

Forum: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Ensuring energy security and the use of sustainable resources in Asia and the Pacific by regional cooperation

Student Officer: Emir Dinçel

Position: President Chair



(Image 1, Steven Kimbrough, “Is a Transition to Renewable Energy on the Verge of Being Unstoppable?”)

Introduction

Access to energy has been one of humanity's greatest challenges for centuries, especially following the Industrial Revolution. Especially with the rapid population growth in the Asia Pacific region and the growth of the region's volatile economy; the demand for sustainable and affordable energy has been on a constant rise. On the other hand, regional and international conflicts such as the Russo-Ukrainian War have created energy scarcity problems among the developing nations of the Asia Pacific. In addition, the effects of consuming fossil fuels such as air pollution, global warming, and climate change remain a key issue in the Asia Pacific that requires the swift adoption of sustainable sources such as solar and wind energy. Thus, ensuring energy security and the use of sustainable sources in Asia and the Pacific region is a great priority on the path to reaching the United Nations' 7th sustainable development goal, which is to ensure affordable and clean energy.

Definition of Key Terms

Energy Security: According to the International Energy Agency, “Energy security is not just about having uninterrupted access to energy, but also about securing energy supplies at an affordable price. The surge in energy prices has been on a large enough scale to worsen considerably the global economic outlook, causing difficulties for households and industrial operations alike, and leading many governments to recalibrate their policy priorities.” (IEA)

Sustainable Energy: Sustainable energy is often defined as energy that is capable of meeting the needs of the current generation while preserving the energy resources for future generations. Thus, sustainable energy sources must be renewable, environmentally friendly, cost-efficient, and easy to access.

Climate Change: According to the United Nations, “Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns.” Even though these shifts may be caused by natural events such as volcanic eruptions, there has been a large artificial increase in such shifts following the Industrial Revolution, which has been growing at an increasing rate in correlation with increasing demand by the growing global population’s wants and needs.

Decarbonization: The process of reducing the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere. Decarbonization may be achieved through a variety of methods such as switching from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy as well as the regulation and filtration of industrial processes.

General Overview

The Asia and Pacific region is home to more than 50 percent of the world’s population and it remains a large hub for global trade and cultural heritage. According to the data provided by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), around 98.4 percent of Asia Pacific’s population has access to electricity which is 7 percent over the global average. Yet many Asia and Pacific countries fall far behind in this statistic regarding electric access; with some notable examples such as Myanmar at 73.6 percent, the Democratic Republic of Korea at 57 percent, and Papua New Guinea at only 19 percent. On the other hand, only about 16 percent of the Asia Pacific region’s energy comes from renewable sources, which is 2.7 percent below the world average (Asia). With a high dependence on fossil fuels in regional industries such as the petroleum exports of the Middle East and the coal dependency for electricity generation in China and India; the Asia Pacific challenges regarding energy security and sustainability are far from over. In addition, regional conflicts such as the Russo-Ukrainian War had a great impact on developing nations which were reliant on the petroleum and natural gas exports from the two countries, especially with the introduction of numerous trade embargoes on Russia’s exports. Yet, Russia’s oil and gas exports continued to flow into major Asian economies such as China, India, and Türkiye. Obviously, the Russo-Ukrainian

conflict is just one of many that has impacted the energy market in Asia and the Pacific, with other historically notable crises being the COVID-19 pandemic, the invasion of Iraq, and the Kuwaiti oil fires. History has shown again and again how crucial it is to preserve energy security in such conflicts for regional trade and economic development, thus it is more important than ever for Asia and Pacific nations to ensure energy security by switching to renewable energy sources and reducing their dependence on fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

People's Republic of China: As the second-largest economy in the world by gross domestic product and the largest country by energy consumption, China plays a leading role in the Asia Pacific regions in energy consumption and energy security. Even though Chinese President Xi Jinping has pledged to become carbon neutral by 2060, partially by transitioning to renewable and sustainable energy sources; "fossil fuels still accounted for 83 percent of China's primary energy mix in 2022, with coal accounting for 56 percent and oil 18 percent." (Hove) Thus, energy security and access to sustainable energy sources remain a focal point for China and its growing industries.

India: Following right behind the People's Republic of China, India is the second-largest energy consumer in Asia and the Pacific. The growing rates of industrialization, in India especially during the 21st century, have led to the country's dependence on fossil fuels as cheap energy resources for public consumption. This is also due to India's rapidly growing population, which has surpassed over 1.4 billion people by 2023. However, in recent years India has made large investments in renewable and sustainable energy sources, especially in hydroelectric, wind and solar energy.

Japan: Following the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster in 2011, Japan's energy policies took a sharp turn with a reduction in its nuclear energy production capacity. On the other hand, the lack of sufficient energy resources such as oil and natural gas on Japanese soil, to fulfill the needs of the growing population and industries has made the country extremely reliant on foreign exports (EIA). Thus, the Japanese government has made significant investments in renewable and sustainable energy sources with the aim of reducing Japan's overall dependence on foreign energy exports and fossil fuels.

Russia: As the second largest exporter of oil and natural gas in the entire world, Russia remains a key figure in the Asia and Pacific energy market. Despite facing numerous economic sanctions, mainly from Western countries, following the Russo-Ukrainian War; Russia has had a major transitioning process where it increased its oil and gas exports to the Asia Pacific region with the reduction of sales in Europe due to the economic sanctions. While still in a military conflict, the Russian economy relies heavily on its oil and gas exports for foreign currency income and international trade.

