

Researchers call for global grand challenge strategy to develop clean energy

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The Shepherds Flat Wind Farm is an 845 MW wind farm in the U.S. state of Oregon. Credit: Steve Wilson / Wikipedia.

In a comment in this week's science journal *Nature*, an international group of researchers from nine countries call for a grand challenges strategy to set global priorities for developing renewable energy.

The authors argue that [greenhouse gas emissions](#) are not dropping fast

enough to meet even the modest goals set out in last year's Paris Agreement on [climate change](#). They call for a targeted, internationally coordinated effort to identify and solve the scientific, policy and [economic challenges](#) standing in the way of widespread adoption of [renewable energy](#).

"Renewable energy ... is a difficult, urgent global problem that has been neglected in terms of public research and investment. It requires big thinking, multidisciplinary approaches and supportive policies to compete with existing systems. And it is tightly coupled to global challenges, such as food and water security, poverty and health," the authors write.

They suggest an approach modeled on the Grand Challenges in Global Health Initiative to combat neglected diseases, launched in 2005 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Foundation for the US National Institutes of Health. The initiative identified 14 priority areas, including developing a genetic strategy to incapacitate insects that spread diseases such as yellow fever and Zika virus.

The authors suggest that national governments, funding partners, philanthropic foundations and other private-sector actors come together and appoint an international science board of distinguished researchers, policymakers, industry leaders and engaged citizens from developed and developing countries. The board would create a detailed list of renewable energy challenges in areas including energy harvesting and storage, smart grids and transmission, policy levers and economic models.

"Such a shared purpose ... would accommodate the many disciplines needed across the natural and social sciences, and galvanize the best investigators - regardless of country - to work together to help solve one of the world's most pressing problems," the authors conclude.

The comment, "Renewables need a grand-challenge strategy," will be published Thursday, Oct. 6 in *Nature*.

Provided by CIFAR

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