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Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: energy

Implementing the global road map for accelerated action on Sustainable Development Goal 7 in the Asia-Pacific region

Note by the secretariat

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 74/225, the Secretary-General convened a high-level dialogue on energy at the summit level during the seventy-sixth session of the Assembly. The main outcome was a global road map for accelerated action on Sustainable Development Goal 7 in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. It presented a historic opportunity to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy) and make a commitment to transformative action to address the twin energy challenges of ensuring access to clean and affordable energy services for all by 2030 and accelerating the energy transition towards net zero emissions by 2050.

As the largest energy consuming region in the world, the Asia-Pacific region will play a pivotal role in the realization of the global road map.

The present document provides an overview of the progress made towards the achievement of Goal 7 in Asia and the Pacific and highlights actions to be taken by member States and other stakeholders to further accelerate related implementation efforts and the transition to net zero emissions.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific may wish to review the document and provide guidance on the future work of the secretariat, in particular with a view towards the preparation of the third Asian and Pacific Energy Forum.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 74/225, invited the Secretary-General, with the support of the relevant United Nations system entities, to convene a high-level dialogue in 2021, to promote the implementation of the energy-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in support of the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All, including the global plan of action for the Decade and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

2. On 24 September 2021, the high-level dialogue on energy was held at the summit level, gathering more than 130 global leaders, including Heads of State and Government, ministers and other stakeholders. Marking a historic milestone as the first global meeting on energy under the auspices of the General Assembly in 40 years, the dialogue presented a unique opportunity to inspire and make a commitment to transformative action.

3. The main outcome of the high-level dialogue was a global road map for accelerated action on Sustainable Development Goal 7 in support of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. It was issued as a non-negotiated forward-looking summary by the Secretary-General, with policy recommendations and milestones to be achieved to further accelerate Goal 7 progress in support of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development and a rapid transition to decarbonized energy systems.

4. The Asia-Pacific region will have a significant role to play in the overall achievement of the global road map. In 2020, the region had a population of 4.62 billion, approximately 60 per cent of the world total. The region's economies produce approximately one third of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), consume half of the global energy supply and include the world's top energy producers and consumers. In 2019, Asia and the Pacific accounted for 57 per cent of global emissions from fuel combustion, nearly two thirds of which were from coal.

5. The present document provides an overview of the progress made towards the achievement of Goal 7 in Asia and the Pacific and serves to highlight actions to be taken by member States and other stakeholders in the region to further accelerate that progress in the context of global road map implementation. It also contains a description of the principal challenges with regard to achieving the Goal 7 targets by 2030 and setting the region on a path to net zero emissions by 2050.

II. Global road map for accelerated action on Sustainable Development Goal 7 in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement

6. The global road map was presented as a forward-looking summary of the high-level dialogue on energy and was issued on 3 November 2021 on the sidelines of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Glasgow, Scotland.

7. The global road map sets out the following five actions, which are needed to close the gap on Goal 7 and the decarbonization targets under the Paris Agreement: (a) closing the energy access gap; (b) rapidly transitioning to decarbonized energy systems; (c) mobilizing adequate and predictable finance;

(d) leaving no one behind on the path to a net zero future; and (e) harnessing innovation, technology and data.

8. To that end, the global road map sets out the following milestones for 2025 and 2030:

(a) By 2025:

(i) 500 million more people have gained access to electricity;

(ii) 1 billion more people have gained access to clean cooking solutions;

(iii) Annual investment in access to electricity increased to $35 billion and access to clean cooking increased to $25 billion;

(iv) 100 per cent increase in modern renewables capacity globally;

(v) Double annual investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency globally;

(vi) No new coal power plants in the pipeline after 2021;

(vii) Fossil fuel consumption subsidies are redirected towards renewable energy and energy efficiency;

(viii) 30 million jobs created in renewable energy and energy efficiency;

(b) By 2030:

(i) Universal access to electricity and clean cooking solutions;

(ii) Triple global renewable power capacity;

(iii) Double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency;

(iv) Triple annual investment for renewable energy and energy efficiency globally;

(v) Phase out coal power plants within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development by 2030 and globally by 2040;

(vi) 60 million jobs created in renewable energy and energy efficiency;

(vii) Universal access to electricity in all health-care facilities and all schools worldwide.

