Panel Discussion on

Strengthening Power Systems for Energy Transition in South Asia

Date: November 03, 2026. | **Time:** 09:30 am to 11:30 pm PKT. | **Venue:** AIOU, Islamabad.

Background and Rationale

South Asia is undergoing a rapid transformation of its energy systems, driven by rising electricity demand, increasing deployment of renewable energy, and growing efforts to improve energy security and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Solar, wind and other renewable energy technologies are expanding rapidly across the region, creating significant opportunities to improve the sustainability and affordability of electricity supply. At the same time, the increasing share of Variable Renewable Energy (VRE) introduces new demands on power systems, requiring power systems to become more flexible, reliable, digitally enabled and capable of balancing fluctuations in electricity generation and demand.

Energy transition depends not only on the availability of renewable energy resources or investment in generation capacity, but also on the readiness of power grids to integrate, transmit, distribute and manage increasingly diverse sources of electricity. South Asian countries face varying grid-readiness challenges, including weak infrastructure, limited flexibility, inadequate planning and digitalization, and regulatory gaps that hinder renewable energy integration.

Recognizing the importance of power system readiness as an enabling condition for the energy transition, ESCAP and SDPI are jointly undertaking a study covering select South Asian countries – Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as part of a broader project titled 'Strengthening Grid Readiness for Asia and the Pacific.' The project seeks to assess the preparedness of national power systems for higher shares of renewable energy and to identify strengths, gaps and priority areas for action. The findings can help inform policy and investment decisions, identify technical assistance and capacity building priorities, as well as opportunities for greater regional cooperation among South Asian countries.

Scope and Objectives

In the backdrop highlighted above, this panel discussion, co-organized by ESCAP, SDPI and the SAARC Energy Centre, aims to provide a platform to present and critically examine the preliminary findings of the study with policymakers, energy experts, development partners, and other stakeholders. It will seek to validate the emerging evidence, bring country perspectives to the analysis, and identify areas where further data, indicators or contextualization may be required.

The discussion will also explore how the study's findings can support greater regional cooperation, including coordinated planning, knowledge sharing, cross-border interconnections and power trade to strengthen grid readiness.

Specifically, the speakers will:

- Present and discuss the preliminary findings of the power system readiness assessment for Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, incorporating perspectives from policymakers, energy experts and other stakeholders.
- Identify key gaps, bottlenecks and priorities for strengthening power system readiness for higher shares of renewable energy, including infrastructure, system flexibility, planning, digitalization, institutional capacity etc.
- Explore opportunities for regional cooperation and action, including coordinated planning, knowledge-sharing, cross-border interconnections and power trade, and identify areas for policy support, investment and technical assistance.

Speakers will address the following questions:

- What are the most critical constraints to power system readiness? Are they primarily infrastructure, operational, technological, institutional or regulatory in nature?
- Are countries investing sufficiently in modernization of grids relative to the pace of renewable energy deployment and electrification?
- What capabilities will system operators and utilities need as power systems become more decentralized, variable and digitalized?
- How can power system planning and investment become more forward-looking and better aligned with renewable energy development?
- How can regional cooperation support the development and modernization of power systems in South Asia? What role can regional institutions such as the SAARC Energy Centre play in facilitating knowledge-sharing, coordinated planning, capacity-building, cross-border power trade etc.?

PROGRAMME

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Time	Agenda	Resource Personnel
09:30 – 10:00	Registration	
10:00 – 10:03	Housekeeping Rules	**Mr. Muhammad Umer,** Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)
10:03 – 10:10	Opening Remarks and Introduction to the Project.	**Ms. Mikiko Tanaka,** Head and Director, UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office
10:10 – 10:25	Presentation of Preliminary Findings from Pakistan	**Dr. Khalid Waleed**, Research Fellow, SDPI
10:25 – 11:00	Panel Discussion	**Distinguished Speakers** • **Mr. Mohammad Solaiman,** Deputy Secretary (Power Division), Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Government of Bangladesh • **Mr. Syed Faizan Ali Shah**, Advisor, Ministry of Energy (Power Division) • **Mr. Arqam Ilyas,** Manager (Planning and Forecasting), Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) • **Mr. Joseph George**, Research Associate, UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office (Virtual) • **Mr. Waqas Idrees**, Senior Energy Specialist, The World Bank Group
11:00 – 11:10	Remarks by Guest of Honor	**Dr. Fiaz Chaudhry**, Chairman, National Grid Company
11:10 – 11:20	Concluding Remarks by Chair	**Mr. Abdul Rasheed Jokhio**, Director, SAARC Energy Centre
11:20 – 11:25	Open floor discussion	
11:25 – 11:30	Vote of Thanks.	**SDPI / ESCAP**