

## **Policy Dialogue on Energy for Sustainable Development**

### **17-19 December 2013, Bangkok**

#### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The Policy Dialogue on Energy for Sustainable Development was held in Bangkok from 17 to 19 December 2013 at the Pullman Bangkok King Power Hotel, organized by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in collaboration with UNDP.

Almost 70 participants gathered, including representatives from 26 ESCAP member States (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Fiji, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Palau, Russian Federation, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Viet Nam), 6 UN agencies/offices (Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General, UNEP, UNDP, UN Women, UNIDO and WHO), 5 intergovernmental organizations (ASEAN Centre for Energy, Energy Charter Secretariat, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, SAARC Energy Centre), and 6 other entities (ABB China Ltd., Centre for Energy-Environment Resources Development, Chulalongkorn University, The Energy and Resources Institute, Stockholm Environment Institute, and U.S. Agency for International Development).

The Meeting participants agreed on the following Conclusions and Recommendations:

#### **Session 1: Regional-Global Linkages:**

##### **Decade on Sustainable Energy for All (2014) and APEF Plan of Action (2014-2018)**

The Meeting participants discussed the major global processes underway – the Decade on Sustainable Energy for All, 2014-2024, the ongoing climate change negotiations under the rubric of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the intergovernmental negotiations on the development agenda beyond 2015 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Asia-Pacific region will play a significant role in shaping these global processes. The Meeting participants noted the following:

- Energy is a critical enabler for development and is fundamental to all dimensions of sustainable development. The Meeting participants underlined the need to integrate energy issues into the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs which are to be defined;
- Clear linkages exist between the Decade on Sustainable Energy for All 2014-2024 and the APEF Plan of Action 2014-2018. The Meeting participants welcomed the synergies and the contributions that can be made to the Decade through the implementation of the APEF Plan of Action. It was recognized that ESCAP plays an important role as a channel to the global process;
- Coordination is needed among the various global and regional initiatives to support member States in implementing national energy policies and plans;
- Participants emphasized the centrality of providing universal access to modern energy services utilizing all sources of energy for the Asia-Pacific region;
- Participants also stressed the importance of flexibility in target setting at the national level by taking into account national circumstances and development policies and priorities of countries;

- Low-carbon and carbon-free energy technology will continue to be a critical element in attaining the goals of Sustainable Energy for All. The Meeting participants stressed the importance of facilitating technology transfer to developing countries;
- Data was recognized as a key to informed policy making. The leaders of the Pacific subregion demonstrated an exemplary initiative through the signing of the Declaration on Establishing a Pacific Regional Data Repository for SE4All. Such an initiative could also be replicated in other parts of the region to strengthen regional cooperation.

## **Session 2: Moving forward with the APEF Ministerial Declaration and Plan of Action**

The Meeting participants recognized APEF outcome documents, i.e., Ministerial Declaration and the Plan of Action as pioneering document for the region. The Meeting participants welcomed the secretariat's proposal on the APEF review and assessment mechanism with its three pillars on (1) a web-based data and policy information portal, (2) dialogues and (3) analysis & reports. They supported the systematic approach and timeline from 2013 to 2018 conceptualized by the secretariat in response to the mandate given by member States in the APEF Ministerial Declaration and the Plan of Action.

The Meeting participants recognized that appropriate qualitative and quantitative data collection is crucial for the development of Data & Policy Information Portal, in particular during the stage of establishing the baseline in 2014. The meeting made the following recommendations in this regard:

- Collect data from internationally recognized information sources, such as UN Data, and ESCAP Data, and International Energy Agency, as well as from development partners such as the World Bank and ADB;
- Identify national focal points to support the efficient collection of information about existing and planned energy policies including verified energy data collected on a regular basis;
- Take into account the issues of maintaining up-to-date data and data comparability; and
- Organize content at the national, subregional and regional levels.

The meeting proposed to have further discussion on technical details in further setting up the mechanism through expert group meetings.

## **Session 3: Focus on the Asian Energy Highway (AEH) concept**

The Meeting participants supported the concept in developing the Asian Energy Highway, which should be developed in attaining sustainable development. Many countries expressed their support and interest based on their on-going bilateral negotiations as well as subregional initiatives.

