



Ibu Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations & Executive Secretary of
The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Opening Remarks

Second Committee on Energy

UNCC, Bangkok, 9 October 2019

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the 2nd Session of the Committee on Energy.

Energy is central to growth and prosperity. Yet, energy demand in Asia and the Pacific has almost doubled since 2000 and energy imports have increased 15-fold over the past two decades, making our region a net energy importer. Energy will continue to be central to our future prosperity, but our region can no longer rely on fossil fuels to fulfil its energy needs.

The Asia-Pacific region is responsible for about fifty percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Much of this is due to the way we produce and consume energy. As a result, our climate is changing and calling for urgent action. Our people and communities are becoming more vulnerable to climate related disasters. As the Secretary General of the United Nations has said many times, we are facing a climate emergency.

Beyond the pressures of climate change, the energy sector is also being tasked to address a broad array of sustainability concerns, as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda provides us with a blueprint to align our efforts in the transition to sustainability. For the energy sector, Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7) provides a framework for energy development that balances the needs of people, planet and prosperity. This is centred around universal access, increased efficiency and a fast transition to renewable energy. The work of this Committee is structured around regional cooperation to advance SDG7.

Allow me to touch on how the region is positioned on advancing sustainable energy. Starting with some good news, access to electricity in the region is improving and is likely to reach close to the 2030 target of 100 per cent access. However, without accelerating the uptake of renewable energy, increasing energy efficiency and promoting clean cooking, we will simply not achieve SDG7 and the other Sustainable Development Goals. This is the reality not only for Asia and the Pacific but also for the world. That is why countries have called for a decade of accelerated action to achieve the SDGs.

What does accelerated action for achieving the SDGs and living up to the promise of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change require from the energy sector?

First, we need a fundamentally new approach to energy finance. Establishing the next generation of sustainable energy infrastructure requires expanded finance and more innovation in financing. Innovative financing mechanisms, such as green bonds and public-private

partnerships can play a role. Mobilizing more finance in turn requires supportive policies - public co-funding, incentives and de-risking. When more finance is available, evidence from our region shows its incredible potential for sustainable energy. For example, opening up energy markets to transparent auctions is demonstrating how renewables are more competitive than any other source. A recent solar PV auction in Cambodia has seen a price of 3.87 US cents per kilowatt hour – the lowest power purchase tariff for a solar project so far recorded in Southeast Asia. By ending fossil fuel subsidies in the region, we can free up \$164 billion annually to fund sustainable energy.

Second, we can tap the potential of regional cooperation for energy connectivity and electricity trading. Instead of generating energy from fossil fuels, renewable energy can be transmitted over long distances via interconnected transmission lines to locations where there is load centre. Transnational energy networks would enable a more stable supply of clean and competitively-priced energy. Such linkages would reduce our current reliance on fossil fuel-based power plants.

Third, the Asia-Pacific region has impressive capabilities in technology which must be exploited. We have some of the best and lowest cost technologies in areas such as solar, wind, energy storage and energy efficiency, which are improving every day. Moreover, our region is a leader in the development of these technologies. Innovation in energy will be the key deciding factor in realizing the sustainable energy revolution. We should encourage innovation at all scales and settings - from grassroots to high tech applications. As new frontiers open up in areas such as blockchain, energy storage and hydrogen technology, it's essential that we are ready for an innovation-led approach.

Fourth and most important is political leadership. Sustainable technologies exist, the price is on par and finance can be aligned--but our region is stubbornly investing in energy that is undermining our own existence and the planet's future. Providing this collective energy leadership at the regional level is one of the important roles of the Committee on Energy. The Committee can provide guidance and support for the efforts to achieve SDG7, including a fast transition to renewable energy to reduce the adverse impact of conventional energy technologies and deliver social development outcomes. It can offer an effective platform to discuss ways to phase out fossil fuel subsidies and shift away from investing in fossil-fuel based power generation etc.

**Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

In support of the Committee and member States, ESCAP is supporting policymakers navigate their national energy transition and align them with decarbonisation efforts and SDG7 targets. Central to this effort has been the development of national implementation roadmaps on SDG7. ESCAP, in consultation with national policymakers, is assisting to develop pathways to achieve SDG7 and the Paris Agreement. ESCAP is also facilitating regional energy cooperation for interconnecting the region's power grids. Among the topics you will be discussing during this Committee is the draft Regional road map on power system connectivity for promoting cross-border electricity connectivity for sustainable development.

Let us not forget the enormous potential of our region for the coming energy transition. We have an abundance of clean energy resources such as solar, wind, hydro and biomass. We have a unique opportunity to enhance our cross-border energy interconnection and exploit these untapped renewable energy resources. Our region is home to many of the leading companies working on energy technology and innovation.

**Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Let us remember we have only one decade to make a difference. We must act now. I am looking forward to hearing your deliberations on all these issues. We are grateful for the support and cooperation received from our member States as we work together to advance regional energy cooperation.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you a very successful Committee meeting.