9. Acknowledging that no two national energy transition pathways will be identical, the global road map urges that, in the context of achieving the above-mentioned milestones, the Sustainable Development Goals should be integrated as a guiding framework to ensure a just and inclusive energy transition that leaves no one behind, in particular vulnerable populations.

10. Among the partnerships highlighted as key elements for achieving the transformation are energy compacts, which were launched in the context of the high-level dialogue on energy. Energy compacts announced prior to and during the dialogue included more than $400 billion in new finance and investment for clean energy as part of voluntary commitments.

11. Looking ahead, the global road map urges governments, businesses and all stakeholders to step up and drive the global energy transition forward through transformational partnerships. Additional energy compacts should continue to be mobilized, including through a global energy compact action network, supported by UN-Energy, the coordinating body that brings together more than 25 United Nations system entities and international organizations working on various aspects of sustainable energy.

12. The global road map calls for the United Nations system to significantly scale up its efforts to achieve Goal 7 and net zero emissions, and further calls for the strengthening of UN-Energy, which will coordinate and monitor progress on the energy compacts and the implementation of the global road map through 2030.

13. The global road map also suggests that the high-level political forum on sustainable development and other relevant intergovernmental platforms, including on biodiversity, climate change, food systems, oceans, transport, water, and science, technology and innovation, should be leveraged to accelerate Goal 7 action.

III. Tracking progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 7 in Asia and the Pacific

14. Across the Asia-Pacific region, progress towards Goal 7 is mixed. Current progress is insufficient for the region to reach all of the Goal 7 targets by 2030. In the present section, the progress the region is making towards the Goal 7 targets is detailed using data from the Asia Pacific Energy Portal.[1]

A. Energy access

15. Sustainable Development Goal target 7.1 aims to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services by 2030 as measured by two indicators: 7.1.1, proportion of population with access to electricity, and 7.1.2, proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology. The region has been making strong progress on ensuring access to electricity, but progress on clean cooking is much slower.

16. As of 2019, access to electricity has been provided to 96.6 per cent of the region's population. Urban areas have reached close to universal access, while lower electrification rates and quality of service are observed in rural areas. Of the 53 member States, 41 have access rates at 99 per cent or above, with only 6 recording less than 80 per cent access. Of the 157 million people living without electricity across the region, almost three quarters are in South and South-West Asia. On the basis of the continuing progress, the Asia-Pacific region is set to achieve universal access to electricity by 2030.

17. Clean cooking access in the Asia-Pacific region offers a less promising outlook. As of 2019, 65.5 per cent of the population has access to clean cooking, which leaves 1.58 billion people who are still utilizing polluting fuels and technologies. The figure has remained stubbornly low, with an increase of less than 16 percentage points from 2010 to 2019. Without decisive interventions facilitated by policy support and increased financing, the target is at risk of being missed by 2030.

[1] Available at www.asiapacificenergy.org.

B. Renewable energy

18. For cooking and heating, the move towards modern options and away from traditional energy resources, such as fuelwood, charcoal, crop residue and dung, is creating a shift in resource consumption patterns. The growing energy demand and decline of traditional biomass use, a positive outcome, has resulted in a decline in the share of renewable energy in final energy consumption across much of the Asia-Pacific region. However, the share of modern renewable energy, excluding household biomass, is growing, reaching 9.8 per cent as of 2019.

19. Regional progress on increasing the share of modern renewable energy in the energy mix needs to accelerate in order to meet the Goal 7 target to substantially increase the share. While the generation of electricity from renewables has progressed, with the region's renewable energy share in electricity reaching 22.1 per cent as of 2018 – up from 16.1 per cent in 2010 – there is a need to extend renewable energy into other sectors, such as transport and heating.

