydeh, Director of the Directorate of Electricity and Rural Electrification at the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. He made a statement in which he praised the constructive role of ESCWA in supporting sustainable development efforts, especially renewable energy and the empowerment of women in the Arab region, particularly in rural areas. He also thanked ESCWA for all the efforts and programmes implemented in his country.

22. Ms. Roula Majdalani, Leader of the ESCWA Climate Change and Natural Resource Sustainability Cluster, made a statement on behalf of the ESCWA secretariat in which she welcomed participants. She said that achieving the SDGs would contribute to providing a decent life for all social groups, achieving social justice, improving natural resource management, and protecting the environment. She stressed that energy

transition had become a global trend to achieve sustainable development and mitigate climate change, and that renewable energy and energy efficiency were among the main tools in implementing national programmes to diversify the energy mix, based on the optimal use of natural resources and the expansion of energy efficiency measures. She added that coordination and regional action were vital to tackle the challenges facing the Arab region; and that ESCWA efforts, through its work programmes, aimed to support member States in achieving the energy-related SDGs in their national and sectoral policies and programmes.

C. Attendance

23. The session was attended by representatives from 14 of the 20 ESCWA member States. The directors of the Energy Department of the League of Arab States and of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) attended as observers. Annex I to the present report sets out the list of participants.

D. Election of officers

24. Rule 18 of the ESCWA Rules of Procedure states: “Member States shall chair the sessions of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations.¹ Unless the Commission decides otherwise, those bodies shall elect all their other officers”. In accordance with this rule, the representative of Algeria assumed the Chair of the thirteenth session of the Committee on Energy, and the representatives of Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic assumed the positions of Vice-Chair. The representative of the Sudan was appointed Rapporteur.

E. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

25. At its first meeting, the Committee on Energy adopted the agenda of its twelfth session as set out in document [E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/L.1](#).

F. Documents

26. The list of documents presented to the Committee on Energy at its thirteenth session is set out in annex II to the present report.

¹ ESCWA member States in Arabic alphabetical order are as follows: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, Iraq, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Mauritania and Yemen.

Annex I

List of participants

A. ESCWA member States

Algeria

Mr. Mourad Chikhi
Director of Consumption and Development of
Renewable Energies
Ministry of Energy Transition and Renewable
Energy

Egypt

Mr. Ahmed Mohamed Abdel Hamid Mohina
First Undersecretary for Research, Planning and
Authorities Follow
Ministry of Electricity and Renewable Energy

Iraq

Mr. Laith Rashid Shaker
Head of the Organization Department
Department of Planning and Studies
Ministry of Electricity

Jordan

Mr. Zeyad Jamil Abdel Rahman Alsaaydeh
Director of the Directorate of Electricity and Rural
Electrification
Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources

Ms. Rasha Hudeeb
Electrical Engineer
Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources

Mr. Rasmi Hamzeh
Executive Director
Renewable Energy Promotion Fund
Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources

Libya

Mr. Hamid Hamida Sherwali
Chairman of the Renewable Energy Authority
Renewable Energy Authority

Mauritania

Mr. Mohamed Ould Yarguett
Technical Advisor to the Minister of Electricity
Ministry of Oil, Energy and Minerals

Mr. Moammar Rashid
Projects and Environment Follow-up Manager
Ministry of Petroleum, Minerals and Energy

Morocco

Mr. Mohamed Ghazali
Secretary-General of the Energy and Minerals
Sector
Ministry of Energy and Minerals

Mr. Mohamed Ouhmed
Director of Renewable Energy and Energy
Efficiency
Ministry of Energy and Minerals

Mr. Abdulali Lefdawi
Minerals and Hydrocarbons Manager
Ministry of Energy and Minerals

Oman

Mr. Sultan bin Mohamad Al-Hilali
Advisor to the Minister of Energy and Minerals for
Technical Affairs
Ministry of Energy and Minerals

State of Palestine

Mr. Ayman Fouad Ismail
General Director of PEC
Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources
Authority

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Abdulaziz Abdullatif Amri
International Policy Analyst
Ministry of Energy

Saudi Arabia (continued)

Ms. Aljohara Fadliah
Ministry of Energy

Mr. Mohammed AbdAllah Al kharashi
Manager International Organizations Department
Ministry of Energy

Sudan

Mr. Eltahir Abuelhassan
Ministry of Water Resources, Irrigation and
Electricity

Mr. Mohammad Eltoum
General Administration of Renewable Energy

Syrian Arab Republic

Mr. Nedal Karmoucheh
Deputy Minister of Electricity
Ministry of Electricity

Mr. Adham Balan
Planning Manager
Ministry of Electricity

Ms. Wesal Al-Bukhari
Assistant to the Minister of Planning
Ministry of Electricity

Tunisia

Mr. Blhassen Chiboub
Director-General of Electricity and Energy
Transmission
Ministry of Energy and Minerals

Ms. Lamia Ghazouani
In Charge of International Cooperation
Ministry of Energy and Minerals

Yemen

Mr. Abdel Hakim Fadel Mohamed
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity and
Energy

Mr. Mohamed Hamid al-Shaabi
General Manager of Renewable Energy
Ministry of Electricity and Energy

Mr. Ahmed Zaki Morshed
Solar Energy Manager
Ministry of Electricity and Energy

B. Observers

League of Arab States

Ms. Jamila Matar
Director of the Energy Department

Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting
Countries

Abdulfattah Dandi
Director of the Economic Department

Annex II

List of documents

Title	Item	Symbol
Information note		E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/INF.1
Provisional agenda and annotations	3	E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/L.1
Organization of work	3	E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/L.2
Implementation of energy-related activities and of recommendations made by the Committee on Energy at its twelfth session	4	E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/3 (Arabic only)
Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region	5	E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/4
Activities of the Group of Experts on Fossil Fuels	6	E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/5
Extractive industries as a driver of sustainable development: transition to sustainable systems	7	E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/6
Round-table discussion: regional priorities in the field of energy for the period 2021-2025	8	E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/CRP.1
List of documents		E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/INF.2