

Interview with Mr Kandeh YUMKELLA, Director-General of UNIDO

The "Sustainable Energy for All by 2030" initiative is aimed at reducing poverty and enhancing social and economic development in many ways, as energy lies at the heart of all countries' interests

ABSTRACT: *The "Sustainable Energy for All by 2030" initiative was presented on 8 February at the European Parliament and on 16 April at a special summit in Brussels by UN SG Ban Ki-Moon, the President of the European Commission, Commissioner Piebalgs and the Secretary-General of UNIDO. They all emphasized that energy powers human progress, helps reducing poverty, creating jobs and enhancing economic competitiveness, and also contributes to strengthening security and to empowering women. Energy is in fact the great integrator which cuts across all sectors and lies at the heart of all countries' core interests. And the proclaimed objective should be achievable ...*

1. You have contributed together with Commissioner Piebalgs, in the European Parliament on 8 February, to the EU launch of the new UN initiative of achieving "Sustainable Energy for All by 2030". Can you please tell us more about the initiative?

The Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative emphasizes that energy powers human progress, from job generation to economic competitiveness, from strengthening security to empowering women. It demonstrates that energy is the great integrator: it cuts across all sectors and lies at the heart of all countries' core interests. I strongly believe that now more than ever, the world needs to ensure that the benefits of modern energy are available to all, and that energy is provided as cleanly and efficiently as possible. This is a matter of equity, first and foremost, but it is also an issue of urgent practical importance. This is the reason why the UN Secretary-General has launched this new *SE4All Initiative*.

This initiative is launched in a time of great economic uncertainty, great inequity, high urbanisation, and high youth unemployment. It is also a time where there is emerging consensus on the need to act cohesively and urgently towards global issues such as sustainable development and climate change. How we capture opportunities for wealth and job creation, for education and local manufacturing will be the key to unlock any real revolution. Addressing a transition to a radically different, and inclusive, energy system is a generational challenge.

Three linked objectives underpin the goal of achieving *Sustainable Energy for All* by 2030:

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

These three objectives are mutually reinforcing. Increasingly affordable renewable energy technologies are bringing modern energy services to rural communities where extension of the conventional electric power grid would be prohibitively expensive and impractical. More efficient devices for lighting and other applications require less energy and thus reduce the amount of power needed to support them. And finally, the alternative – unconstrained expansion of today's conventional fossil fuel-based energy systems – would lock-in a long-term infrastructure commitment to an unsustainable emissions path for the world's climate.

2. What areas is UNIDO focusing on in the clean energy space?

As the UN specialized agency with a remit focused on sustainable industrial development, UNIDO contributes to the three goals through its activities in areas ranging from industrial energy efficiency, to renewable energy to cleaner production, as well as through its technical cooperation activities that aim to strengthen the capacity of developing countries and their industries to implement the three goals of SE4ALL.

Concerning renewable energy in developing countries and countries in transition, UNIDO has an extended experience. We promote renewable energy projects that lead to changes in the deployment and diffusion of reliable renewable energy technologies. Given the acute demand for energy access and modern energy services in rural areas of developing countries, UNIDO also focuses on on-grid renewable energy programmes as well as the decentralized production of electric power/heat by using indigenous renewable sources such as biomass, solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal. UNIDO's services typically include the implementation of renewable energy demonstration projects, policy support to create a favourable environment for renewable energy technologies, and capacity-building in the form of local training, workshops and targeted publications.

3. Can you tell us more about UNIDO's contributions to the area of energy efficiency?

Through our technical assistance to industries in more than 100 developing countries and countries in transition, UNIDO has already contributed substantially to demonstrate that Energy Efficiency is not only essential for climate action but that it is indispensable for the industrial competitiveness and the long term prosperity of a country. We have a huge experience and hundreds of demonstration cases in industry all over the world.

On the ground our industrial energy efficiency technical cooperation programme combines policy and normative development support with capacity building and transfer of technologies. Our projects aim at removing barriers to continuous improvement of energy efficiency and transforming the market for industrial energy efficiency.

If I should pick up some of the thematic technical areas in which the UNIDO IEE Programme is active, I would certainly mention our work on energy management systems and standards; energy system optimization; low-carbon and advanced process technologies, benchmarking and carbon capture and storage in industry. All these areas offer still plenty of potential for cost-effective energy, economic and environmental savings, especially within the SMEs sector. Indeed SMEs receive special attention from the UNIDO IEE Programme. Two are the main reasons:

- First, SMEs represent the backbone of socio-economic development in most developing countries;
- Second, while SMEs consume “only” 30% of global industrial energy use, their potential for energy savings and increased productivity is remarkably high, unparalleled I would say.

