

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**Committee on Energy
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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

**Proposed programme plan for 2024 in the field of energy
in the light of regional priorities for the period 2021–2025****Summary**

The present document sets out the proposed programme plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for 2024 in the field of energy, in the light of regional priorities for the period 2021–2025, which were discussed by the ESCWA Committee on Energy at its thirteenth session, held online on 20 and 21 September 2021. The proposed programme plan stresses the need to facilitate the transition to more sustainable energy systems; incorporate circular economy and green economy principles; expand access to renewable energy in rural areas; address trade-offs between renewables and biodiversity; improve water, energy and food security; and enhance resilience to climate change.

The Committee on Energy is invited to take note of the present document and enrich it by discussing national challenges and proposing ideas for future work by the ESCWA secretariat in the field of energy.

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Introduction

1. The present document sets out the proposed programme plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for 2024 in the field of energy, in the light of regional priorities for the period 2021–2025, which were discussed by the ESCWA Committee on Energy in its thirteenth session, held online on 20 and 21 September 2021 ([E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/CRP.1](#)). The proposed programme plan stresses the need to facilitate a just and inclusive energy transition to more sustainable energy systems; incorporate circular economy and green economy principles; expand access to renewable energy in rural areas; address trade-offs between renewables and biodiversity; improve water, energy and food security; and enhance resilience to climate change.
2. The Committee on Energy is invited to take note of the present document, and enrich it by discussing national challenges and proposing ideas for future work by the ESCWA secretariat in the field of energy.

I. Challenges in the Arab region

3. Energy plays a key role in achieving social and economic development. However, the Arab region is witnessing enormous challenges that stand in the way of ensuring that current and future generations have access to affordable, modern and reliable energy services, and of achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These challenges include the following:
 - (a) Energy access gap, with urban-rural divide;
 - (b) Absent or ineffective energy resources and demand-side management;
 - (c) High dependence on fossil fuels;
 - (d) Volatility in energy prices and heavy subsidies;
 - (e) Underutilization of renewable energy resources;
 - (f) Slow progress in reducing energy intensity and improving energy efficiency;
 - (g) Lack of economic diversification, social investment and long-term planning;
 - (h) Environmental degradation, growing carbon footprint and increasing ambient air pollution;
 - (i) Political instability and conflict;
 - (j) Lack of readily available financing mechanisms and climate mainstreaming.

II. Suggested programme plan for 2024 in the field of energy

4. The ESCWA secretariat will undertake the following to support intergovernmental and expert groups in fostering regional exchange and consensus-building on regional challenges that affect the ability to formulate and deliver on the SDGs and other climate change commitments at the national and global levels:
 - (a) 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 improving the inclusion of ESCWA energy-related activities on the agenda of the Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity (AMCE) to maximize the impact on decision-making;
 - (b) Ensure the sustainability of the Regional Initiative to Promote Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region (REGEND), which has been supported by the Swedish Government since 2017 to promote inclusive small-scale renewable energy applications;
 - (c) Promote the [REGEND capacity-building online course](#) (in Arabic), hosted on the ESCWA [LEARN platform](#), which targets rural populations, students and fresh graduates, mainly women and young people, and covers the following topics: renewable energy in rural areas, good agricultural practices, rural development and women's empowerment, agri-food production, the water-energy-food nexus, and fertilization by irrigation;

(d) Establish a regional multi-stakeholder platform on biodiversity that considers trade-offs and risks to biodiversity when expanding capacity for renewable energy generation from solar, wind and biofuels to support building climate resilience through regional cooperation for inclusive sustainable development;

(e) Assist member States in accelerating the adoption of a circular carbon economy framework and incorporating circular economy and green economy principles into nationally determined contributions to promote resource efficiency and sustainable production and consumption measures, alongside the uptake of sustainable energy;

(f) Contribute to the advancement of climate action by strengthening the engagement of member States and their capacities in building climate resilience through localized initiatives by elaborating scientific, policy and financial tools for mainstreaming climate considerations in development planning, budgeting and financing;

(g) Continue providing technical assistance and support to multi-stakeholder regional platforms, regional initiatives and strategies that inform and mobilize access to energy sector finance;

(h) 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, including minerals and raw materials in support of the energy transition in the Arab region and the role of blockchain in the Arab sustainable energy transition;

(i) Facilitate the intergovernmental process and support expert bodies by undertaking the following:

- i. Providing substantive servicing of the ESCWA Committee on Energy and its Group of Experts on Extractives, and support the global Working Group on Transforming the Extractive Industries for Sustainable Development;
- ii. Provide substantive servicing of AMCE, its Committee of Experts on Electricity in Arab Countries and its Committee of Experts on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency.

(j) Hold meetings of ad-hoc expert groups on water, energy, food security, climate change, and other issues related to the management of natural resources for sustainable development;

(k) Service seminars and workshops for capacity development on energy, water and food security, climate change, and other issues related to the management of natural resources for sustainable development;

(l) Prepare policy briefs and reports on energy and technical materials on issues related to the management of natural resources for sustainable development and climate change.

III. Topics for discussion

5. The Committee on Energy is invited to provide guidance on the above-mentioned topics, with a focus on the following:

(a) Energy policies in Arab countries, including on regulatory reforms, the circular carbon economy, green and blue hydrogen, minerals and raw materials, innovation and new technologies (including blockchain), and empowering women, young people and entrepreneurs;

(b) Proposals for future work by the ESCWA secretariat in that regard.
