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DRAFT REPORT

on the EU development cooperation in support of access to energy in
developing countries
(2023/2073(INI))

Committee on Development

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

**on the EU development cooperation in support of access to energy in developing countries
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The European Parliament,

- having regard to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 1 on poverty eradication, SDG 7 on ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, SDG 9 on industry and infrastructure, and SDG 13 on climate action,
- having regard to Article 208 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which has poverty reduction and, in the long term, poverty eradication, as the primary objective of the EU's development policy, and which requires that the 'Union shall take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries',
- having regard to the joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, Parliament and the Commission of 30 June 2017 on the New European Consensus on Development – 'Our world, our dignity, our future'¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009²,
- having regard to Articles 3(5) and 21 of the Treaty on European Union, outlining the Union's commitment to a value-based approach to development cooperation to ensure the consistency of its external action, respecting the principles of the UN Charter and fostering the sustainable economic, social and environmental development of developing countries,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 4 October 2022 on climate finance in view of the UNFCCC 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) in Sharm El-Sheikh on 6-18 November 2022, of 25 January 2021 on climate and energy diplomacy - delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal, and of 28 November 2016 on energy and development,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 entitled 'The European Green Deal' (COM(2019)0640),

¹ [OJ C 210, 30.6.2017, p. 1.](#)

² [OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 1.](#)

- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 July 2020 entitled ‘A hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe’ (COM/2020/0301),
- having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 18 May 2022 entitled ‘EU external energy engagement in a changing world strategy’ (JOIN(2022)0023),
- having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 1 December 2021 entitled ‘The Global Gateway’ (JOIN(2021)0030),
- having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 9 March 2020 entitled ‘Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa’ (JOIN(2020)0004),
- having regard to the report of 5 January 2023 of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment entitled ‘Women, girls and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment’,
- having regard to the draft new partnership agreement between the European Union and the members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) (The Post-Cotonou Agreement), for which negotiations have been concluded, but has yet to be signed or entered into force,
- having regard to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol thereto, to the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the UNFCCC in Paris, in December 2015, and to the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007,
- having regard to the UN Environment Programme’s 2022 Emissions Gap Report, and to its second synthesis report on fossil fuel production (Production Gap Report 2021)³,
- having regard to the 2022 report by the International Renewable Energy Agency entitled ‘World Energy Transitions Outlook 2022: 1.5 °C Pathway’⁴,
- having regard to the 2023 joint report by the World Bank, the International Energy Agency, the International Renewable Energy Agency, the UN and the World Health Organization entitled ‘Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report, 2023’⁵,

³ [The Stockholm Environment Institute, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, the Overseas Development Institute, E3G, and the UN Environment Programme, ‘2021 Report – The Production Gap: Governments’ planned fossil fuel production remains dangerously out of sync with Paris Agreement limits’, 2021.](#)

⁴ [The International Renewable Energy Agency, ‘World Energy Transitions Outlook 2022: 1.5 °C Pathway, International Renewable Energy Agency’, Abu Dhabi, 2022.](#)

⁵ [The International Energy Agency, ‘Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report, 2023’, Paris, June 2023.](#)

- having regard to the 2021-2027 African Union Green Recovery Action Plan, which provides a comprehensive strategy designed to promote green initiatives, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect the environment and enhance resilience to climate change⁶,
- having regard to its resolutions of 14 March 2023 on Policy Coherence for Development⁷, of 25 March 2021 on a new EU-Africa Strategy – a partnership for sustainable and inclusive development⁸, of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal⁹, of 1 December 2016 on access to energy in developing countries¹⁰ and of 2 February 2012 on EU development cooperation in support of the objective of universal energy access by 2030¹¹,
- having regard to the report of the World Commission on Dams of 16 November 2000 entitled ‘A new framework for decision-making’,
- having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Development (A9-0000/2023),
- A. whereas SDG 7 stipulates the aim to achieve sustainable access to affordable and clean energy by 2030¹²;
- B. whereas, according to the UN, as of mid-2023, approximately 733 million people worldwide, 80 % of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa, still do not have access to affordable, reliable, clean, high-quality energy¹³;
- C. whereas energy poverty, defined as the lack of sustainable, clean and safe energy sources, is a gender issue, with women and girls spending, on average, up to 18 hours a day collecting cooking fuels¹⁴;
- D. whereas traditional cooking fuels (solid biomass, kerosene and coal) are the main contributors to carbon emissions and represent a threat to people’s health; whereas EU funding for clean cooking fuels is marginal;
- E. whereas developing countries have an abundance of renewable energy sources, but often lack an enabling policy and regulatory framework for sustainable energy development and use;
- F. whereas the EU together with its Member States provided the vast majority of Official Development Assistance financing for SDG 7 projects in Africa amounting to