C. Energy efficiency

20. The Asia-Pacific region has demonstrated a long-term decline in the level of energy intensity of primary energy supply. The energy intensity level of primary energy, measured as the ratio of energy supply in megajoules to GDP in constant 2017 dollars at purchasing power parity, dropped from 7.3 megajoules in 2000 to 5.2 megajoules in 2019 and is now approaching the global average of 4.7 megajoules. The pace of energy intensity reduction has picked up in the recent period, with an annual reduction rate of 2.5 per cent from 2010 to 2019, which is in line with the 2.6 per cent global annual reduction required until 2030.

IV. Opportunities for accelerated action on Sustainable Development Goal 7 in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement in the Asia-Pacific region

21. The global road map sets out a vision for closing the gap on Goal 7 while also realizing the objectives set out in the Paris Agreement. It incorporates additional elements that support the realization of Goal 7 targets, including investment, job creation and phasing out of coal as described in section II of the present document. In order for the milestones set out in the global road map to be achieved, the Asia-Pacific region needs to accelerate its progress and close gaps in all substantive action areas of the global road map. There are several areas where the region has strong potential to help to deliver progress on the global road map, such as universal access to electricity, job creation, and investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency. However, the region faces challenges in achieving access to clean cooking, leveraging private investment and phasing out coal from power generation.

22. Below, the secretariat has highlighted actions to be considered by member States and other stakeholders to further accelerate Goal 7 progress and net zero emissions in support of implementing the global road map.

A. Access to electricity

23. On the basis of existing and planned policies, the Asia-Pacific region is set to achieve universal electricity access by 2030. As of 2018, 38 of 62 members and associate members had access rates of 99 per cent or higher, and only 6 have less than 80 per cent access.

24. Greater efforts are needed to achieve 100 per cent electrification by 2025, considering the disparity between rates of access to electricity in urban versus rural areas. A continued focus on access for rural populations is needed, with emphasis on providing off-grid areas with energy services that go beyond meeting subsistence levels of energy consumption and strive towards greater quality and quantity of supply to support modern lifestyles and productive activities.

25. Off-grid renewable energy technologies represent a viable electrification solution, although in some cases insufficient or inappropriate regulation of the off-grid energy sector creates challenges. Within a single country, various technological solutions, ownership frameworks and business models may ensure that modern energy services are reliable. Efforts are needed to develop dedicated policies and regulations designed for various off-grid solutions.

26. Financing gaps should be addressed to encourage greater private sector participation. Global and regional financial institutions can play a significant role in developing public and private financial and insurance mechanisms and complementing national efforts.

27. Tracking electrification progress presents a number of data-related challenges. No single internationally accepted and internationally adopted definition of modern energy access exists. What constitutes access to electricity in one jurisdiction may not be accepted in another. In addition, the current indicator used for tracking electrification is binary – a household either has or does not have electricity. That measure does not account for other aspects of energy access, such as quantity, reliability or affordability, which are important in helping to understand electricity's usability and potential with regard to socioeconomic impact. Furthermore, the quantity and quality of data in many national contexts are insufficient for off-grid areas in particular, owing to such issues as methodological inconsistencies and irregular or infrequent data collection.

B. Access to clean cooking

28. Clean cooking rates are low in developing countries across the region, and the rates of progress are slow in many economies. In 2018, 10 member States had clean cooking access rates of less than 25 per cent, and an additional 12 member States had access rates of 50 per cent or less. Several Pacific island countries are among those with the lowest rates of access. Pacific island countries often have small, dispersed populations, and biomass is readily available and affordable; consequently, promoting the adoption of modern cooking fuels and technologies is challenging. However, high reliance on traditional biomass is also characteristic of the economies of the subregions of East and North-East Asia, South and South-West Asia, and South-East Asia.

