

Indo-Pacific Era Strategic Centre

Mapping the Geopolitics of the Next Indo-Pacific Century.

May 2023



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Climate Security and SDG 7 on Affordable and Clean Energy

By Margareth Sembiring

It is impossible to talk about climate security without mentioning energy. Energy use contributes to 73 percent of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions, and interventions in the energy sector have been the foremost strategy in the fight against climate change for decades.

The SDG 7 sets five broad goals encompassing energy access, renewable energy development, energy efficiency, international cooperation, and infrastructural expansion and technology expansion, by 2030. Overall, the global community has made considerable improvement over the years. The rate of electricity access has grown from 83 percent in 2010 to 91 percent in 2020, thereby reducing the number of those without electricity from 1.2 billion to 733 million. The use of renewable sources for electricity generation increased from 19.7 percent in 2010 to 26.2 percent in 2019, and the rate of carbon emission rise has slowed from 3 percent per year in the 2000s to about 0.5 percent per year in the past decade.

Challenges to Progress

While the progress demonstrates that the measures introduced in the energy sector have yielded positive results, it unfortunately still falls far short of what is required to cap a 1.5°C rise in global average tem-

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peratures by 2100. This observation was already made prior to the double crises of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, and much has been said to exhort countries to tighten their emission reduction targets by 2030 and 2050. In what appears to be a promising development, no country seems to relax their climate mitigation commitments despite the double crises. On the contrary, more countries are pledging net-zero emissions by around mid-century.

In reality, however, the soaring fuel prices and the increase in demand for oil and coal as alternatives to gas, which got exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, have pushed energy security concerns to the fore. The electrification growth rate **dropped** to 0.5 percent points between 2018 and 2020 compared to 0.8 percent points between 2020 and 2018. Additionally, about 75 million people who have just obtained access to electricity may no longer be able to afford it, and around **100 million** people may re-join the estimated **2.4 billion** people who still use polluting cooking fuels.

Renewable Energy Solutions

Considering renewable energy's lower volatility compared to fossil fuels, low-carbon energy transition is indeed offering a long-term energy security solution. But for undetermined time depending on the economic and geopolitical dynamics, countries are likely going to focus on short-term solutions to ensure energy provisions for their populations. This means that depending on their domestic circumstances, some countries may use this as a momentum to accelerate renewable energy expansion, or begin nuclear power projects, or hold on to fossil fuels for longer than expected.

The progress in Goal 7 will very much depend on the global energy markets. Emerging technologies such

as battery storage systems, hydrogen, and carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS), among others, can be a game-changer affecting the supply and demand of different energy sources. However, with the flow of clean energy financing to developing countries **shrinking** by 42 percent and by 24 percent in 2018 and 2019 respectively, it is hard to estimate how much of these technologies can be made available in developing countries in the near future.

With only seven years left before the conclusion of the SDGs and the 2030 climate reduction targets, the competing priorities that the world governments are currently wrestling with certainly cast doubts over their fates. Regardless of the eventual outcomes, in view of climate security, consistent efforts by all relevant stakeholders to reduce carbon emissions and ensure universal energy access must not cease.

SUGGESTED READINGS

United Nations Statistics Division, 2022, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*.

The World Bank, 2022, "Report: COVID-19 Slows Progress Toward Universal Energy Access", 1 June.

World Health Organization, 2022, "WHO Publishes New Global Data on the Use of Clean and Polluting Fuels for Cooking by Fuel Type", 20 January.

Global Carbon Project, 2022, "Global Carbon Budget 2022", 11 November.

International Energy Agency, 2022, *World Energy Outlook 2022*, Paris: IEA.



Photo Credit: Freepik

CLIMATE CHANGE



Photo Credit: freedomnaruk on Freepik.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

April heat in western Mediterranean 'almost impossible without climate change': Study

The "exceptional early heatwave" involved "local temperatures up to 20 degrees hotter than normal and April records being broken by up to 6 degrees", said the report by World Weather Attribution (WWA), whose scientists study the link between extreme weather events and climate change.