⁶ [African Union, ‘The African Union green recovery action plan’, Addis Ababa, 2021.](#)

⁷ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2023)0071.

⁸ [OJ C 494, 8.12.2021, p. 80.](#)

⁹ [OJ C 270, 7.7.2021, p. 2.](#)

¹⁰ [OJ C 224, 27.6.2018, p. 167.](#)

¹¹ [OJ C 494, 8.12.2021, p. 80.](#)

¹² UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ‘The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition – July 2023’, New York, USA, 2023.

¹³ [The International Renewable Energy Agency, ‘Basic Energy Access Lags Amid Renewable Opportunities New Report Shows’, 6 June 2023.](#)

¹⁴ [UN Development Programme, ‘Energy and Gender Equality’.](#)

EUR 13.8 billion between 2014 and 2020; whereas an estimated 53 % of the disbursements were in the form of loans;

- G. whereas the energy transition is severely and persistently underfunded in developing regions, in particular in the least developed countries;
- H. whereas most EU-funded projects aim to promote electricity generation, yet the distribution segment is the weakest, despite being essential in achieving SDG 7;
- I. whereas the Africa-EU Energy Partnership was renewed in February 2022 with explicit objectives to promote renewable energy generation;
- J. whereas green hydrogen has the potential to accelerate the path to decarbonisation, provided that it is part of a broader strategy to reduce the overall consumption of energy;
- K. whereas decentralised mini-grid and off-grid renewable energy offer good solutions for remote communities, but need to be accompanied by public support to create a viable business model;
- L. whereas the expansion of renewables based on solar and wind power also raises challenges as they require large areas of land, thus interfering with existing land use and local needs, in particular regarding access to water;
- M. whereas the EU and partner countries share a common but differentiated responsibility to achieve a sustainable energy transition; whereas EU support for renewable energy projects must, in the first place, meet the local population's needs before supporting export;

Promote universal access to clean energy

- 1. Recalls that access to energy is a basic human right; stresses that a net-zero carbon future and the development of renewables must go hand in hand with poverty reduction and a human rights-based approach;
- 2. Urges developing countries to commit to energy justice through their regulatory frameworks, which should ensure local acceptance and community participation;
- 3. Points out that energy poverty disproportionately affects women and girls; highlights their daily involvement in collecting firewood and charcoal far from their homes; calls for the EU to step up its support in mainstreaming gender in the energy transition;
- 4. Is worried about the health and environmental consequences of household fuelwood emissions, such as respiratory diseases, forest degradation and biodiversity loss;
- 5. Urges the EU to incorporate access to clean cooking as a priority within its energy partnerships with developing countries;
- 6. Expresses concern over the increasing energy needs among refugees and internally displaced persons living in camps;

Support the energy transition in line with the principle of policy coherence for development

