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Energy Access for All

Date: January 11, 2012

Time: 10:30-12:30pm

Location: M3

Panel:

Moderator: Prof. Dr. Otmar HÖLL, Director, Austrian Institute for International Affairs (OIIP)

Willfried LÜTKENHORST, Managing Director of UNIDO's Strategic Research, Quality Assurance and Advocacy Division

Jens WANDEL, Deputy Regional Bureau Director for Europe and the CIS and Director of the Bratislava Regional Centre, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Prof. Samuel SCHUBERT, Head of International Relations Department, Webster University

Prof. Dr. Keywan RIAHI, Program Leader, Energy Programme (ENE) of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)

Today's main problem is to accomplish the transition to sustainable energy. There is only one way to success and for it all parts of society must be involved in the process and as a result carbon dioxide will be reduced. There has to be a reverse access to modern energy sources, at the end it should equally be to all. Today, solar panels, wind turbines and so on allow people to have access to energy. So, people do not need to build big buildings in order to have access to energy. As there is too much carbon dioxide in the air the usage of bad oil for energy purposes, which is mostly utilized in the insides of homes and jeopardizes health, has to be reduced. The best way to change habits is the right pricing of energy. Regrettably it is impossible to remove all fossil fuel subsidies but they put pressure on people. Poorer people do not use much of fossil fuels which are bad for social policy and need to be faded out. There has to be created a free market and we must promote education to improve the overall situation.

Keywan Riahi notes that energy is the major factor now and it will remain similar important in future. It affects all parts of human lives as it is needed everywhere. The global energy agenda is shaped to two predominant forces: the energy deficit and the energy poverty. About 1.3 billion people or 16% of the world's population still lack access to electricity, another billion have only sporadic or irregular access despite more widespread prosperity and more advanced technology. 2.7 billion human beings are dependent on traditional forms of energy. Moreover, in Africa 90% of all people rely on traditional methods that have big impact on the development of carbon dioxides. The aim should be toward finding new approach - the global energy agenda. The advisory group on energy and climate change (AGECC) was established in 2009 by Ban Ki-moon to ensure universal access to modern energy services by 2030.

As 2012 poses the international year of sustainable energy this is a great opportunity for the UN to provide a political framework for international action, aggregate many disperse activities and to create a framework for campaigning and advocacy. This should help achieve sustainable energy for all, double energy efficiency and RE market share in global energy mix and maybe most important: to oppose objections. Thus, a new global portal for clean energy resources, expert assistance, and peer learning is available. Websites such as <http://www.sustainableenergyforall.org/> or <http://www.un-energy.org> build up networks that should promote ideas and help users to find documents!

Modern energy services unpin the achievements of all the MDGs but the situation has improved! UNIDO has greatly increased awareness of problems as the pace of electrification across time and regions has been very uneven. Especially in rural areas still many people are dependent on solid fuels for cooking and heating. This solid fuels dependence has many negative consequences and social costs respectively big influence on livelihood when there are limited productive hours in the day available for work. This results in immense impacts on climate and societies. Additionally, there is a deficiency of innovate financing at the user end as a lack of incentives and subsidies can be assessed. Much of existing funding still goes to large infrastructure projects that bypass the poor.

Samuel Schubert gave a realistic, partially historic overview about the development on the topic energy declaring that at all time it was necessary for human societies as there was a historical development from slaves and horses to mills to modern solar power. With energy there is greater health, hygiene, development and security but it is a political agenda. According to him this might be the simple reason why energy is not equally available to all people hence it is not an issue of technology but a decision of political choices and distribution of resources. Next, energy is essential for heating, transport and electrification but internationally only is being discussed in terms of sustainability, pollution and distribution meaning that many parts are not widely discussed yet as energy is an uncomfortable topic. Furthermore, energy and environment cannot be developed at the same time and everything needs its own pace but Eastern Europa after being integrated within the EU became cleaner as the productivity increased which led to a cleaner environment and higher production rates. Because our understanding of climate change has improved and changed the evidence became clear and demonstrate that unequal societies produce in relative terms more waste and dioxide. We must change how we understand this problem because everything can improve. Twenty years ago nobody believed that internet would be widespread in Africa. Embrace the concept. Contrary, as the market leads to decrease of prices but this means that the poor will get the chance last to buy new technology. There has to be a new, realistic approach.