

## *The Role of Energy Access in Meeting Africa's Sustainable Development Agenda*

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Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, dear colleagues.

It is a great pleasure to be with you here today to speak on the importance of energy access for sustainable development in Africa, a topic very close to my heart.

Upon becoming Executive Director of the IEA last September, I set out my vision for the Agency and the key pillars to my strategy for modernising the IEA – a strategy which has been endorsed unanimously by the IEA's member governments.

The theme of this meeting is very strongly connected with two of the pillars in particular. First, for the IEA to further open its doors to non-member countries, and second to become a global hub for clean energy technologies and energy efficiency.

Since I took over at the IEA, Mexico has started proceedings to become a member of the IEA, China, Indonesia and Thailand have activated their status as key IEA Association countries. Two African countries are also engaging in this process, South Africa and Morocco, alongside Brazil and India. With Morocco we are also working closely together in preparation of the upcoming UN climate change conference. Five African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa) are also working with our Technology Collaboration Programmes – on renewables, smart grids, clean coal and greenhouse gas RD&D.

But there is more. A year and a half ago, we launched the first *Africa Energy Outlook*, which I had the honor to present at the Italy-Africa Ministerial meeting here in Rome, and which would not have been possible without the support of the Italian Government and many African Governments. We undertook the report because a major crisis continues within our global energy system – **an energy poverty crisis – and the epicenter of this crisis is sub-Saharan Africa**. This is a crisis of which you are acutely aware, and it is something that the IEA, and myself personally, have sought to make others around the world aware of; we have pioneered analysis in this area for more than a decade.

Over the short time since our report was launched, the global landscape has changed – with greater international attention on this issue:

- Last year, the UN Sustainable Development Goals have adopted the target of clean, reliable and affordable energy for all by 2030;
- COP 21 reached a global consensus in the Paris Agreement, to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees;
- And with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, there is a historic agreement to generate finance for the sustainable development agenda.

However, even though the world is moving on sustainable development, we collectively need to make sure that words don't remain just words, and that action is taken. And nowhere is this more urgent than the African energy sector.

The African continent is hugely rich in resources, with major energy producers, including Nigeria for oil and gas, Angola for oil and South Africa for coal.

In recent years, there have been major oil and gas discoveries across the continent: Africa has led the world in discoveries since 2012, with large gas discoveries in Mozambique and Tanzania, oil and gas discoveries in Angola and Nigeria, and the very important Zohr discovery by Eni last year in Egypt.

In the future, we see Africa remaining a mainstay of global oil production and emerging as a major player in natural gas, anchored by LNG export.

But just as importantly, if not more importantly, are the huge untapped renewable energy resources. Less than 10% of the region's hydropower potential has been tapped so far, and wind and solar energy potential are abundant.

**While resources are rich and more than sufficient to cover overall needs, the continent is poor in supply.**

There is almost universal access to electricity in North Africa, but in sub-Saharan Africa, 635 million people – two-thirds of the population – live without electricity. This is a population around ten times the whole population of Italy. Of those with electricity, for many, supply is not reliable or affordable.

This is important because the primary purpose of our energy system is to enable a better quality of life. To those that have it, modern energy unlocks access to better healthcare, better education, better economic opportunities and, even, longer life. To those that don't have it, it is a major constraint on their social and economic development.

Beyond electricity, the importance of access to clean, modern cooking fuels is a critical issue, one which affects four-fifths of sub-Saharan Africans, but receives far less attention than electrification. Biomass used in a traditional way for cooking, in open, smoky fires, is a massive contributor to air pollution, which is the biggest environmental threat to human life, responsible for 5.5 million deaths every year in the world. The IEA will shine a spotlight on this critical issue with a *World Energy Outlook* special report looking at Energy and Air Pollution to be published this June; the special report also looks in-depth at Africa.

Using biomass for cooking also leads to a large time burden, with many waking hours and much drudgery dedicated to gathering and hauling fuelwood. Women and children are disproportionately affected by these issues.

We at the IEA make analysis and projections for energy access every year and the outlook – if current policies are to be maintained – is bittersweet.

**From now to 2040, the number of people with electricity grows by nearly one billion, a huge increase, one that matches the great success story of Chinese electrification over the past decades.**

But, at the same time, rapid population growth means that electricity access is not universally achieved:

**In our central scenario, by 2040, half a billion people still do not have access to electricity. This is unacceptable and calls for urgent action.**

However, the size of the challenge that remains should not obscure the progress that is being made.

The importance of energy access for sustainable development is being recognised by the international community: Action is underway, and low energy prices offer the opportunity to accelerate this action, and in a sustainable way.

Current trends suggest some markets in Sub-Saharan Africa are poised to leapfrog to an economic development paradigm based on affordable renewables, which **could meet almost two-thirds of demand growth over the period to 2020.**

In addition to the role of renewables in grid-connected power generation, affordable small-scale solar PV can help energy access in rural areas and improve electricity provision in urban zones, where grid-connected power is not always reliable and diesel power generators are so far the preferred back-up option.

As a member of the Advisory Board of the UN Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative, I am encouraged to see so much positive action towards the goal of achieving universal energy access, in a sustainable and affordable way, and yet it is clear that such an immense target requires even more effort.

Energy is a cornerstone of strategies for development and economic growth:

**A long-term development model for the region needs to be one where the energy sector becomes a driver rather than an inhibitor of growth.**

However, as much as the efforts made by us and other international bodies, partnership and investments made by governments and companies outside of Africa, are critically essential, **it is the leadership and governance of African states, and the will and efforts of African Governments to bring about reform and attract investors,** that will determine the pace of improvement and the attraction of new energy investment to bring prosperity to the youngest and most populous continent on the planet.

Such concerted action to improve the functioning of the energy sector and bring clean and modern energy to all is essential if the 21st is to become an African century.

We at the IEA, and myself personally, stand ready to help.

Thank you.