AFP

The Straits Times | 6 May 2023

Climate change: Vietnam records highest-ever temperature of 44.1°C

Vietnam has recorded its highest ever temperature, just over 44°C - with experts predicting it would soon be surpassed because of climate change. Thailand reported a record-equalling 44.6°C in its western Mak province.

BBC

8 May 2023

Climate change raising heat risks for workers, experts warn

Rising global temperatures are increasing the risk of workers dying or becoming disabled from labouring in extreme heat. Tens of thousands of workers around the world have died from chronic kidney disease and other illnesses linked with extreme heat over recent decades.

Channel News Asia

10 May 2023

World not ready yet to 'switch off' fossil fuels, COP28 host UAE says

The United Arab Emirates said that countries should agree to phase out fuel emissions - not the production of oil, gas and coal - at the upcoming U.N. climate change negotiations that it will host this December. The comments reflect deep divisions between nations over how to combat global warming ahead of the COP28 talks.

Valerie Volcovici and Leah Douglass

Reuters | 10 May 2023

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Global water security 2023

Most of the world's population live in water insecure countries today. Out of 7.78 billion people living in 186 countries, over 0.61 billion people (8%) are critically water-insecure and 5.52 billion (72%) are water-insecure, including 4.31 billion people in the Asia-Pacific region, 1.34 billion in Africa, 415 million in the Americas, and almost 66 million in Europe.

MacAlister, C, Baggio, G, Perera, D, Qadir, M, Taing, L, Smakhtin, V.

United Nations, University Institute for Water, Environment and Health | 2023

Human-induced climate change increased drought severity in Horn of Africa

As a result of human-induced climate change, the combination of low rainfall and high evapotranspiration would not have led to drought at all in a 1.2°C cooler world. In today's climate the same event is now classified as an exceptional drought, with major crop and pasture losses and widespread water shortages.

Joyce Kimutai, et al.

2023

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

World Environment Day

The 2023 World Environment Day campaign #BeatPlasticPollution calls for global solutions to combat plastic pollution.

Worldwide

5 June 2023

ENERGY SECURITY



Photo Credit: frimufilms on freepik.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Low-carbon energy transition: Lessons from the Philippines

The Philippines presents an interesting case for renewable energy development. Defying cost concerns typically expressed by developing countries, the Philippines is making strides to expand its renewable energy capacity.

Margareth Sembiring

RSIS Commentary | 18 April 2023

Asia Pacific emerges as frontrunner in race to harness wind power

While challenges remain, nothing seems insurmountable for companies such as Orsted. It is also focused on the next frontier – floating wind turbines.

Julie Yoo

CNA | 26 April 2023

Australia closes oldest coal plant, pivots to renewables

Although Australia is planning to clean up its domestic energy market, the economy is still fuelled by exports of coal and gas. Dozens of new coal mines, oil fields and gas projects are in government planning pipelines.

AFP

The Straits Times | 28 April 2023

Bongbong Marcos eyes nuclear energy to avert possible PH power crisis

In his recent official visit to the United States, Marcos said he is looking at a “cutting-edge” micro nuclear fuel technology as part of the administration’s efforts to solve the country’s power crisis.

Daphne Galvez

Inquirer.net | 12 May 2023

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Enhancing nuclear and radiological emergency preparedness and response in ASEAN and beyond

Within ASEAN, a broad consensus has formed that a regional approach to nuclear emergency preparedness and response would complement national frameworks and capabilities. ASEANTOM’s work is promising, but there is room to deepen and expand this work.

Julius Cesar Trajano

Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Policy Brief | 2023

A zero-carbon nuclear energy future? Lessons learned from perceptions of climate change and nuclear waste

Nuclear energy was perceived as part of the solution to climate change (51% agree), but concern around more pollution and environmental contamination remained (42% agree).

Grace Dehner, et al.

Energies, Vol. 16, No. 4 | 2023

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

ISCN-ASEAN Centre for Energy Joint Seminar on Nuclear Security Culture

This webinar explored various scenarios in a nuclear power plant that demonstrate the importance of achieving good nuclear security culture.

