

Remarks at High-Level Symposium on:
Global Energy Interconnection:
Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary General

I am very happy to be here today with all of you. As a matter of fact, when we discuss global interconnection in relation to energy we are at the center of **the two key words that express our global concerns - sustainability and inclusivity.**

We want to make sure that we move into a situation in which energy becomes the key factor of **sustainability and obviously with a global interconnection effectively working we can produce energy where it can be done in a more friendly way to the environment and to the risk of climate change.**

But at the same time it is this global interconnectivity that allows for **inclusivity for energy to reach everybody in need.** And so, you are in the center of the two central concepts of our commitment to Agenda 2030 and with our objectives in relation to climate change.

Energy is the golden thread that connects all the Sustainable Development Goals. Modern energy services are integral to poverty reduction, food security, public health and quality education for all. They are the key to sustainable industrialization, healthier more efficient cities and – of course – successful climate action.

Despite this understanding, the world is still far from achieving the vision of Sustainable Development Goal 7 of affordable and clean energy for all. Some 1 billion people still live without any access to any electricity at all -- 500 million in Africa and more than 400 million in the Asia-Pacific region. And 3 billion people still cook and heat their homes without the benefit of clean fuels and more efficient technologies. Again, most of them live in Africa and Asia.

Just a couple of weeks ago, a study by the Lancet Commission on pollution and health found that indoor and outdoor air pollution -- largely related to how we generate and use energy -- is the greatest environmental cause of disease and death in the world today.

In 2015, air pollution was responsible for an estimated 9 million premature deaths -- 92 per cent of them in the developing world. So, **the world needs more energy, and – in particular – more clean energy. This need for clean energy is only going to grow as the world's population increases and global living standards rise.**

Because, as well as a rising need for energy, the world is experiencing rising temperatures. Atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide are at record levels. We have already surpassed the critical threshold of 400 parts per million and, as the World Meteorological Organization reported just [this] week, concentrations continue to rise. It is imperative that Parties to the UN Climate Change Convention work to increase ambition.

There is still a significant gap between actions that have been pledged and what is needed to keep temperature rise to well below

2 degrees Celsius and as close as possible to 1.5 degrees. **At the moment, we are on track for a temperature rise of 3 degrees or more. That would be catastrophic.**

The trend is clear. The past year and the past decade were the hottest on record. And this year's hurricane season in the Atlantic is already the most violent ever recorded. The frequency and severity of extreme weather events highlights the changes to our climate and the risk to vulnerable communities of a vicious cycle of loss and damage and recovery.



echoed around the world, can be mitigated by urgent climate action.

That means **transforming the world's energy systems.** It means promoting modern technologies that can fuel energy needs without polluting the environment and pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. And it means **increasing investments in energy efficiency, clean energy and renewable energy and global interconnection is at the center of these concerns.**

As we look to the double challenge of energy poverty and climate change, we must address two key questions: *How can we achieve prosperity for all, leaving no one behind, while protecting our fragile ecosystems? And how can we ensure that the benefits, costs and risks of our energy transformation are managed through effective international cooperation?*

Today's Symposium can help provide some of the answers. It will feature both policy and technical-level presentations on **how to strengthen global energy interconnection through the deployment of smart grids. With smart grids it is now feasible to generate, transmit and distribute power efficiently, cutting transmission losses and providing clean, affordable, economically viable and environmentally sound energy services.**

I commend our principal guest, Mr. Liu Zhenya of the Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization (GEIDCO), for his commitment to enhancing international energy cooperation. Such cooperation is critical to the 2030 Agenda and to the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Today, I urge all governments and all stakeholders around the world to step up efforts to transform the world's energy systems for the benefit of all. **Let us make sure that, by 2030, all people -- no matter where they are, no matter how far they live from cities -- will have access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.** I wish you a very productive meeting and thank you very much for your attention.
(November 1, 2017)