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ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

Embargoed for 16hr30 (local South African time) 1 September, 2002

PRESS RELEASE

For information only
Not an official record

Putting Energy into Sustainable Development - UNEP launches new Global Clean Energy Network at Johannesburg World Summit

30 Years UNEP: Environment for Development: People, Planet Prosperity

JOHANNESBURG/PARIS, 1 September 2002 – The goal of bringing new and less polluting energy sources to billions of deprived people around the world came a step closer today as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched a pioneering global network of "sustainable energy" centres.

Speaking at the launch here at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Klaus Toepfer, UNEP's Executive Director said, "The provision of environmentally sound energy services are integral to poverty alleviation and sustainable development."

"Over two billion people in developing countries do not have access to reliable forms of energy," Toepfer said. "Nine out of ten Africans have no access to electricity," he continued. "Providing clean energy on a sustainable basis is not only vital for fighting environmental issues like global warming but for reducing poverty and misery in Africa and parts of Asia and Latin America."

Access to affordable, modern energy services is increasingly seen as a pre-requisite for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. Access to energy is a condition for achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals including the goal to halve the proportion of people in poverty by 2015 that is at the heart of the Johannesburg debate.

For one-third of the world's population, dependence on traditional fuels results in many hours spent each day gathering wood, animal and crop waste. Moreover, limited access to adequate and appropriate energy, including electricity (there are currently two billion people worldwide who lack access to electricity) means that value-adding income generating activities are constrained.

The consequences for the environment of present energy production and consumption patterns are also significant. For example, in developing countries, the widespread use of traditional fuels for indoor cooking and heating results in serious respiratory diseases and loss of life related to indoor air pollution, as well as a contribution to deforestation, particularly in arid and semi-arid areas.

Air pollution in developing countries is one of the four most critical global environmental problems. Such pollution causes an estimated two million excess deaths per year, or 5 percent of the global burden of disease.

At the global level, emissions of greenhouse gases, which mostly originate from the use of fossil fuels, (presently 80 percent of the world's primary energy comes from fossil fuels), will have to be reduced in order to combat global warming. Solving the climate change challenge means reducing global dependence on fossil fuels.

The new Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development (GNESD), made up initially of ten centres in ten developed and developing countries, will help promote the research, transfer and take-up of green and cleaner energy technologies to the developing world.

It will achieve this by strengthening collaboration between existing "centres of excellence" that work on energy, development and environment issues. And, through these centres, influence sustainable energy policies, strategies and programmes.

"The underlying rationale of the Network is that it increases the capacity of developing country research institutions to look at energy for sustainable development issues, says Mark Radka, head of UNEP's Energy Unit. "Furthermore, it creates a shared research and information base on policy and technical guidance, advice and information."

"Critically, the Network will help all partners to develop and apply policies suitable to the needs and constraints of developing countries, thus supporting the use of energy as an instrument for poverty alleviation and sustainable development," he said.

Promising advances in energy-related technology hold a great potential for sustainable development, particularly regarding renewable energy and energy efficiency.

A number of technology options (energy from wind, "new" biomass, solar, geothermal sources) have been advanced to a state of technical reliability, and technological developments continue to reduce costs. The challenge remains to introduce or scale up the application of sustainable energy services. Similarly, policy and regulatory challenges remain if these are to become commercially viable options and able to compete with conventional and environmentally harmful energy options that typically benefit from favourable pricing conditions and perverse policy incentives.

"Technological solutions to energy problems are available today. We now need the political will and action to implement them," Toepfer said.

"The choices humankind makes on energy in the next decade will largely determine the history of the 21st century, and in particular whether we are able to put ourselves securely on the path to sustainable development," he said.

Note to Journalists
The Network will be launched at a press conference with Klaus Toepfer, Tim Wirth of the UN Foundation and Ministers from Denmark, France Germany, and the UK in the Sandton Media Centre at 4.30pm on Sunday 1 September. For more information please contact Nick Nuttall, UNEP's Head of Media (in Johannesburg) on mobile: +27 11 (0) 72 533 8239, email: nick.nuttall@unep.org, or Robert Bisset, UNEP Press Officer (in Paris) on Tel +33-1-4437-7613, mobile: +33-6-2272-5842, email: robert.bisset@unep.fr

Note to Editors
The Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development (GNESD) is a partnership, and has been submitted to the World Summit on Sustainable Development for recognition as a "Type Two" outcome.

UNEP will host a small secretariat for the Network. A Steering Committee representing the energy centres as well as the other Network partners will provide strategic direction.

The creation of GNESD is in line with the G8 Renewable Energy Task Force Report (2001) which recommended that its member countries "expand support for assistance programmes and networks for capacity building" to help promote the policy shift towards sustainable energy solutions.

Core partners in the Network are out-standing energy centres in industrialised and developing countries with proven experience and success in advancing knowledge and policies on various energy issues. The list of energy centres includes, for example, the Tata Energy Reseach Institute (TERI) in India, the African Energy Policy Research Network (Kenya), the Bariloche Foundation (Argentina), ENDA Tiers Monde (Senegal), and the Energy Research and Development Centre (EDRC) in South Africa.

The energy centres are joined in the Network by international organisations, governments, financial institutions, private sector representatives, foundations, and other parties who share the goal of promoting energy for sustainable development.

The idea of the Network was developed by UNEP in cooperation with the UNDP, UNIDO, UN DESA, and The World Bank drawing on proposals and inputs from the energy centres themselves. Initial funding partners are the governments of Germany, France, United Kingdom, Denmark, and the UN Foundation.

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UNEP News Release 2002/60