DRAFT

CONCEPT NOTE

SIDE EVENT IN COP26

Opportunities and Challenges for African Energy Transition: What will it take for Africa to reach net-zero emissions?

Glasgow, United Kingdom

Date: 4th November 2021
12:00 to 13:30 GMT

Venue: ONLINE

To participate kindly register here
https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_W8DkhfUBSfW_q6b1jlGIeA

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Region: Africa continent
Working Title: "Opportunities and Challenges for African Energy Transition: What will it take for Africa to reach net-zero emissions"

co-organised with

I. Context

Africa has taken the path of transition to green growth through the development of renewable energy sources and low carbon economy as emphasized at COP 21 in Paris in 2015 where the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) was launched. COP26 summit is bringing parties together to accelerate action towards the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Access to affordable clean energy in Africa remain one of the biggest challenges facing the continent. Africa still have a population of about 900 million of people who still do not have access to clean and modern cooking facilities, and more than 600 million without access to electricity. The situation is even alarming for the populations living in remote and rural areas.

The good news is that Africa's contribution to the emission of Carbon dioxide (CO_2) is by far the lowest with only 3-4% of the global emissions and Africa is a continent with vast unexploited energy resources. In this context, the African Union (AU) has taken substantial actions toward transforming the energy sector for the benefit of its people as emphasized in the AU Agenda 2063 that "Africa's energy system shall be based on renewable clean energy sources, supported by strong and localised manufacturing segment". These aspirations are fully entrenched in AU strategy, to fully adopt cleaner, more efficient and adaptable energy systems through the African Energy Transition Programme. The programme has been adopted by the AU decision organs to support the AU Member States to smoothly transition to renewable sources of energy, in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

In this context, the African Union Commission (AUC) through the African Energy Commission (AFREC) together with AU Member States, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), regional and international partners will host a high-level panel to discuss the ***Opportunities and Challenges for African Energy Transition to reach net-zero emissions***.

II. Background

Despite its low contribution to the emission of CO_2, the climate change threatens Africa very severely. It is reported that in West Africa for example, the temperature increase is 1.5 times higher than world level and people fight recurred droughts, great variability of the pluviometry, floods, coastal erosion, and the seasons' disparity. As consequence, the primary sector such as agriculture, livestock, fishing and the forest exploitation, which are key sectors for the economy and food security of African countries are heavily affected.

At the same time African countries need to pursue the development agenda which requires sustainable energy provision for the population, the industries and primary sectors. In order to keep Africa's low CO_2 emissions while developing its abundant energy resources there is need to strategically adopt an energy sector transition to develop more efficient renewable energy resources. In recognition of the importance to develop non-conventional energy resources in Africa, the African Ministers meeting in the second ordinary session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism (STC TTIIET) in April 2019 in Cairo, Arab Republic of

Egypt, mandated the African Energy Commission (AFREC) to develop the Africa Energy Transition Programme and support the AU Member States in their energy transition process.

This programme has been designed to accelerate the African energy sector transformation required in the continent to foster jointly inclusive economic growth, wealth creation, poverty eradication, and inequality reduction in a sustainable climate compatible development manner. This goal is instrumental in the achievement of the aspiration of the AU Agenda 2063, the United Nations Sustainable Development (SDGs), and the implementation of the Paris Agreement in a synergetic mode that maximizes co-benefits. The AU is therefore committed to facilitate Africa energy sector transition through actions which are socially and economically viable, at the same time, climate compatible. In this regards AU is working towards the full implementation of the African Energy Transition Programme through a holistic interventions and approaches.

III. Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

The African Energy Transition Programme was designed to respond to the challenges currently faced by the continent, which include but not limited to:

- Persistent reliance on low-quality traditional energy sources
- Inequalities between and within countries and regions
- Insufficient regional integration
- Capacity constraints
- Commonalities and differences across Africa
- Rapid population growth and demographic shifts

Opportunities

In order to address Africa's current energy challenges and successfully implement the far reaching African Energy Transition, the programme is based on strategic objectives that are in line and opportune for any green initiative to be implemented in Africa, these objectives are:

- building the energy infrastructure for economic and social development, starting with agriculture, which employs the largest share of the population but remains at a near subsistence level of production in most parts of the continent;
- Developing the renewable energy sector in alignment with the Paris Agreement, to exploit Africa's great potential for solar, wind, hydropower, geothermal and other renewable sources, and build African capacity for manufacturing and developing these technologies;
- Designing energy efficiency programs for buildings, industry and transport in AU Member States. Such programmes should include local manufacturing of efficient equipment, as well as regulatory and behavioural interventions;
- Long-term strategic planning towards smart, people-centered, interconnected and distributed renewable energy systems to rapidly accommodate the current development and falling costs of new renewable energy technologies which open up new possibilities for transition to, and designing of, the energy systems of the future;
- Careful consideration of the possible role of national, regional and inter-continental gas pipelines, where this can be justified from a long-term climate and economic perspective,

with recognition of risks of stranded assets and the global need to rapidly move away from fossil fuels;

- Developing an integrated African electricity network, which would greatly decrease average electricity costs across the continent and increase energy sustainability and security;
- Decarbonisation of the energy and other sectors, to put countries firmly on a low- to zero-carbon energy trajectory as well as fulfil national commitments under the Paris Agreement; and
- Implementation of a systematic, continent-wide approach to innovation to harness the research and development capacities required to meet all the above objectives.

