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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Workshop on “Sustainable Energy and Gender Empowerment”, in the framework of the Tenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development
7-8 October 2019, United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand

INFORMATION NOTE

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), in partnership with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UN Women, UN Environment, the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA), the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) are organizing a Workshop on “Sustainable Energy and Gender Empowerment” to be held on 8 October 2019 within the framework of the Tenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (7-8 October 2019) in Bangkok, Thailand.

1. Background Information

The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015, along with the Paris climate conference (COP21) in December 2015, with the aim to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all with specific targets to be achieved by 2030. However, the primary current concern relates to the implementation programs that countries can develop to achieve those SDGs, including the ones in relation to developing more sustainable energy systems, as indicated by SDG7 aiming at “ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”.

Progress in sustainable energy lies at the heart of socio-economic growth and sustainable development. Accelerating progress on SDG 7 is a key condition for reducing inequalities, poverty eradication, advances in health and education, sustainable economic growth, and the principle of “Leaving no one behind”, in addition to climate action. Mainstreaming sustainable energy also presents significant opportunities for achieving a greater gender balance, including through improved energy access for women, access to medical services and education, and job opportunities.

SDG5 on gender equality and SDG7 are two deeply entwined components, in addition to gender-sensitive targets in other goals, providing for stronger cross-sectoral and integrated efforts. Moreover, women’s distinct roles also provide them with skills and knowledge, which make them valuable agents of environmental safeguard and a key resource for positive adaptation and mitigation of environmental damage.

In this context, gender disparity in economic and social sectors is a critical issue that needs to be addressed towards achieving social and economic equity. Equally important, energy affects women and men differently as men and women have different roles and responsibilities in households, markets and social spheres, which makes their access, use, and impact of energy services and technologies also different. Improving gender equality and social inclusion is essential to fully realize the development impact of many energy programs. The path to achieving SDG 5 and SDG 7 therefore indeed interlinks gender equality and energy access.

Moreover, mitigating the effects of climate change on the poor should be addressed within the socio-economic and environmental sustainability concerns. Indeed, rural economic revival based on the use of

appropriate renewable energy sources, will lead to decoupling economic development from environmental footprint and thus support countries to meet their nationally set obligations under the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Furthermore, improving resource efficiency if coupled with appropriate environmental governance and greater policy coherence among the different sectors will help to achieve the goals of the ambitious and transformative 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

In this context, the UN-ESCWA is implementing the “Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in rural areas of the Arab region (REGEND)”. This regional initiative is a Sida-funded project and includes several partners in implementation such as the League of Arab States (LAS), line ministries, local authorities, various regional and international organizations, UN organizations, local and regional NGOs, research institutions and academia.

By using appropriate small-scale renewable energy technologies for productive activities and entrepreneurial development, REGEND aims to improve the livelihood, economic benefits, social inclusion and gender equality of Arab rural communities, particularly marginalized groups, through a bottom-up and participatory approach by addressing energy poverty, water scarcity and vulnerability to climate change and other natural resources challenges in three targeted countries, namely: Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia. gender equality and entrepreneurship constitute an integral part of REGEND’s activities and expected outputs and are considered a cross-cutting priority along the various phases of its implementation.

Within the framework of the REGEND’s activities, ESCWA and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), in partnership with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UN Women, UN Environment, the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA), the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) are organizing a Workshop on “Sustainable Energy and Gender Empowerment” to be held on 8 October 2019 within the framework of the Tenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (7-8 October 2019) in Bangkok, Thailand.

2. Objectives of the Workshop

The event on “**Sustainable Energy and Gender Empowerment**” intends to highlight the importance of enhancing gender equality and diversifying the involvement of women across the sustainable energy value chain based on a human right based approach.

The workshop will feature presentations and experience-sharing discussion panels that will cover gender equality, entrepreneurial development, and the role and opportunities that sustainable energy offer with focus on the rural context and related productive activities.

The workshop aims to address the following topics:

- Share experiences and foster learning between stakeholders and experts on the challenges and opportunities for gender equality in the energy sector;
- Discuss the potential of synergies between key sectors (energy, water, agriculture, tourism, services, industries, etc.) especially in the rural context;
- Present the opportunities of use of sustainable energy technologies and showcase for economic development and support for gender equality in the sustainable energy industry;
- Identify sustainable energy policy gaps in gender mainstreaming and women empowerment;
- Address the challenges and difficulties in accessing finance, information and markets, technology, access to education and training especially for women entrepreneurs;
- Discuss the potential benefits of realizing gender equality and pathways forward in empowering women in the energy sector and achieving SDG7;

- Formulate actionable recommendations for mainstreaming gender and human rights approach in sustainable energy policy planning, capacity building and awareness raising for gender equality.

The outcomes of the workshop will serve as the basis for suggesting a gender mainstreaming and human rights strategy and action plans to support policy makers, government and local institutions in operationalizing a gender equality and human rights approach to accelerate progress towards sustainable energy.

3. Participants

The Event will bring together various international, regional and national energy, practitioners, gender experts, NGOs, government ministries and entities, UN organizations, and research institutions and academia.

4. Date and Venue

The workshop on “Sustainable Energy and Gender Empowerment” will be held on 8 October 2019 in the framework of the Tenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (7-8 October 2019) at the United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand.

5. Language of the Workshop

The meeting will be conducted in the Arabic and English languages. Simultaneous interpretation from and into the Arabic and English languages will be provided.

6. Correspondence

All correspondence related to the seminar is to be sent to either one of the three addresses:

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