Timeline of Events

<p>11 December 1997</p>	<p>The Kyoto Protocol was adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change which aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) with the cooperation of industrialized countries by methods such as transitioning to sustainable energy sources.</p>
<p>27 - 30 May 2013</p>	<p>The first Asian Pacific Energy Forum (APEF) organized by ESCAP, took place in Vladivostok, Russia to discuss regional cooperation to establish energy security and encourage sustainable energy use.</p>
<p>12 December 2015</p>	<p>The Paris Agreement was adopted by 196 countries in the annual session of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21), which set goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by fossil fuels and switch to renewable sources of energy.</p>
<p>3 - 5 April 2018</p>	<p>The second Asian Pacific Energy Forum (APEF) organized by ESCAP, took place in Bangkok, Thailand to discuss newly emerging challenges in the Asia Pacific energy industry while addressing energy security issues in national, international, and household levels.</p>
<p>September 2020</p>	<p>The president of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, announces China's plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.</p>
<p>24 February 2022</p>	<p>Russian President Vladimir Putin announces a special military operation in Ukraine, leading to disruptions in the global energy market and driving energy costs up for the nations that hold embargoes against the Russian government.</p>
<p>November 30 - December 12, 2023</p>	<p>The annual session of the UN Climate Change Conference, COP28, was held in Dubai, with the attendance of roughly 85,000 participants, including over 150 Heads of State and Government, to discuss increasing renewable energy capacity and energy efficiency along with many other environmental matters.</p>

UN Involvement

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP): ESCAP was founded by the United Nations in 1947 with the aim of promoting regional cooperation and sustainable development. Since its founding, ESCAP has organized countless initiatives such as the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum (APEF) and Asian Energy Highway Initiative to highlight the importance of regional cooperation in the Asia and Pacific energy market.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO): UNIDO focuses on the challenges regarding one of the greatest aspects of energy use, which is industrial processes. Its mission is to promote sustainable development in industries through the implementation of various methods including but not limited to renewable energy projects and energy efficiency programs. One such example is UNIDO's Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP), which “fosters investment-ready and scalable cleantech solutions, selected for their economic viability, environmental sustainability as well as social and gender-specific impacts. The acceleration is directly linked to the country's regulatory and policy support and capacity-building interventions, uniquely placing the program among other similar initiatives because of its normative component.” (UNIDO)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): UNDP's mission is to reduce poverty, lower social inequalities, and build resilience to possible crises, including crises regarding energy disruption and dependence on fossil fuels or foreign sources. Thus, energy security remains one of the key focal points discussed in the UNDP, along with access to sustainable and renewable energy sources.

Relevant UN Documents

The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 11 December 1997

Regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 24 February 2017 (E/ESCAP/FSD(4)/2)

Promoting regional cooperation for enhanced energy security and the sustainable use of energy in Asia and the Pacific, 22 May 2011 (E/ESCAP/67/L.5)

Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol - 8 December 2012 (FCCC/KP/CMP/2012/13/Add.1)

Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 25 September 2015 (A/RES/70/1)

The Paris Agreement, 2 December 2015 (Volume 3156, I-54113)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

There have been many previous attempts with the cooperation of the United Nations and its member states to address energy security issues and encourage the use of sustainable energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydroelectricity to meet the population's needs. One such attempt is the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a global level and underlined the importance of transitioning to renewable energy sources on this matter. These points were highlighted once again later in the Paris Agreement at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21), where 196 member states set goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by fossil fuels and switch to renewable

sources of energy. In addition to these international commitments, there have been countless individual renewable energy and carbon reduction targets set by member states such as China's carbon neutrality goal by 2060. Consequently, "Asian investment in renewable energy has grown exponentially since 2004, with an average annual growth rate of 23%, reaching USD 345 billion in 2022, largely driven by China, which accounts for 80%" (Srivastava). There have also been significant attempts to increase international energy connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Energy Grid initiative and the Asian Energy Highway, which have proposed to build international infrastructure to carry out energy efficiently between Asia and Pacific countries. Yet, global and regional crises such as the Russo-Ukrainian War have shown that there is still a long way to establish energy security and complete the transitioning into renewable energy sources in the Asia Pacific region.

Possible Solutions

Solving the energy security challenges and the use of sustainable energy resources is still a significant challenge in the modern Asia Pacific society, and there is no question that regional cooperation is necessary to reduce the negative impacts of these challenges. Continuing regional and international energy-transferring infrastructure following the footsteps of the ASEAN Energy Grid initiative and the Asian Energy Highway is crucial to mitigating the effects of regional conflicts and reducing energy dependence on individual countries by using international cooperation through such channels. In addition, setting out specific regional goals specific to the needs of the Asia and Pacific countries with the assistance of ESCAP is crucial in this path to establish energy security and reduce the dependence on fossil fuels on a regional and international level. These goals can be set in an international conference to discuss Asia Pacific energy matters and signed as a treaty by member states. In addition, further economic assistance may be provided by the United Nations and member states in their respective countries to promote the production and use of renewable energy sources. Yet it is important to realize that establishing energy security and transmission into renewable energy sources is a long process that is likely to take years to fully reach. Thus, it is crucial to establish long-lasting solutions and pledges in coordination with the United Nations' 7th Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

Notes from the Chair

As energy security and sustainability of resources is a very broad topic with thousands of different sources to get data from, it is very important that the delegates select sources that are highly qualified and preferably published by the UN and its organs. One such source that the delegates are encouraged to take a look at is [the Asia Pacific Energy Portal](#), which is published by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). If there is a lack of official UN documents on a specific subtopic that the delegates are focusing on, they are then encouraged to refer to highly trusted international organizations such as [the International Energy Agency](#) and [the World Energy Council](#).

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