IV. Actions taken and way forward

In responding to the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities, in February 2021, the AU Heads of State and Government adopted the second Priority Action Plan of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA PAP2) as the reference programme for regional and continental infrastructure development in Africa for the coming ten years until 2030. PIDA PAP2 aims to fill critical infrastructure gaps emphasizing local ownership, the necessity of both soft and hard interventions, sound implementation, partnerships, and financing mechanisms. It underscores the Integrated Corridor Approach in infrastructure development as well as smart technologies in the design and implementation of the projects while ensuring environment sustainability. It is structured to boost job creation and enhance gender mainstreaming. It contains list of **69 priority projects** with estimated total cost of **USD 160 Billion** in sectors of Energy, Transport, ICT and Transboundary Water.

On 3rd June 2021, the African Union launched the African Single Electricity Market (AfSEM). AfSEM aims to be the most cost-efficient response for strong growth of electricity demand in Africa and an essential tool for tapping the full potential of the continent's renewable energy sources as well as an effective accelerator to 100% access of electricity in the continent. The progressive implementation of AfSEM to full realization by 2040 will see it become be the largest single electricity market in the world covering 55 countries serving about **1.3 billion people**.

Successful implementation of AfSEM depends on a robust electricity infrastructure that links generation resources to electricity demand centers through adequate transmission capacity. It is in this context that a Continental Power System Master Plan (CMP) is under development. The CMP aims at matching the continents electricity long term demand projections with requisite generation and transmission infrastructure in alignment with the AfSEM objectives and roll out plan. The CMP lays emphasis on developing renewable and clean energy sources that will promote the Africa Energy Transition.

The progress made in advancing the energy sector development in Africa has been adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic to the extent that the rate of energy access dropped for the first time in decades. Therefore, the AUC in collaboration with the UK COP26 Presidency has developed the Green Recovery Action Plan (GRAP). Development of renewable energy and energy efficiency is one of the key pillars of GRAP to accelerate energy access being

cognizant of energy efficiency gains for the climate. Implementation of GRAP aims to position Africa on a sustainable Covid-19 recovery path.

V. Event Objectives and Outputs

Objectives

The proposed event will bring together African energy development stakeholders and financing partners to a platform for discussion on the opportunities, challenges and the way forward for the implementation of the African Energy Transition Programme. The platform will also provide an opportunity for attracting additional partnerships to the programme.

The side event at COP26 will provide an opportunity to exchange knowledge, experiences, best practices and information among energy stakeholders on recent developments in the area of energy transition and operationalization of related programmes.

Outputs

The expected outcome is a joint agreement on modalities for cooperation to adequately address the challenges facing the African Energy Transition Programme in order to accelerate the implementation of related work packages in AU Member States and contribute to the continental targets for the SDG7.

VI. Format

The side event will begin by a keynote speech by the H.E Commissioner of Infrastructure and Energy followed by a moderated panel discussion. The recommendations from the panel discussion will be taken forward for implementation by the African Energy Commission (AFREC) in close collaboration with the AU Member States and key continental stakeholders.

VII. Date & Venue

The workshop will be held in Glasgow on **4th November 2021** from **12 to 13:30 hours GMT**. The event will take place at the Africa Pavilion in the COP26 Exhibition Area.

VIII. Languages

All presentations and discussion during the meeting will be in English or French with simultaneous interpretations in both languages.

IX. Participation

The meeting will be attended by high-level delegates from the African Union Commission, African Development Bank, African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Regional Economic Communities, AU Member States, UK Government, European Union, and international organizations, and selected energy sector experts and media representatives.

X. Information

For further information on the African Energy Transition Programme and the side event please contact Mr. Yagouba Traore, Head of Policy Strategy and Support at AFREC at Traorey@africa-union.org

XI. Speakers

Moderator
Dr. Kandeh Yumkella, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All

Keynote Speech
H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy

Panelists

H.E. Dr. Verona Songwe, Executive Secretary of UNECA
H.E. Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, CEO of AUDA-NEPAD
H.E. Dr. Kevin Kariuki, Vice President for Power, Energy, Climate & Green Growth, The African Development Bank
H.E. Dr. Gerd Müller, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany
H.E. Sir Nicholas Kay, COP26 Regional Ambassador for Africa
H. E. Mr. Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President, for the European Green Deal, European Commission