29. Without strong policy interventions, if the current pace of progress continues, by 2030, urban areas will approach universal access to clean cooking fuels and technologies, while rural areas will lag behind, with fewer than three out of five people having access.

30. Clean cooking targets must be integrated into national energy plans. In general, investments in the area of clean cooking are very small compared to what is needed to achieve universal access to clean cooking. Additional resources are needed to support the development of options that meet consumer needs and overcome barriers, such as cost and cultural preferences. Furthermore, increasing employment opportunities for women in rural areas raises the opportunity cost of gathering fuel for cooking. With value attributed to women's time, households are more likely to choose more efficient technologies with shorter cooking times and reduced fuel gathering requirements. Policies in support of clean cooking fuels and technologies also help to raise awareness about the negative impact of traditional cooking technologies and fuels on human health.

31. More efforts are needed to create, strengthen and expand clean cooking markets and distribution networks. While there are many stove models in the region, few apart from natural gas- and electricity-based models meet the emissions performance levels that are required to be considered clean. Adopting the International Organization for Standardization standards for clean cooking stove performance, which align with the World Health Organization air quality standards, can help to align national regulatory frameworks with international best practices, enable the phasing out of inefficient and polluting technologies, and can help to facilitate regional and international markets and trade.

32. The quantity and quality of data for energy access are insufficient. Methodological inconsistencies and irregular or infrequent data collection present challenges to tracking progress with regard to Goal 7, while more data are needed to better understand service delivery in terms of quality, reliability and affordability; energy user preferences; and clean cooking markets.

C. Investment in energy access

33. The work towards electrifying the last mile is challenging for countries in the region. Even countries with officially reported 100 per cent electrification rates are still working to connect their most remote areas, such as mountains, islands or isolated hamlets or villages. For these locations, individual household solar photovoltaic solutions and decentralized systems are often the most efficient means of electrification. The right mix of decentralized electrification solutions based on solar, wind, biomass or hydropower will depend on local resource availability, demand for electricity services and willingness to pay in these areas.

34. According to International Energy Agency estimates, achieving universal access to electricity worldwide by 2030 will require investments of up to $52 billion annually, depending on governments' commitments, while universal access to clean cooking fuels and technologies may require $3 billion annually. The current investment in these sectors in the Asia-Pacific region is below what is needed. However, ascertaining accurate information on levels of investment in off-grid energy access remains challenging; aside from the larger investments reported in the region, financial reporting is inadequate because of limited information from national budgets and private sources and because energy access programmes are wide ranging and often integrated with other priority areas. Nearly all of the financing for mini-grids and off-grid solutions in the region has come from international sources, mainly bilateral and multilateral development financial institutions, private equity investments and

venture capitalists.[2] Additional public investment is needed to support decentralized power system to provide electricity to those without access to power grid.

35. More investment is needed in the research and development of clean cookstoves that meet International Organization for Standardization standards and in research into consumer preferences. Infrastructure financing is needed to support producers and distributors of stoves and clean fuel. Mechanisms such as microfinancing, pay-as-you-go and rental options are needed to provide end users with options to help them to bridge financial gaps, while public financing will be critical to making some options competitive with cheaper alternatives, at least in the short term. Engaging local lending institutions as partners in energy access programmes can expand the potential market for off-grid electrification and clean cooking technologies and fuels.

36. Data for clean-cooking financing is particularly scarce, though total financing tracked in 2015 and 2016 reached $3.6 million in Indonesia, $0.4 million in Bangladesh and $0.1 million in Nepal. While some countries exhibit progress, in general, investments in this area are minuscule compared to what is needed to achieve universal access to clean cooking.

D. Renewable energy

37. The Asia-Pacific region is at the global centre of renewable energy development and deployment, with several countries demonstrating leadership in investment, net capacity additions and production. Between 2014 and 2019, solar electricity production in the Asia-Pacific region increased almost sixfold, while wind production more than doubled. A growing number of megaprojects of global significance are rapidly building new capacity.

