

Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transitions Agenda

Background

Recognizing the critical importance of sustainable energy to economic development and the imperative to transition to cleaner forms of energy, the Commonwealth at its Heads of Government Meeting in 2018 encouraged member countries to cooperate in accelerating the transition to cleaner forms of energy. This imperative was heightened in the light of commitments made by Commonwealth governments under the Paris Agreement.

In furtherance of the recognition by Heads of this pressing global challenge, an inaugural Forum of member countries was held in London in June 2019 aimed at encouraging collaboration amongst Commonwealth member countries (CMCs) to accelerate action in the transition to sustainable energy systems and towards achievement of the SDGs - in particular SDG 7 on access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy. The Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transitions (CSET) Agenda is a platform for collaborative action amongst member countries towards acceleration of the transition to low carbon energy systems and the achievement of SDG7. It is anchored on three key pillars, namely, the *Inclusive Transitions; Technology and Innovations; and Enabling Frameworks*, drawn from the outcomes of the inaugural Forum.

Rationale

Energy plays a vital role in global economic growth underpinning all areas of development. Long term global energy projections indicate that the world will require substantially more energy as population growth and urbanisation outweigh efficiency gains. Expanding energy access is consequently a priority for sustainable development as reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7), a first-ever universal goal on energy, with five targets to be achieved by 2030. While the 2030 target for universal access is only a decade away, access to electricity for populations in African Commonwealth countries at 51.5 per cent presents a significant gap to close.

This is a critical decade of action for the world to achieve the SDGs and climate change goals. Stepped-up effort is urgently required if developing Commonwealth countries were to meet SDG 7 within the coming decade.

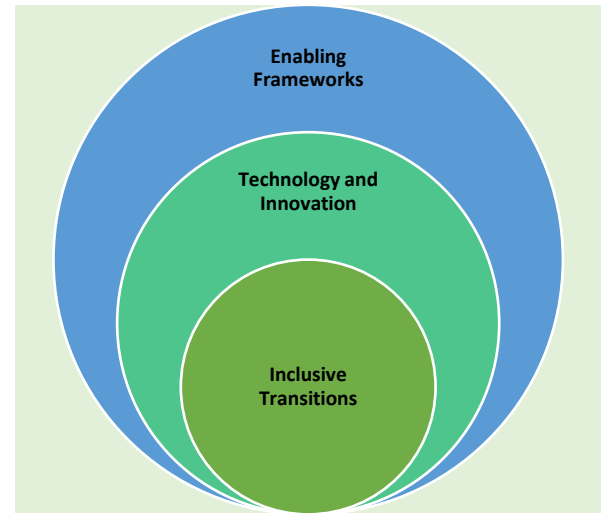
Given however that energy production and use represent about two-thirds of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increased energy demand poses a significant challenge to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and the goals of the Paris Agreement. To achieve the global emission targets required for the successful implementation of the Paris Agreement, there is an urgent need to transition from current energy production and consumption systems, which rely primarily on fossil-fuels to more efficient, sustainable and clean energy systems. How energy is produced, transported, and consumed will be a critical factor in socio-economic development and addressing the climate challenges that the world faces.

The pace of the energy transition needs urgent acceleration. Strong political will and ambition by Commonwealth member countries is required to establish the enabling frameworks to attract finance, scale up technology and lower costs for energy transition. Equally as important is the need to ensure that the energy transition leaves no one behind. Ensuring an inclusive energy transition is vital to achieving sustainable and stable, people-centred societal development. The energy transition needs to reflect the broader goals of society and inclusiveness has to be the heartbeat of the new way forward.

CSET Pillars

The development and implementation of the CSET Agenda will be achieved through the following three key pillars:

- a. Inclusive Transitions - advocating and promoting equitable and inclusive measures for energy transitions that recognise and address in a meaningful way the impact on economies, communities and industries and advance a transition that leaves no-one behind.
- b. Technology and Innovation - propagating advances in technology solutions and innovations as well as research and development for sustainable energy systems; leveraging synergies and fostering strong partnerships between the public and private sectors.
- c. Enabling Frameworks - supporting the development of enabling frameworks including policy, laws, regulations, standards; governance institutions and implementation tools for accelerating energy transitions.



Similar to the modality for on-going pan-commonwealth initiatives such as the Commonwealth Blue Charter and the Connectivity Agenda, the Commonwealth Secretariat will provide technical and administrative support to member led action groups to be established under these pillars. Working in partnership with other organisations, the CSET Agenda will advocate and support COVID-19 recovery pathways that align with the climate and sustainable development agendas.

About the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 54 independent and equal sovereign states. It is home to 2.4 billion people and includes both advanced economies and developing countries. The countries span Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Pacific and are diverse, with 32 small states, 25 of which are small island developing states.

For further information on the Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transitions Agenda, please contact:

Dr Nick Hardman-Mountford
Head Oceans and Natural Resources
n.hardman-mountford@commonwealth.int

Alache Fisho
Legal Adviser and Lead, Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transitions Agenda
a.fisho@commonwealth.int

Victor Kitange
Economic Adviser, Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transitions Agenda
v.kitange@commonwealth.int