



Parallel Roundtable One

Sustainable Energy for All: What Works and What Needs Fixing?

15 May 2014



Overview

Sustainable energy, generally understood as the provision of energy to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own energy needs, has in recent years gained increasing prominence on the international development agenda. Part of that greater awareness has been linked to a renewed focus on human development and climate change, which can only be fully addressed with the participation of the global energy sector.

The widely-recognised United Nations Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative, whose advisory board is co-chaired by the World Bank, brings together governments, the private sector, and civil society in striving to achieve three interlinked goals by 2030:

1. Ensuring universal energy access to modern energy services.
2. Doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency.
3. Doubling the share of renewables in the global energy mix.

Strong national commitment supported by international cooperation will be required to reach the level of global investment estimated to accomplish these goals, which by some accounts amounts to US\$600 billion on a global scale, every year, until 2030. Political will, appropriate policies and institutions, adequate financing, unimpeded technological transfer, more training and education, and on-going engagement with society, among others, stand out among the actions most frequently mentioned to make a difference in this front.

These are still broad categories, however, and there is much room for debate regarding the degree of involvement required from national governments and multilateral organisations if SE4ALL objectives are to be met. For some, “appropriate policies and institutions” with a chance of long-term success must be market based. Others argue that, given the urgency of the access and environmental agenda, public support is necessary, especially where financial markets are thin. Otherwise it will be very difficult to accelerate the pace of investments to reduce poverty, increase efficiency, and expand the reach of renewable energies.

There is also the broader argument that, outside the solution of basic coordination problems, such as convergence among industry standards or the creation of financial mechanisms tailored to the realities of low-income countries, direct interventions have little chance of success. Despite the best intentions of international cooperation agencies, energy access is still a dream for 1.2 billion people and energy efficiency is highest in high-income countries. And notwithstanding the benefits of markets, most renewable energies seem to require fiscal support in order to thrive.

As some approaches have been more successful than others, there is value in an enhanced sharing of experiences. The lessons of experience in one country or region may provide valuable insights for the design of policies in another. Considering that countries are making progress at a different pace and on a different scale, and that local knowledge is among the best inputs for policymaking, it is worthwhile asking: in national approaches to promote sustainable energy, what works and what needs fixing?

Objective of Parallel Roundtable One

Ministers, industry executives and thought leaders are invited to discuss on-going efforts aimed at ensuring the achievement of sustainable energy for all, and to exchange views on what lessons they draw from their experience in their countries to date.

Suggested Questions

- What national “lessons of experience” with policies to promote sustainable energy for all merit greater attention by the international cooperation community?
- What sector (industry, transport, housing, etc.) holds the most promise for faster deployment of clean-energy technologies?
- Which niche market opportunities and grass-root successes deserve roll out on a larger scale? Can they be structured to match the opportunities of large-scale projects?
- How should available financial mechanisms be improved to scale-up clean energy investments?

- How have public-private partnerships fared in national efforts at promoting sustainable energy when compared with more traditional approaches?
- Can micro-credits contribute to address energy poverty, if at all?
- Technology transfer plays an important role in scaling-up efforts to increase the reach of sustainable energies. What factors have hindered or facilitated the application or reach of clean-energy technologies, including energy efficiency, where they are most needed?
- When do market forces or state interventions lead in facilitating access to affordable, clean and modern energy sources?
- The sustainable energy for all initiative focuses on high impact regions in sub-Saharan Africa and developing Asia. Should other regions, including those with developed economies, deserve focus as well?
- In what areas must regional cooperation instruments to address the cross-border dimensions of alleviating energy poverty be strengthened?
- Are regional cooperation instruments to address the cross border dimensions of alleviating energy poverty and building more sustainable energy systems sufficiently in place and where and how could these be strengthened?
- What contribution can the IEF make to assist in mainstreaming this agenda in the global producer–consumer dialogue, to keep track of successful practices and to disseminate results to help this process to reach the finish line?

The IEF Reference Shelf: Recommended Reading

- Hastings-Simon, S. and others, (2014) Myths and realities of clean technologies McKinsey & Company, April
- UN, World Bank, IEA and others, (2013) Sustainable Energy For All: Tracking Progress, New York, May
- Thomson, H. and Snell, C. (2013) Energy Poverty in the EU, Policy Brief University of York Department of Social Policy and Social Work, York, June
- IEA OECD (2010) *World Energy Outlook*, Paris, November
- UN (2010) Energy for a Sustainable Future The Secretary-General's Advisory Group on Energy and Climate Change (AGECC) Summary Report and Recommendations, New York, April