The Meeting participants agree that political issues will continue to be a challenge to develop the Asian Energy Highway. In further strengthening the concept some recommendations were made, echoing the suggestions from the Expert Group Meeting in September 2013:

- Facilitate networking within and among subregions to support and strengthen existing initiatives on multilateral power grids with a view to promote harmonization for future region-wide cooperation and possible integration;

- Include the Unified Energy System of the CIS countries, which has extended experience in managing an integrated transmission system and/or other relevant initiatives;
- Identify specific ways the Pacific Island States could benefit from the AEH or alternatively develop an initiative on connectivity that addresses the particular energy challenges in the Pacific;
- Ensure socio-economic benefits as well as the market potential are clearly identified and understood;
- Develop an appropriate mechanism to support the implementation of the Asian Energy Highway.

The Meeting agreed that the next immediate step in further developing the concept should focus on conducting studies that identifies the socio-economic and environmental benefits of the concept with a specific focus on quantifying the economic benefits to strengthen the incentives for political commitment.

The Meeting has been informed that the progress made in the conceptualization of the Asian Energy Highway will be reported to the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission in May 2014.

The Meeting participants also highlighted that the region had witnessed the fastest global growth in gas demand and hence there was an urgent need for greater integration of the Asia-Pacific gas market, both LNG and inter-country pipelines, especially in terms of pricing. There could be a greater focus on this issue as described in the APEF Plan of Action.

#### **Session 4: Member State's Good Practices in Enhancing Energy Security and Working Towards the Realization of Sustainable Development**

The Meeting participants shared good practices and exchanged views on various barriers and opportunities for cooperation under the APEF Plan of Action. The action areas chosen by participants to speak on were, for Chapter II "Areas for action", B on access, C on renewable energy, D on energy efficiency, E on energy mix, F on trade and investment, G on fiscal policy, M on advanced energy technologies, N on common infrastructure, and O on capacity-building, and for Chapter III "Areas of action for subregions", B on North and Central Asia and C on the Pacific.

Many countries expressed the importance of having national energy policies with nationally defined targets. The need was identified for further opportunities to exchange information, especially on renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency targets, noting the importance of interaction and building relationships, whether face-to-face or through videoconferencing.

The Meeting participants discussed the difficulty of engaging financing institutions, in particular the problems faced when trying to attract investments and access loans for major renewable energy programmes. There is a gap between the needs of project proponents and requirements of the banking sector.

The Meeting participants from the Pacific emphasized that while significant efforts are progressing to reach renewable energy targets, the high costs of importing petroleum remains a major barrier. Support from Asian member States and the secretariat were requested on exploring these issues and possible solutions through bulk purchasing and government-owned storage facilities in the APEF dialogues.

Collection of reliable data to support policy formulation continues to be a challenge in the region. These data are crucial in developing effective strategies including energy efficiency benchmarking and other targets. There is a need to review how to strengthen capacities to collect data. The SE4All Global Tracking Framework could provide guidance in identifying the types of data requirements and meeting participants were invited to contribute to the second version of the Framework which is currently under development.

The secretariat noted that information provided during the Policy Dialogue will be used to develop the content in the information and data portal developed for the review and assessment of the APEF Plan of Action. The Meeting participants also recognized that the present Policy Dialogue provided an opportunity to address national challenges in search of solutions.

### **Session 5: Collaboration with UN-Energy Asia-Pacific and Regional and Global Organizations**

Under this session, UNDP, UNEP, UNWOMEN, UNIDO and ECS made presentations with a view to identify synergy between on-going regional initiatives and the APEF Plan of Action. Participants raised the point that better coordination is needed between agencies and their activities. For example, the process for countries to request and receive assistance from UN agencies in energy-related areas such as renewable energy and climate change could be streamlined to avoid duplication. Some participants requested information on how to participate in agency activities.

During the second part of the Session, ACE, CAREC, SEC, and SPC also presented their respective on-going initiatives and links with the implementation of the APEF Plan of Action. Integration of national plans and regional plans in energy was emphasized to facilitate achievement of common aims. Organizations expressed their willingness to synchronize and harmonize energy-related objectives and efforts. ASEAN was recognized as an example of strong cooperation in energy. The key role these organizations played in enabling the development of the APEF proceedings and outcome documents was also acknowledged.

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