

## **Summary of discussion on Enhancing power grid connectivity to achieve affordable and clean energy for all**

### **held on 7th April in preparation for the 7th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)**

This webinar addressed the challenges and barriers to sustainable energy development and discussed examples from across the region where energy connectivity through cross-border power grids is providing solutions. Speakers and participants noted needs for the phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies, the pricing of externalities, building trust between countries, liberalization of domestic markets and international trade, increased investment, knowledge transfer, and private-public sector cooperation, enterprise reform, and the development of institutional as well as infrastructural connectivity. Importantly, the discussion recognized that cross-border transmission grids are not a panacea to sustainable energy development issues. In particular, transmission-level connectivity does not address the last mile issue for electricity access except in niche locations – a benefit that has been overstated in some quarters. On the other hand, cooperation on power grid connectivity can contribute to social and economic welfare by creating new jobs, contributing to sustainable and clean energy supply and, given right policies, lead to the redistribution of benefits across the population. Participants also noted that the down-side security risks associated with connectivity have also been overstated by some: Connectivity cannot equip the supplier country with a simple means of shutting down the consumer country's grid, because the act of switching off the connecting transmission system would inflict disruption on both sides of the connection.

Participants were in general agreement on the policy recommendations put forward in the entry point profile: 1. To strengthen political commitment for enhancing power grid connectivity; 2. To strengthen regional cooperation on power transmission policy, planning and operations; 3. To ensure that adequate finance, trade and innovation agreements are in place; and 4. To build capacity in relevant technical and policy domains and share learnings from successes. A fifth recommendation put forward by the speaker – that as we emerge from the COVID-driven downturn, recovery funding should be directed towards sustainable energy infrastructure – was also unopposed. These investments, characterized as both capital- and labour-intensive, can provide economic stimulus as well as long-term benefits of enhanced clean and low-carbon energy generation.

*This webinar and associated entry point profile was organised by ESCAP, in coordination with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).*