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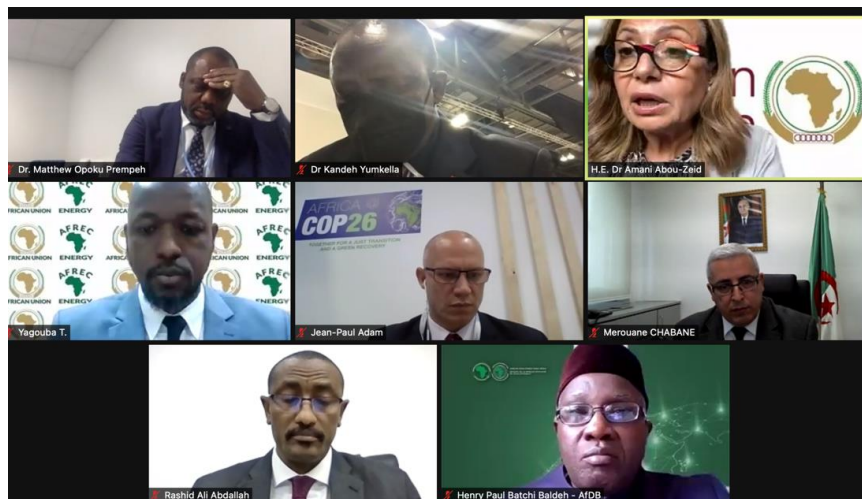
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Is energy transition the answer to Africa's Climate Change and Socio-Economic Development?

What will it take for Africa to reach net-zero emissions?



04 November 2021, Glasgow, UK: The African Union Commission (AUC) through the African Energy Commission (AFREC) hosted a high-level online side event at the COP26, held under the theme: *“Opportunities and Challenges for African Energy Transition: What will it take for Africa to reach net-zero emissions?”*

The meeting called for bold measures related to opportunities and challenges facing Africa, to accelerate actions towards the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The meeting aimed at fully unlocking Africa's position on climate adaptation, to expand modern energy access, reduce poverty and create jobs, whilst contributing to the global objectives of circumventing the lock-in of carbon into future development on the continent.

As impacts of climate change continue to worsen and pose significant threats to socio-economic development globally, speakers across governments, African Union Commission, African Development Bank, United Nations, leading policy influencers and private sectors deliberated through a virtual forum, co-organised by the African Development Bank (AFDB), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD).

In her keynote address, Her Excellency Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the African Union Commission underscored that it is in the best interest of Africa to join global efforts, to transition towards Net-Zero emissions, in order to mitigate future impacts of climate change on the continent and also reduce the costs of adaptation.

“The availability of abundant renewable energy resources on the continent such as hydropower, solar, wind, geothermal and bio-energy can transform Africa's energy sector to modern and sustainable energy through both grid and off-grid systems. These resources offer opportunities to accelerate clean energy access on the continent through energy transition and

especially factoring natural gas as an energy transition fuel for power and clean cooking”, She stressed.

Dr Abou-Zeid also emphasized that Africa’s political will and commitment is highly significant to accelerate the uptake of renewable energy as evidenced by the targets within countries national plans reflected in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to achieve climate and development ambitions. “COP26 should seek to stimulate concrete actions to address the huge financing gap to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050”, she further stressed.

Though Africa contributes about 3.6% of the global CO2 emission, there is evidence that climate change impacts on Africa are more severe, bearing in mind that access to affordable clean energy remain one of the biggest challenges facing the continent. Thus, addressing persistent barriers to energy development on the continent through technical, financial, markets, policy and regulatory framework is essential.

H.E Dr Gerd Muller, the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany called for joint forces amongst nations to act now on issues of climate change and decarbonisation. He said that moving to renewable energy will create jobs and many other opportunities, which will make Africa a green continent. “Decarbonisation is necessary because the energy sector is the source of more than two thirds of all CO2 emissions” he emphasised. Expressing Germany’s commitment to work with Africa in her energy transition ambitions, he hailed the proposed AU-EU Green Energy Initiative as an appropriate instrument for facilitating a bi-continental approach.

H.E. Mr. Benatou ZIANE, Minister of Energy Transition and Renewable Energy of Algeria noted in a statement read on his behalf by Mr CHABANE Merouane, Permanent Secretary, that Africa needs to diversify its energy sources and liberate itself from the dependency of hydropower, to guarantee energy security for the future generations for the development of an economy which is based on a model that is aligned with socio-economic needs, promote equality, employment creation and responds to Africa’s energy challenges. “Algeria has already started working on a policy framework for a new energy model, to balance a local energy mix which is favourable for transition and reducing emission by 2030. We are also working on developing renewable energy by increasing 15 GW by 2035” he stressed.

In their panel discussion H.E Hon. Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh, Minister of Energy of Ghana, Mr. Jean-Paul Adam, Director Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resources Management of UNECA, Mr. Henry Paul Batchi Baldeh, Director Power System Development at AfDB, and Mr. Mamadou Diakhité, Acting Head of Division for Environmental Sustainability at AUDA-NEPAD highlighted the following:

- Africa need to be realistic in choosing the energy transition pathways which address her unique requirements/circumstances;
- Enhancing policy, legislation and implementation approaches across national, regional and continental level, to enable a favourable environment for development;
- Leapfrog into the green development space without ignoring Africa’s infrastructure development and industrialisation ambitions;
- Develop bankable projects to scale up access to funding and investment;
- Adopt a mix of energy solutions to address the needs of each country including solutions to high tariffs and accessibility to sustainable energy options;
- Promote energy efficiency which is necessary for energy transition;
- Focus on building energy infrastructure and strengthening transmission corridors.

The African Union together with its various development agencies and partners have taken concrete actions by developing continental development programmes and projects such as,

improving infrastructure to increase regional power system network by 2040, stimulating and expanding energy markets by providing evidence-based policy advice to member states and ensuring that frameworks and strategies which will enhance technology transfer, technical capacity building at continental and national level are adopted and strengthened. Mobilising adequate financing to accelerate the energy transition agenda in Africa is also one of the challenges that the Commission has focused its attention on.

Notes to Editor

About energy transition position in Africa

Africa's pursuant development agenda on the provision of sustainable energy at the continental level is driven by the AU Agenda 2063 that "Africa's energy system shall be based on renewable clean energy sources, supported by strong and localised manufacturing sector" and SDG 7 of the UN vision 2030 to, "ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all".

In recognition of the importance to develop non-conventional energy resources in Africa, ensure preservation and lower Africa's CO₂ emissions, while developing its abundant energy resources, Africa ought to adopt an energy sector transition which is socio-economic viable, efficient and adaptable.

It is with this view that the African Energy transition programme blue print for AFREC which aims to provide a clear understanding of transformations of the energy system needed in the short, medium and long term. It will chart a path to achieve the viable energy transition required, by identifying frameworks to support the development of sectoral and technological detailed, policy-relevant and country-driven strategies consistent with the national development agenda and the Paris Agreement goal.

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