7. Urges the EU and its Member States to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development across the EU external energy agenda;
8. Reiterates its commitment towards energy justice; calls for the EU to support developing countries in implementing rights-based renewable energy regimes; believes that the principle of free, prior and informed consent for affected communities is a pre-condition for a successful green and just energy transition;
9. Highlights the risks of land-use conflicts – forced resettlement and expropriation for large-scale renewable energy installations; urges the EU to support governments of developing countries to:
 - a) conduct mapping of traditional land use, including for temporal grazing, indigenous cultural heritage and high-value biodiversity systems, prior to the development of renewable energy projects;
 - b) seek free, prior and informed consent from the local communities, while guaranteeing their right to say no, and their rights to justice, redress and compensation or remuneration;
 - c) define environmental and social criteria and ensure compliance through mechanisms for oversight and grievance;
10. Notes, with concern, that large-scale green energy projects (such as wind and solar power) are being set up in dryland areas, for example, without adequate consultation with the customary land users (such as pastoralists); recalls that traditional communal rights have a weak legal status, thereby increasing the risk of land grabbing;
11. Recommends that EU Member States that have not done so should ratify International Labour Organization Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples;
12. Is worried about the impact that water-intensive energy conversion practices, such as hydropower plants, have on agricultural communities;
13. Stresses that any planning of dams should be evaluated according to five values: equity, efficiency, participatory decision-making, sustainability and accountability;
14. Notes, with concern, that Africa hosts an increasing number of fossil fuel projects, which risks preventing it from making a timely leap to renewable energy; recalls that a major portion of current oil, gas and coal production in Africa is destined for export, while the continent continues to be plagued by energy poverty;
15. Denounces the double standards whereby private and public financial institutions in developed countries are increasingly making pledges to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, while financing the development and expansion of fossil fuels;

Green hydrogen

16. Warns against the risk of a new ‘green hydrogen curse’ that would foster developing countries’ reliance on exports and could crowd out investments in the development of local energy markets; is concerned about the lack of required infrastructure, the long-distance transport costs, the limited investments and financial capacities and the risks linked to weak institutions and corruption; calls for the EU to support the development of a green hydrogen value chain only when it can guarantee that it equally benefits exporting countries and their populations;
17. Acknowledges that the expansion of green hydrogen also has negative social and environmental impacts in the Global South, in particular as it relies on mining and the use of raw materials and rare earths; stresses the need to develop a global resource governance system that prioritises sustainability, efficiency and circularity, with a view to reducing global demand for virgin materials;
18. Notes, with concern, the conflicting use of water associated with mining and the development of large-scale renewable energy plants, such as green hydrogen; reaffirms that access to water is a fundamental human right;
19. Stresses the need to regulate water as a resource for green hydrogen production in a sustainable way, so that it does not jeopardise local populations’ access to water;
20. Notes the proliferation of desalination plants to deal with water scarcity; points out that seawater desalination can have major environmental impacts, in particular on marine biodiversity; highlights that reducing water use and recycling or reusing treated wastewater is often less expensive than desalination;
21. Insists that green hydrogen strategies must follow strong social and sustainability standards; calls for the EU to establish appropriate monitoring frameworks in its partnership agreements that allow for assessing their broader impact on SDG performance; calls for mandatory environmental impact studies to be conducted and for biodiversity hotspots to be excluded as sites for green hydrogen facilities;
22. Urges the Commission to set up an inclusive governance framework for partnership agreements that includes civil society organisations to ensure that the ‘no harm’ principle is respected vis-à-vis local communities and that global human rights standards are met;

Scale-up funding for a just energy transition

23. Stresses that EU financing for renewable energy should be in line with the principles of equity and climate justice;
24. Calls for the EU and its Member States to increase the amount of official development assistance it devotes to the energy sector, particularly in Africa, prioritising grants over loans and reorienting financing towards countries with lower rates of access to electricity to support their clean energy transitions and to develop programmes for facilitating the transfer of knowledge and green technologies;
25. Urges the EU to support developing countries in gradually phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and to focus on efficient, modern and affordable cooking technologies;

26. Calls for the EU and European development finance institutions to:
- a) direct investments into the distribution segment, in particular rural electrification, and to prioritise decentralised, small-scale and off-grid renewable energy systems;
 - b) ensure that human rights impact assessments are carried out and that all required social and environmental safeguards and remedies are duly implemented and monitored, including the human rights and land tenure guidelines;
 - c) implement and strictly apply the rights-based approach providing effective complaint and redress mechanisms, notably in projects under the Global Gateway initiative;
 - d) ensure that any dam projects with approved financing respect the World Commission on Dams' guidelines;
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27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The world continues to advance towards sustainable energy targets but not fast enough. At the current pace, about 660 million people will still lack access to electricity and close to 2 billion people will still rely on polluting fuels and technologies for cooking by 2030. Rates of progress vary significantly across regions. Most Sub-Saharan countries are lagging behind to achieve universal access to energy. Africa is home to almost 18 % of the world's population but accounts for less than 6 % of global energy use, with 600 million people or 43 % of the population without access to electricity. Most of those people live in rural areas and informal settlements or are displaced people or refugees. And even when there is access to electricity, the quality of services is often poor.

