

Ninth session of the Assembly
Abu Dhabi, 11 - 13 January 2019

Note of the Director-General The Geopolitics of Energy Transformation

1. Renewables are moving to the centre of the global energy landscape. Technological advances and falling costs have driven sustained growth in this sector to the point where, in 2017, renewables grew faster than any other energy source. Many renewable technologies are now cost-competitive with fossil fuels in the power sector.

2. While the surge in wind, solar and other renewables has taken place mostly in the power sector, renewables are increasingly being applied in end-use sectors. Electric vehicles and heat pumps, for example, enabling greater deployment of renewables in transport, industry and buildings. Innovations in digitization and energy storage are expanding the potential for renewables to thrive in ways unimaginable just a decade ago. The imperative to tackle climate change and decarbonize the global economy is further strengthening this momentum.

3. This accelerating deployment of renewables has set in motion a global energy transformation that will have profound geopolitical implications. Just as fossil fuels have played an important role in shaping the geopolitical map over the last two centuries, the energy transformation will have implications for the global distribution of power, relations between countries, the risk of conflict, as well as the social, economic and environmental drivers of geopolitical stability. The geopolitical consequences of the energy transformation driven by renewables have not been considered in a comprehensive way in any international setting before, while research and analysis on this subject are still at an initial stage.

4. In order to deepen the understanding of the geopolitical implications of the energy transformation, IRENA launched the Global Commission, at the 8th session of its Assembly in January 2018, with the support of Germany, Norway and the United Arab Emirates. The Commission held four meetings in 2018: in Berlin (April), in Oslo (June), in Reykjavik (October) and in Abu Dhabi (November).

5. Chaired by Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, the former President of Iceland, the Commission is composed of senior and experienced individuals drawn from a range of geographical and professional backgrounds. The membership of the Global Commission includes:

- Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson – Chair, former President of Iceland
- Khalid Bin Mohammad Al-Sulaiman, former Vice President for Renewable Energy, King Abdullah City for Nuclear and Renewable Energy (Saudi Arabia)
- Adnan Z. Amin, Director-General of IRENA (Kenya)
- Anatoly Chubais, Chairman of the Executive Board of RUSNANO (Russia)
- Christiana Figueres, former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Costa Rica)
- Joschka Fischer, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany

- Fu Chengyu, Chair of United Nations Global Compact Network China; former Chairman for China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (SINOPEC)
- Pascal Lamy, President Emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute; former Director-General of the WTO (France)
- Carlos Lopes, Professor at the Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice, University of Cape Town; former Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission of Africa (Guinea-Bissau)
- Murray McCully, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand
- Mari Pangestu, former Minister of Trade; former Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy (Indonesia)
- Andris Piebalgs, Senior Fellow of the Florence School of Regulation; former EU Commissioner for Energy and for Development (Latvia)
- Lapo Pistelli, Executive Vice President, International Affairs of ENI; former Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs (Italy)
- Bill Richardson, President of the Richardson Center for Global Engagement; former US Secretary of Energy and former Governor of New Mexico (United States)
- Izabella Teixeira, former Minister of Environment of Brazil
- Masakazu Toyoda, Chairman and CEO at the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan
- Maria Van Der Hoeven, former Executive Director of the IEA (Netherlands)
- Eirik Waerness, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist, Equinor (Norway)
- Peter Fischer, Representative of the Government of Germany
- Hans Olav Ibrekk, Representative of the Government of Norway
- Fatima AlFoora AlShamsi, Representative of the Government of the United Arab Emirates

Objective of the session

6. The objective of the plenary session is to inform Members on the key findings of the report of the Global Commission on the Geopolitics of Energy Transformation that will be launched on 11 January 2019. The plenary session will explore the geopolitical implications of the energy transformation driven by renewable energy.