

UN report stresses the need to provide access to clean energy to the world's poor

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Access to sustainable energy and increased energy efficiency is a prerequisite for achieving the MDGs.

According to the new report from the UN, the lack of access to modern energy is a significant barrier to economic development. Today, more than 1.6 billion people worldwide have no access to electricity and close to one billion people depend on firewood, etc. as their energy supply for cooking and heating. A reliable, affordable energy supply is key to economic growth and the alleviation of poverty in the world.

The new report provides both analysis of the problems and present recommendations to the international community, specifically on how to establish targets for increasing access to energy. By 2030 all people should have access to modern energy services and there must be substantial increases in energy efficiency, the report says.

Another target in the report is to reduce global energy intensity by 40 per cent by 2030 (the total [energy consumption](#) compared with the Gross Domestic Product). The successful adoption of these measures would reduce [global energy](#) intensity by 2.5 per cent per year - approximately double the historic rate. This would also have a very significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions while providing most countries with economic advantages.

During the launch in New York, Secretary-General Ban stressed the importance of the expert group's work. "The decisions we make today on

our energy future will have far-reaching consequences - for [climate change](#), for development, economic growth and global security. Providing clean, affordable energy for all is essential. It is a massive challenge, but - as this report shows - it can be done."

Head of the UNEP Risoe Centre, John Christensen, based in Denmark attended the meeting: "It may seem impossible to provide worldwide access to modern energy forms while also reducing global carbon emissions, but it is actually possible and the report shows how. However, it will require global political will and the involvement of all stakeholders from top politicians and the private sector to the individuals living in the north as well as in the south, "says John Christensen from New York.

Increasing access to modern energy services at a level sufficient to meet basic human needs would not increase greenhouse gas emissions significantly, according to the report. The International Energy Agency estimates that expanding access to electricity to cover basic needs would result in only a 1.3 per cent increase in [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

These emissions could be further reduced through improved energy efficiency and the use of renewable or cleaner sources of energy. This is a way to support a new energy development which is sustainable in the long run.

The investment needed to ensure universal energy access will be substantial, the report notes, and would require both public and private financing. However, it is only a small part of what has to be invested in energy development globally. The report highlights that some countries have already shown that it is possible and not just a dream to provide more people with energy access, including Brazil, China, and Vietnam as well as Denmark, Japan and Sweden, and California in the United States. These countries have dramatically improved their [energy efficiency](#).

Provided by Technical University of Denmark

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