Over the last 5 years the UNIDO IEE portfolio has grown by a factor 5 in terms of number of projects and a factor 10 in terms of funding secured and leveraged, reaching more than 20 countries and mobilizing more than 400 millions USD. Our objective is to continue to grow over the next 5 years, assisting and working together with greater number of developing countries and emerging economies. Our expectation is to reach out 10-15 additional countries and scaling up resources mobilised by at least 50%.

In our recent UNIDO's *Industrial Development Report 2011* on "Industrial energy efficiency for sustainable wealth creation", we highlight the importance of giving priority to industrial energy efficiency, given that industry is the largest energy user, accounting for 31% of world energy consumption since early 1990. The potential of energy savings from best available technologies totals roughly 30% of today's global industrial energy consumption and 6% of global energy use. As our analysis shows, energy efficiency actions will bring along a large range of environmental, social and economic dividends.

4. How do you see the role of the EU in the Initiative?

The EU has a crucial role to play to support the three goals of "Sustainable Energy for All" on. It has already been a great supporter of the Initiative through Commissioner Piebalgs representation and contributions. The EU has taken several significant initiatives in promoting sustainable energy and combating climate change and thereby has demonstrated global leadership in this area.

In its Energy and Climate Change Package with its ambitious 20-20-20 targets, the EU has embarked on a path towards a low-carbon society based on legally binding targets. Moreover, the new EU 2020 Strategy pushes to align EU internal policies towards making the Union not only more competitive, but also much more resource efficient and green. In other strategies like the "Energy Roadmap 2050" the EU again takes foresighted approach aiming to put in place a secure, competitive and decarbonized energy system by 2050. The EU needs to be commended for its efforts and for having become a front-runner on the global stage towards sustainable energy and a more sustainable future. And the EU also looks beyond Europe to make sustainable energy an important element of its external relations, notably through its development assistance. Through its "Agenda for Change" the EU has put a stronger emphasis on energy and climate change in its development cooperation. This is an important contribution that will support our fight against energy poverty.

One concrete example of partnerships is the Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP) which provides a strong political framework for cooperation on energy between the two continents. I participated in the 1st High-level Meeting of this Partnership in September 2010 in Vienna where leaders of Africa and Europe committed themselves to providing energy access to an additional 100 million people in Africa by 2020. The EU's commitments under this Partnership will contribute to the objectives of the UN Secretary General's Sustainable Energy for All Initiative. We must do considerably more than scratch the surface for an issue that deeply impacts all of our lives. This means commitments from many different stakeholders and ways to track progress. Our ongoing work with the EU is key to that success.

5. What is the role of gender in the Initiative?

A lack of access to modern energy services is felt especially acutely by women, because energy is central to so many daily activities – not just direct uses like cooking, but as an enabler to economic activity, health care, education, transportation, access to clean water, to name a few.

Women and girls in developing countries are often responsible for securing energy for their families, and they feel the negative impacts most. Exposure to smoke from polluting and inefficient modes of cooking, heating, and lighting creates one of the biggest disease burdens in the world today. It kills 2 million people annually, mostly women and children, and millions more suffer from cancer, pneumonia, heart and lung disease, blindness, and burns. The time and danger involved in collecting firewood adds a high cost to the price of "free" fuel.

But women are not only harmed by the status quo; they are also an integral part of the solution. They are innovators and problem-solvers who are already taking the lead in their communities to develop and

implement sustainable energy solutions, employing local knowledge to design and deploy new alternatives and protect local ecosystems. This combination creates a powerful opportunity that we must leverage to fulfill the vision of Sustainable Energy for All. We cannot design solutions without the full participation and input of the women around the world who have the firsthand experience of the effects of this crucial global problem and a true understanding of what is required to make solutions work. This is the focus of a major event EU in Brussels on April 16th, 2012.

Finally, let me emphasize the fact that by naming 2012 as the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All, the UN General Assembly has placed energy at the heart of the multi-lateral process. It is an enormous opportunity to share models that work, can be scaled up, and help filling gaps in existing funding or capacity. It is also a chance to ensure that the political momentum currently focused on this area is maintained.