

Theme for the 23rd Session of the CSE:

Energy for Sustainable Development

Trends and Milestones

The Committee on Sustainable Energy's activities are conceived with a view to providing access to affordable and clean energy to all, in line with the "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative of the Secretary-General, and to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon footprint of the energy sector. Achieving these objectives is considered essential if the world is to succeed in moving towards cleaner energy systems. Meeting the imperatives of sustainable development and a low carbon economy requires managing energy transitions efficiently and effectively in collaboration with all stakeholders. A sustainable energy system integrates a variety of approaches and technologies to support the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. However,

Reality conflicts with ambition. The state of the global economy and the economics of energy markets have led to outcomes that conflict with the ambitions of the UNECE member States. While the global energy map is being redrawn, coal use and hence greenhouse gas emissions are increasing, tariffs are rising though quality of service is not, and geopolitics have moved energy security of supply, especially for natural gas, to the forefront (all expert groups).

Energy efficiency is not improving fast enough. Improving energy efficiency is the famous low-hanging fruit that is easy to do, pays for itself, and contributes to energy security, environment, quality of life, and economic well-being. It has multiple benefits, and yet it is not happening at expected scale because of how markets are designed/structured, low-tariff policies, subsidies, lack of information, and lack of investment capital (Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency).

Renewable energy policies could work better. Renewable energy represents one way to reduce the carbon intensity of the energy sector, improve energy security, and encourage economic development. Renewables are progressively integrating into the global energy mix, yet there is much more to be done. Renewables still require enduring support. The overall policy framework for energy does not take proper account of externalities, leading to market failure. Done properly, renewable energy could play an important role in the future energy system (Group of Experts on Renewable Energy and Expert Group on Resource Classification).

Gas could smooth the transition. Natural gas has become the fuel of choice for many countries. Natural gas markets are influenced by many factors including policy, technology, environment and potentially increased supply from unconventional gas resources. While the role of natural gas in increasing the uptake of renewable energy presents an underused opportunity, there are challenges to reduce gas leakages, improve LNG's contribution, and enhance the use of gas as a transport fuel. Modernizing aging infrastructure is another opportunity for policy makers to ensure the transition to next-generation technology, with high near-term costs but significant long-term benefits from higher efficiency (Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Production, Group of Experts on Gas and Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane).

In response, the 23rd session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy will provide a macro-assessment of energy markets and geopolitics to explore the region's options for redirecting itself to sustainable outcomes. It will consider the starting point and trends for the region in attainment of the Committee's objectives and explore how the region can take an active role in shaping pathways towards cleaner energy systems and thus the direction of sustainable development.