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For immediate release

Abundant, sustainable energy resources in the Sahel can transform the fortunes of over 340 million people and spur green industrialisation.

Given its significant renewable energy resource potential, the Sahel can become the first African region to pioneer and champion an industrial revolution fuelled by renewable energy investments that go beyond domestic use, by establishing and leveraging green value chains that reduce poverty and create jobs.

Addis Ababa, 16 February 2024 - Energy drives transformations that boost socioeconomic productivity, foster sustainable human development and lay the foundation for a more prosperous and resilient future. Investment in sustainable energy could regenerate Africa's Sahelian zone by using the region's significant clean energy potential to transform lives, diversify economies, give hope, and protect the planet.

A new study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the [2023 Sahel Human Development Report: Sustainable Energy for Economic and Climate Security in the Sahel](#), reveals that in the Sahel, fossil fuels (55.9%) dominate energy production, with oil and gas comprising the majority, while renewable sources like hydro, solar, and wind remain marginal. A shift by the mid-2030s, with reduced oil reliance (30%) and increased gas production (70%), could pave the way for solar and wind, ultimately constituting a substantial portion (54%) of energy production by 2063.

"The Sahel stands at a pivotal juncture and remains a region of great promise. This report raises fundamental questions about optimal planet-friendly development pathways, more efficient use of cleaner energy resources, and the region's abundance of renewal energy options. It also unveils a series of actionable pathways, effectively bridging the gap between development objectives and the urgent need for climate change adaptation." says, Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, UNDP Regional Director for Africa.

The Sahel HDR explores the causal relationship between energy and development. Over the past decade, energy demand in the Sahel has grown by more than 4% annually, partly due to population growth and partly due to growing economic activity. While electricity access in urban areas is increasing, it remains completely absent in most rural areas as power generation across the region is costly.

Energy is a public good that must be guaranteed for all citizens. The report shows how a Balanced Green Growth, centred on renewables and energy efficiency, is feasible and could be a viable pathway for a climate-resilient future for Sahelians while prioritising human welfare outcomes. Green energy will be central in meeting the estimated 950 petajoules growth in demand; however, the pathways to achieving this will differ among the Sahelian states.

"With the Sahel HDR, we can create a ripple effect of progress that will benefit the entire continent. Let us embrace the spirit of solidarity and cooperation as we walk toward a Sahel where every individual can live a dignified life." says Engr. Abubakar Ali-Dapshima, Director Renewable and Rural Power, Federal Ministry of Power, Nigeria.

The report recommends turning opportunities and regional synergies into a pathway for success to address a combination of energy poverty for over half of the population of the Sahel and an overreliance on expensive and high-polluting hydrocarbons that has retarded socioeconomic progress



PRESS RELEASE

and contributed to environmental degradation. The report notes that while sustainable energy could unlock the Sahel's immense potential, a balanced and coordinated approach is required to enable a successful transition of the region's energy system and avoid shortfalls as renewable capacity scales up.

"The Sahel HDR's focus on energy combinations that focus on fostering solutions not only yield substantial socioeconomic dividends but also uphold environmental stewardship," says Honourable Seedy Keita, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, The Gambia

The Sahel HDR suggests charting a path that underpins the Sahel's renewable energy revolution will require sustained investments before commercial viability. The report further notes that without concessionary and risk-tolerant financing that adopts a long-term lens, bankable projects will remain scarce, deal flows will be limited, and energy poverty will be further entrenched across the region. Achieving universal access in the Sahel requires incentives that spur commercial investments, not just temporary subsidies that could distort markets.

"The Sahel HDR provides a pragmatic vision of achieving dependable access to energy for a region where half of the population currently does not have access to electricity. One key takeaway is that to succeed, there needs to be a common regional vision, not fragmentation and consistent funding," says Dr Alex Vines, Director of Africa Programme, Chatham House.

The Sahel HDR encourages prioritising cross-border interconnectivity and regional power pools that leverage the collective resources across the region. Sahelian governments should consider harmonising power sector regulations, lowering duty barriers for equipment imports, and jointly planning least-cost generation additions consistent with the objectives of regional initiatives like the West African Power Pool (WAPP).

The report calls for policy priorities that include expanding off-grid energy options, expediting household connectivity, and political commitment to help communities and countries reach the last mile with energy connectivity. The right mix of smart incentives will also help close the gender energy gap and bridge the rural-urban divide in energy access and affordability.

To learn more, download the [2023 Sahel Human Development Report](#) in English or French.

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Note to Editors:

- The Sahel is a region of a diverse ecosystem, with individual countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal) at different stages of development and energy use. Analysing viable pathways to sustainable energy for economic and climate security in the Sahel is the focus of the report. Even though the report identifies an optimal pathway, the recommendations are tailored to suit each individual country.
- The HDR uses empirical techniques and political economy analyses to consider optimal energy strategies that could be most appropriate for this sub-region. Energy mixes that promote a just energy transition for the Sahel while delivering tangible socioeconomic gains and diminishing planetary pressures are prioritised.



PRESS RELEASE

- The Sahel HDR also explores regional synergies that allow for scaled-up investments, economies of scale and broader energy markets. It delves into the challenges and requirements for implementing its recommendations across Sahel countries. It employs a model that examines policy ambiguity and conflict within each nation, crucial factors shaping implementation hurdles.
- The Sahel HDR offers a roadmap outlining the initial steps for actors to kickstart the process. It proposes immediate resource infusion into areas with clear goals and political alignment, such as renewable energy production, gender empowerment, education, water access, and leveraging regional and international cooperation initiatives. In areas marked by high conflict and ambiguity, like fragility and governance, bolstering state capacity and advancing democratic processes are pivotal.
- By factoring in the political economy and trade-offs inherent in energy transitions, the Sahel HDR charts a tangible pathway for policy prioritisation – an approach that holds significant promise to achieve developmental goals, enhance livelihoods, and steer the Sahel to achieve sustainable prosperity. Seizing the current opportunity window becomes imperative to effectively implement recommendations and harness energy as a catalyst for development.
- The Sahel HDR suggests that rather than making an impossible choice between advancing human development and developing environmentally sustainable energy sources, the Sahel can simultaneously make progress in both by taking advantage of the unique synergies between development and energy and by focusing efforts toward one in ways that bolster the other.

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