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GA2

Research Report

Topic 1: Advancing access to reliable, affordable, and renewable energy for all member states.

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Outline:

Introduction:

Sustainable Development Goal 7 is to "ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all", according the United Nations. This issue of advancing access to reliable, affordable, and renewable energy for all member states is of paramount importance in the pursuit of sustainable development. Energy accessibility is a fundamental aspect that influences economic growth, social well-being, and environmental sustainability. The General Assembly Second Committee (GA2) must address this challenge collectively to ensure that all member states can harness the benefits of reliable and sustainable energy sources.

Definition of Key Terms:

Reliable Energy:

Energy sources that can consistently meet the demands of consumers, ensuring a stable and uninterrupted supply.

Affordable Energy:

Energy that is reasonably priced, allowing for widespread accessibility without causing undue economic burden.

Renewable Energy:

Energy derived from resources that are naturally replenished, such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, waves, and geothermal heat.

Background Information:

The problem of expanding access to cheap, renewable, and sustainable energy has changed throughout time due to the intricate interactions between environmental, technical, and economic issues. Historically, traditional fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas have dominated the world energy scene. These sources have increased economic growth, but they have also made social inequality worse and degraded the environment. The origins of the problem may be seen in the industrial revolution, when countries started to use fossil fuels to drive fast industrialisation. Energy consumption increased along with the growth of economies. However, the dependence on non-renewable resources raised issues with resource depletion, geopolitical disputes over energy access, and the effects of carbon emissions on the environment.

The environmental movement began to take shape in the second half of the 20th century as people became more conscious of how traditional energy sources affected the environment. The oil crises of the 1970s brought attention to how vulnerable countries that rely mostly on fossil fuels are, and they also sparked conversations about energy security and diversification. A paradigm change occurred in the 21st century when sustainable development was acknowledged as a top priority worldwide. The UN emphasised the importance of energy availability in reducing poverty, enhancing health, and advancing education through the Millennium Development Goals and later the Sustainable Development Goals.

Early solutions to the problem centred on energy conservation and efficiency. But it became more and more clear that in order to address both climate change and energy availability, a radical shift toward renewable energy was required. Although progress remained gradual, initiatives such as the Kyoto Protocol provided the foundation for international collaboration on lowering greenhouse gas emissions. The severity of the climate catastrophe has forced the topic to the top of international agendas in recent years. With the 2015 Paris Agreement, governments committed to reducing global warming and boosting resilience and adaptation. It was a historic event. Technological developments have also boosted the economic viability of renewable energy sources, which has expanded their acceptance.

Notwithstanding these encouraging advancements, problems still exist. Access to clean energy technology is restricted for developing countries, and there are still questions about the sustainability of renewable energy projects financially. From being an environmental issue, the problem now has several facets that include social, economic, and geopolitical aspects.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved:

China:

As the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, China plays a pivotal role in the global energy landscape. China has been investing heavily in renewable energy infrastructure, making significant strides in solar and wind power. It seeks to balance its economic growth with environmental sustainability. It aims to reduce reliance on coal, improve air quality, and position itself as a global leader in clean energy technologies.

United States:

The United States, historically a major consumer of fossil fuels, has increased its focus on renewable energy. Various states have implemented ambitious clean energy goals, and the federal government has rejoined international agreements like the Paris Agreement. The U.S. aims to transition towards a low-carbon economy, create green jobs, and address climate change. Its preferred outcome includes reducing emissions, fostering innovation, and ensuring energy security.

India:

India, with a rapidly growing population and economy, faces the dual challenge of increasing energy access and reducing emissions. It has invested in solar power and aims to increase the share of renewables in its energy mix. India aims to achieve energy security, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and provide electricity to all citizens. The preferred outcome includes affordable, reliable, and clean energy for sustainable development.

International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA):

IRENA is an intergovernmental organization that promotes the widespread adoption and sustainable use of renewable energy globally. It facilitates cooperation among nations, provides policy advice, and supports capacity building. IRENA advocates for increased investment in renewable energy projects, policy frameworks that support clean energy, and the global transition to a sustainable energy future.

UN General Assembly Resolution 65/151 (International Year of Sustainable Energy for All, 2012):

This resolution declared 2012 as the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All, acknowledging the importance of energy access for sustainable development.

UN General Assembly Resolution 74/223 (International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies):

Recognizing the importance of clean air and sustainable energy, this resolution establishes the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies, emphasizing the interconnectedness of environmental and energy issues.

UN Sustainable Development Goal 7:

"Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all"

Article 55 from the United Nations Charter:

"With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, the United Nations shall promote:

1. *higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development;*
2. *solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational cooperation; and*
3. *universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."*

The right to an adequate standard of living intersects with discussions on access to affordable and reliable energy.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue:

Past initiatives, including the UN Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative and the Paris Agreement, have aimed to address energy-related challenges. However, progress has been uneven, and significant gaps persist in achieving universal access to reliable, affordable, and renewable energy.

Possible Solutions:

- Encouraging international cooperation and technology transfer to support developing nations in adopting renewable energy technologies.
- Establishing financial mechanisms, such as green bonds or concessional loans, to facilitate investment in renewable energy projects.
- Promoting research and development to enhance the efficiency and affordability of renewable energy technologies.
- Implementing capacity-building programs to empower communities in harnessing and managing renewable energy resources.

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