



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



**Side Event on “Energy Transition in the Arab Region: Challenges and Opportunities”  
04 November 2020**

**Speech of Ms. Roula Majdalani, Cluster Leader, CCNRSC, ESCWA**

*Excellencies, Distinguished guests and participants,*

Good morning or good afternoon, depending on where you are,

On behalf of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this side event on the sideline of the prestigious 2020 Global Energy Interconnection and Asian Energy and Power Conference”.

ESCWA is one of the five Regional Commissions under the United Nations secretariat to fulfil the economic and social goals set out in the UN Charter by promoting cooperation and integration among Arab countries of Western Asia. ESCWA acts as a modern, agile, vigorous institution, embracing forward thinking and adopting new technologies to implement its vision as a catalyst for a just and flourishing Arab region.

Our mission is to be a powerful unifying voice, trusted convener, effective policy adviser and innovative knowledge generator for the Arab region. We partner with our Members States and their people, with a clear objective stipulated in the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, that aims to build flourishing and just societies and achieve equitable prosperity and dignified lives. As a Regional Commission, we are active in many areas including

economic and social development, gender, governance and post-conflict development, sustainable management of natural resources and technology for development.

ESCWA supports its member states in meeting the SDG7 regional targets through an integrated lens by acting as a regional thinktank, providing policy advice and platforms for dialogue and transfer of knowledge, based on research and science-policy interface as well as training and capacity building programs.

Through our knowledge, capacity building and outreach activities, we support member states better track and achieve the SDG7 targets, which are: universal access to electricity, clean cooking, fuels and technologies; doubling the global rate of energy efficiency; increasing substantially the renewable energy share in the energy mix and other related goals (For example Goal 1 on poverty, Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 11 on sustainable communities, Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production and Goal 13 on addressing climate change).

ESCWA is also involved in fostering regional and country level exchange through the implementation of the “Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region”, which aims to support income generation, gender empowerment and entrepreneurship in rural areas implemented under the **Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies (ACCCP)**.

As a regional key player on transition to sustainable energy, ESCWA prepares the recurrent publication on tracking SDG 7 for the Arab region, which provides an update on the progress in achieving SDGs targets in Arab countries with thanks to the fruitful collaboration with our strategic partner the **Islamic Development Bank** and other international and regional agencies leading on energy issues.

ESCWA's partnership with **GEIDCO** focuses on promoting regional integration and sustainable energy and economic development to accelerate the achievement of SDG7, in particular regional electricity market.

*ESCWA's Key priority actions for accelerating the transition to more sustainable energy systems in the Arab region include:*

- Enhancing the quality and access to modern energy in the Arab region, especially in the least developed countries (*Mauritania – Sudan – Yemen*).
- Increasing the share of renewable energy sources in the region's energy mix by reforming the highly regulated utility markets and subsidies on fossil fuel-based products, removing technological barriers and promoting commercial viability.
- Building institutional capacity in monitoring and data collection and strengthening local governance.

As indicated by Dr. Dashti, ESCWA Executive Secretary, we need to strengthen our collaboration to enhance Arab interregional cooperation and trade and develop local manufacturing of clean energy technology components.

We also need to support grid interconnections between Arab countries such as a pan-Arab electricity market, focusing on smart grids and green corridors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The challenges and opportunities of the Arab region's energy transition is at the center of today's discussion particularly in the context of our precarious climate and harsh environmental conditions. We look forward to a fruitful discussion on regional cooperation and trade, clean energy deployment and local manufacturing, grid interconnection, access to finance and capacity building.

ESCWA is pleased and honored to co-organize this important and timely Global Conference and lead on this Side Event, which I am sure will contribute to a rich exchange of information and knowledge sharing on experiences from the region and conclude with key recommendations that reflect the Arab region's challenges and priorities to achieve sustainable energy transition, **where no one is left behind.**

**Finally**, I renew my gratitude and appreciation to our partners: the League of Arab States, GEIDCO and the Islamic Development Bank for their continued cooperation and collaboration and I wish you all a fruitful meeting.