38. Renewable energy development represents only approximately one fifth of the region's energy consumption and has been highly concentrated in the power sector. More attention is needed to increase the use of renewables in other sectors, in particular transport and heating. In the Asia-Pacific region, 70 per cent of renewable energy is consumed for the purpose of heating, the bulk of which is done with traditional biomass. Efforts should also be made to support the shift from traditional biomass to more advanced and efficient renewable energy technologies. In addition, while 19 per cent of the energy consumed in the region is used for transport, only 2 per cent of overall renewable energy use is consumed by the transport sector.

39. The transition to renewable energy is accelerating as the cost of renewables falls to levels competitive with, or even below, the cost of fossil fuels. Though pricing varies according to context, the largest reductions are seen in terms of levelized costs for solar photovoltaics and onshore wind, which are currently cheaper than the marginal operating costs of coal and gas power plants. The most competitive pricing is for installations in China and India, though several Asia-Pacific economies have experienced dramatic cost reductions in just a few years. Better technology, growing economies of scale, increased developer experience and improved supply chains are all contributing factors.

[2] Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century, *Asia and the Pacific Renewable Energy Status Report* (Paris, 2019).

40. Distribution networks and grid-connected installations, including on rooftops, are contributing significantly to the growth of the renewable energy sector, in particular in urban areas and economies with constrained land resources. Supporting residential and commercial investments in rooftop solar power can be a cost-effective way to add capacity without growing the energy system's footprint, while also alleviating financial pressure on limited public resources. Policy instruments such as net metering and feed-in tariffs as well as reduced equipment duties, connection fees, taxation and lending rates are being employed to accelerate growth in the sector.

41. Innovations in renewable energy technologies and applications are further expanding the sector's potential. Increased power density is being realized with increased solar cell efficiency, larger wind turbines, and floating solar farms located on hydro reservoirs, which also take advantage of existing transmission infrastructure. Blockchain technology is being piloted in several locales to support peer-to-peer energy trading platforms, investments in renewable energy projects and the purchase of renewable energy credits. Virtual power plants that can aggregate the capacity of numerous distributed systems are being considered under several demonstration projects. The related vehicle-to-grid technology, which incorporates two-way power flows that allow electric vehicles to send power back to the grid, is being explored in order to advance virtual power plants.

42. The expansion of renewable energy in the power sector is highly reliant on a supporting grid infrastructure. Experience in the region shows that renewable capacity additions without the concurrent development of transmission lines or the strengthening of existing grid infrastructure can lead to curtailments of renewable power plants or the overloading of local grid systems.

43. Increasing regional connectivity is an important tool that can be used to enable the integration of higher shares of renewable energy, in particular variable sources, such as solar photovoltaics and wind. Grid systems that extend over greater geographical areas are able to take advantage of natural smoothing of weather patterns and more diverse supplies of generation, which improves both power system flexibility and overall security of supply. Regional integration also creates economic opportunities, by giving suppliers of electricity access to additional markets, and consumers access to lower cost resources. The potential to connect renewable energy development in more remote but resource-rich regions to demand centres, many of which are densely populated areas, is also increased through connectivity across jurisdictional and national boundaries.

44. Renewable energy targets have been established by nearly all Asia-Pacific countries, as well as at the regional and subnational levels. Some of the most ambitious targets are found among the Pacific island States, several of which are targeting 100 per cent renewable electricity generation. In South-East Asia, the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have set the aspirational target of increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix at the subregional level to 23 per cent by 2025, under the ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation 2016–2025.

E. Energy efficiency

45. While improving, regional energy intensity in Asia and the Pacific remains higher than many other regional averages, indicating that relatively more energy is used to produce economic output compared to other regions.