Sub-Saharan Africa comprises also 19 of the 20 countries with the lowest rate of access to clean cooking in the world. In 2022, people in Africa without access to clean cooking numbered 970 million. 64 % of Africans rely predominately on gathered wood together with agricultural and animal wastes as fuel for cooking. The lack of access to modern cooking in Africa has huge social and environmental consequences: health, deforestation, climate change. In addition, the lack of gender targets for clean energy is harming women and girls.

While the EU has a long tradition of energy cooperation in Africa – together with its Member States, provided EUR 12.1 billion or the vast majority of ODA financing for SDG7 projects in Africa between 2014 and 2020 –, it nevertheless suffers from some shortcomings. The energy transition is persistently underfunded in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Most of the disbursement took the form of loans, which raises some concerns of debt sustainability, taking into account that, in 2023, 21 low-income countries in Africa are in, or at risk of, debt distress. In addition, most projects financed by the EU are aimed at promoting large electricity generation infrastructures and the interconnection of transmission networks to create integrated electricity markets, which have little impact on promoting access to electricity for those who don't have it. Last but not least, EU funding for modern cooking is marginal. It is estimated that in 2020, Team Europe dedicated less than 1 %.

Against this background, the rapporteur believes that some improvements shall be made in the remit of the Africa – EU Partnership. First of all, the EU and its Member States shall increase the amount of ODA oriented to the energy sector in Africa, prioritising grants over loans in countries at risk of debt distress. Likewise, in order to overcome energy poverty in Africa, EU financing should be reoriented towards countries with lower rates of access to electricity. More weight should be given to the distribution segment as a strategic element to promote universal access to energy. Gender should be mainstreamed throughout the design of EU development policies and programmes on energy in Africa, while access to clean cooking shall be a priority.

More broadly, the rapporteur believes that the EU and its Member States shall ensure Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development across the EU external energy agenda. On this line, the EU shall support developing countries to implement rights-based renewable energy regime, which is the pre-condition to achieve energy justice. To this effect, the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of all affected populations, their right to say no, to justice and redress as well as to compensation and remuneration, must be fully respected to ensure local acceptance and benefits for the local communities (in terms of jobs, training,

access to electricity, *etc.*).

This is all the more important given that large-scale renewable energy projects, such as green hydrogen based on solar and wind power, hydroelectric power, present both opportunities and challenges in the Global South. For instance, while green hydrogen produced from renewable resources can potentially play a significant role in reaching the Paris climate goals, it may trigger land use conflicts and aggravate poverty.

Generally speaking, developing countries have an abundance of renewable energy sources, which provide a cheaper, more accessible, inclusive and reliable source of energy than fossil fuels. In Africa, which is endowed with many renewable energy sources, dryland areas are seen as excellent sites for generating wind and solar power. With the global energy transition, there is now a trend to use the huge potential of these areas to produce energy. Governments of developing countries use the narrative of “idle” lands or “degraded” land to justify these land acquisition. However, these areas have been used for generations by diverse pastoralist peoples as well as hunter-gatherers and crop farmers as common property resources. The ventures into renewables often ignore their land rights. This exacerbates climate injustice and the risk of “land grabbing for green energy”. To avoid it, the rapporteur believes it is essential to develop among others mapping of traditional land use (including temporal grazing), indigenous cultural heritage and high-value biodiversity systems, prior to the development of renewable energy projects, as well as to develop strong social and environmental standards, including oversight and grievance mechanisms to ensure their compliance. The rapporteur takes the view that the EU’s green hydrogen strategy in Africa shall fully reflect those concerns and be adapted accordingly.

Last but not least, the EU shall lead by example and stop financing fossil fuel projects in Africa. On the contrary, EU and European development finance institutions shall prioritise and step up their investments in decentralised, small-scale and off-grid renewable energy systems, which offer good solutions for remote communities, to achieve SDG7 and “leave no-one behind”.