

SIDE EVENT
**Renewable Energy as a key element of post-COVID recovery
in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Date & Time: 13 July, 7:30-9:00 AM EST (15:30 – 17:00 GST)

Background

Since the end of 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has set off an unprecedented global emergency that is affecting the health, as well as livelihoods of billions of people, while impacting all economic sub-sectors including manufacturing, construction, services and retail activities. While, in the immediate, the priority is to protect people and combat the outbreak, countries' responses must align with medium- and long-term priorities. The goals set out in the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement can serve as a compass to keep countries on course during this disorienting period.

The pandemic came at a time when Sub-Saharan African countries were already facing severe challenges towards achieving SDG7 objectives. Data shows that at least 25 African countries have electricity access rates of less than 40 per cent. Access to clean cooking is still one of the significant challenges, as these countries consistently rely on biomass fuels and technologies for their thermal needs. Additionally, the region's growing population and economic progress call for a rapid increase in supply on the continent, to which renewable energy must contribute in the decades ahead. Africa therefore has a unique opportunity to pursue sustainable energy development as a basis for long-term prosperity. Tackling today's energy challenge on the continent and preparing for tomorrow's needs, therefore, requires a firm commitment to the accelerated use of modern renewable energy sources. Unlike other energy technologies, renewable energy showed during 2020 a remarkable resilience to COVID with a record of 260GW of new installed capacity, however Africa benefitted only of 2,6 GW of this new investments in that same year.

Africa is endowed with substantial renewable energy resources and is in a position to adopt innovative, sustainable technologies and play a leading role in global action to shape a sustainable energy future. Supply unreliability is a concern holding back economic development, with most countries facing frequent blackouts and often relying on expensive and polluting solutions. Clean, indigenous and affordable renewable energy solutions offer the continent the chance to achieve its economic, social, environmental and climate objectives. Sustainable development and use of the continent's massive biomass, geothermal, hydropower, solar and wind power have the potential to rapidly change Sub-Saharan Africa's current realities and keep on track with the 1.5-degree scenario of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

In this context, through partnerships at continental, sub-regional and national levels, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has been supporting Sub-Saharan African countries in their transition to a sustainable energy future in the pursuit of sustainable development, energy access, energy security and low-carbon economic growth and prosperity. More specifically, this support spans across the implementation of the Clean Energy Corridor initiative in Eastern, Southern and West Africa; as well as the regional engagement in Central Africa, and under the access thematic, covering entrepreneurship support and the electrification on rural health facilities. IRENA support is also geared towards supporting countries in the enhancement and implementation of their climate change ambitions.

On the side-lines of the 2021 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development IRENA will hold an event that will bring together national and sub-regional stakeholders from across Africa to reflect and agree on the role of the energy transition in Africa’s response to the current crisis and beyond, in order to achieve sustainable development and climate objectives.

Objective

This virtual event, which will focus on Sub-Saharan Africa, will aim at:

- Understand the key role of energy transition in Africa in the post-pandemic period towards sustainable development and improved resilience;
- Discuss the crucial role of systemic innovation in the energy transition; and
- Identify strategic actions through renewables to stimulate energy transition and boost socio-economic development in a sustainable and just manner.

Agenda

Moderator: **Safiatou Alzouma Nouhou**, Director of the Independent Delivery Unit, Africa Renewable Energy Initiative

Time	Item	
7:30-7:35	<i>Welcome remarks</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francesco La Camera, Director-General, IRENA
7:35-7:55	<i>Statements by the co-sponsors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Martin Bille Hermann, Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Denmark • Stefano Signore, Head of Unit, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, European Union • H.E. Dr. Nawal Al-Hosany, Permanent Representative to IRENA, United Arab Emirates
7:55-8:15	<i>Overview presentation on IRENA engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binu Parthan, Head of Regions Unit, IRENA
8:15-8:55	<i>Discussion and key contribution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Ahimbisibwe, <i>ag.</i> Principal Energy Officer, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, Uganda • Souleymane Konaté, Secretary General, Ministry of Mines, Quarries and Energy, Burkina Faso • Dr. Gloria Magombo, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Energy & Power Development, Zimbabwe • Rodrigue Catross Mankassa Ngoubili, Deputy-Director for New and Renewable Energy, Ministry of Energy and Hydraulic Resources, Gabon • Hyacinth Elayo, Sustainable Energy Policy Officer, ECREEE
8:55-9:00	<i>Wrap up and closing</i>	Moderator