46. Energy efficiency targets have been established in many Asia-Pacific countries, where action plans and measures are increasingly being adopted to lower rates of energy consumption across the industrial, commercial, building and transport sectors. Targets are highly variable in their structure and ambition but are generally formulated with a view to lowering energy or electricity intensity or reducing overall energy consumption. Factors driving the adoption of these measures include the need to meet domestic demand for adequate and reliable energy supplies, together with support for economic growth and emission reductions.

47. Upgrades to and replacements of power generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure are improving the electricity sector's performance, which is important in the face of growing demand for electricity. Greater support is needed to comprehensively assess existing energy systems with a view to identifying the best options for long-term improvements in energy efficiency. The adoption of common energy efficiency standards and labelling systems supports the reduction of energy consumption, while also building regional and global energy efficiency markets.

48. National and subnational emissions trading schemes can play a significant role in encouraging energy efficiency. To advance energy efficiency, more ambitious and specific targets and plans are required at the economy-wide and sectoral levels. Road maps are needed to phase out inefficient technologies and adopt emerging technologies, including smart grids, advanced building systems, efficient transport and the latest industrial and appliance technologies.

49. Financing for energy efficiency is a significant barrier for many countries. Increased knowledge-sharing and cooperation are needed to address a lack of funds and expertise for developing financing mechanisms. Despite the evident progress in reducing energy intensity, many factors aside from efficiency measures, including structural economic changes, have led to this outcome, and progress is needed to improve energy efficiency policy settings. In some cases, economy-wide targets do not exist or are set forth within broad policy documents without supportive actions backing them.

50. Policy frameworks for energy efficiency are weak in the Asia-Pacific region compared to those for energy access and renewable energy. As countries move towards defining targets in regulatory documents, with explicit measures and instruments to meet them, energy intensity reduction can be expected to accelerate across the region.

F. Job creation

51. The region is a centre for manufacturing of renewable energy equipment and advanced energy technologies. For example, in 2019, Asia and the Pacific accounted for more than 63 per cent of all jobs in renewables.[3] As national energy systems around the world are increasingly oriented towards energy efficiency and renewables, the role of the region in supplying the required technologies is likely to grow, along with investment and job creation. There will be significant opportunities to support economic growth and create high-quality jobs. However, efforts need to be directed at increasing the

[3] International Renewable Energy Agency, *Renewable Energy and Jobs: Annual Review 2020* (Abu Dhabi, 2020).

number of women employed in the clean energy sector. For example, in 2019, only 32 per cent of jobs in renewable energy were held by women.[4]

52. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had an impact on employment across economies, with millions of jobs lost and an estimated 10 per cent income decline experienced in Asia and the Pacific.[5] Addressing this damage will be a major element in government measures for recovery and stimulus. Smart investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy offer greater returns in terms of job creation than do fossil fuels, and target key areas of carbon emissions, helping to advance climate objectives. Well-directed funding can have a multiplier effect through higher economic returns, increased job creation and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

53. In the energy sector, the greatest job opportunities can be found in building energy efficiency, with approximately 15 jobs created per $1 million of capital investment. Renewable energy, also at the heart of both tackling climate change and meeting the region's growing appetite for energy, provides strong employment opportunities. Notably, solar photovoltaic energy, which is also rapidly becoming the most widely available and lowest-cost new energy supply in many contexts, creates between two and three times the number of jobs of conventional power generation. At the same time, strengthened power grids are the fundamental enabler for economies to provide quality energy access and take advantage of the most cost-effective variable renewable energy supplies, as well as to provide good employment value.

54. Investment in industrial efficiency not only drives job growth and lower emissions but also increases economic competitiveness by reducing energy and production costs. At the same time, more efficient transport of people and goods provides job creation from construction activities in the short term and benefits due to the interconnectivity of existing and new economic zones in the long term.

G. Coal phase out

55. The Asia-Pacific region accounts for almost 54 per cent of total carbon dioxide emissions globally, nearly two thirds of which are from the energy sector, which is heavily reliant on fossil fuels. The Asia-Pacific region made up 80 per cent of the world's coal consumption in 2019, with demand mainly concentrated in China (52 per cent), followed by India (10 per cent) and Japan (3 per cent). South-East Asia accounts for 5 per cent of the world's coal consumption. Almost two thirds of the region's energy sector emissions come from coal-fired electricity generation.

56. At the recent twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties, held in Glasgow, Governments, banks and organizations made announcements about moving away from coal. More than 40 Governments made announcements in 2021 to signal a shift away from coal, including those of Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the Philippines, Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, Nepal and Singapore. In a statement entitled "Global coal to clean power transition statement", Governments also committed to scaling up clean power and ensuring a just transition away from coal. The Governments of India, Indonesia and the Philippines, among others, announced partnerships with the Asian

[4] Ibid.

[5] International Labour Organization, *Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2020: Navigating the Crisis towards a Human-Centred Future of Work* (Bangkok, 2020).

Development Bank and other international funds to support the early retirement of coal plants and to accelerate transitions away from coal power. This development follows recent announcements from the Governments of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea with regard to ending overseas coal financing.

57. Despite the indication of significant policy change towards a transition to clean energy and the rapid phase-out of coal, hundreds of new coal-fired power plants in the Asia-Pacific region are still being built, and hundreds more are in the pipeline. According to a joint report by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air and the Global Energy Monitor, following the recent decisions to move away from coal, the pipeline of proposed coal-fired power plants in Asia is expected to shrink from 65 gigawatts (GW) to 22 GW,[6] but would need to reduce to zero under the global road map. There are still approximately 43 GW of projects already under construction throughout Asia, according to the report's estimates. Given a typical economic lifetime of around 40 years, this infrastructure is presenting a significant increase in stranded asset risks and is locking higher emissions into the regional energy system.

58. According to the International Energy Agency, the amount of electricity generated worldwide from coal is surging towards a new annual record in 2021, undermining efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and potentially putting global coal demand on course for an all-time high in 2022. After falling in 2019 and 2020, global power generation from coal is expected to jump by 9 per cent in 2021 to an all-time high of 10,350 terawatt-hours. The rebound is being driven by the rapid economic recovery, which has pushed up electricity demand much faster than low carbon supplies can keep up with. The steep rise in natural gas prices has also increased demand for coal power by making it more cost competitive.

59. Governments in the Asia-Pacific region will need to put more effort into reversing the current trend of expanding coal-fired generation and urgently implement policies to enable a fast decarbonization of the electricity mix. Strengthening governments' commitments to climate policy with plans that include a clear commitment to phasing out coal and removing subsidies for fossil fuels while building support for renewables and energy efficiency will offer new opportunities for both developed and developing countries in the region to build low carbon economies, with significant benefits for sustainable development.

V. Issues for consideration by the Commission: towards the third Asian and Pacific Energy Forum

60. As decided in the Ministerial Declaration of the Second Asian and Pacific Energy Forum, endorsed by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in its resolution 74/9, the third Asian and Pacific Energy Forum will be held in 2023. The Committee on Energy at its third session recommended that the agenda of the Forum be developed in consultation with member States, and that the background documents be developed with advice from the Expert Working Groups on Energy Connectivity and on Universal

[6] Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air and Global Energy Monitor, "With China's withdrawal from overseas coal, the pipeline for new coal in Asia could drop to 22 GW: all of which will likely not be built", briefing, November 2021.

Access to Modern Energy Services, Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Cleaner Use of Fossil Fuels.

61. The Forum could serve as a cooperative platform to ensure that regional efforts to implement the global road map are designed and implemented in a manner consistent with Goal 7 targets and in support of other Sustainable Development Goals and net zero emissions in line with the Paris Agreement. The global road map for accelerated action on Sustainable Development Goal 7 in support of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement may serve as a basis for deliberations at the Forum.

62. With a view to a timely start of the preparatory process to the Forum, the Commission may wish to provide the secretariat with further guidance on agenda items that the Forum should cover, based on information provided in the present document.