Recorded Webinar

11 April 2023



Photo Credit: user6702303 on Freepik.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

SC orders stop to commercial release of genetically modified rice, eggplant products

The Supreme Court of the Philippines ordered a writ of nature (“kalikasan”) in a case seeking to stop the commercial release of genetically modified rice and eggplant products, as they “need further study on (their) safety.”

CNN Philippines

19 April 2023

Qatar’s strides in food security

Qatar has completed the construction of its 53-hectare large Strategic Food Security Facilities (SFSF) in its Hammad Port. This facility will play a critical role in helping the country meet its long-term food sector development strategies, building on successes such as self-sufficiency in eggs increasing from 14 percent (2017) to 36 percent (2022), and vegetables from 20 percent (2017) to 46 percent (2022).

The Peninsula Qatar

1 May 2023

China approves safety of gene-edited soybean, its first such crop

China has approved the safety of gene-edited soybean, as the first approved commodity using the said technology, which promises higher yields. The approval came amid trade tensions, erratic weather and war in Ukraine, a major grain exporter, which have raised food security concerns in the country.

Reuters

Nikkei Asia | 4 May 2023

Italy agriculture minister says 'slush' lab-food threatens quality products

Italy's government proposed a bill to ban the production and import of cultured food and feed. The problem, according to its minister of ministry for agriculture and food sovereignty and forests, is that lab-grown meats are “ma(de) them all the same in laboratories, erasing our culture tied to the land,” thus threatening the country's food heritage.

Angelo Amante and Crispian Balmer

Reuters | 8 May 2023

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

A baseline report: 2022 - The state of digital agriculture in the Commonwealth

This report focuses on the current state of digital agriculture in the Commonwealth, to address difficulties faced by farmers in attracting finance and investment and accessing markets. It provides policy recommendations, including the need for governments to play more active roles in early stages of business development, especially in countries characterised by smallholder-level production.

The Commonwealth Secretariat

2022

Digital agriculture in action: Selected case studies from India

This report identifies recent trends and challenges in scaling up digital agriculture in India, including technologies such as e-extension, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, drones, food safety technologies, fintech, precision agriculture and remote sensing. Among the key challenges faced are uncertainties in farmers' incomes, and gaps in digital literacy/infrastructure, and the lack of open datasets and data frameworks.

Sreenath Dixit et al.

UN FAO and ICRISAT | 2022

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Are healthy diets affordable? Using new data to guide agricultural and food policy

This event brought together a panel of experts from countries, international agencies, and academia to discuss new food security indicators on diet costs and affordability and their use in guiding agricultural and food policy both globally and domestically. They can be used to inform and monitor a wide range of programs at the global, national, and sub-national levels including those focused on Zero Hunger – the second of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Recorded Webinar

14 July 2022

HEALTH SECURITY



Photo Credit: DC Studio on Freepik.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Indonesia leads Social and Health Development Initiative in ASEAN 2023

Indonesia's increasing activism in driving social and health development in Southeast Asia is expected to have positive impact on improving the quality of life in the region. This article provides details on Indonesia's social and health development initiatives in 2023.

Silvia Jultikasari Febrian

Modern Diplomacy | 23 April 2023

Lessons learned from a healthier Southeast Asia

This article highlights a few lessons learned from Southeast Asia's experience in health and medical research, which include the contributions of science and data, the importance of effective strategies and prevention, and the promising future of health technologies.

Curtis S. Chin

The Jakarta Post | 3 May 2023

WHO declares end to COVID global health emergency

The World Health Organization declares end to COVID-19 as a global health emergency. However, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, said "the risk remains of new variants emerging that cause new surges in cases and deaths".

Jennifer Rigby and Bhanvi Satija

Reuters | 8 May 2023

Deadly combo of extreme heat and air pollution grips parts of Southeast Asia

Many parts of Southeast Asia have been hit by heat waves. The combined risks of extreme high temperatures and air pollution are causing public health concerns in the region.

Denis Chow

NBC News | 10 May 2023

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

A scoping review on laboratory surveillance in the WHO Southeast Asia Region: Past, present and the future

This article argues that well integrated surveillance systems contribute to improving the early detection and control of diseases in the region, but financing poses a challenge in the integration of different surveillance systems.

Vidushi Goel et al.

Journal of Global Health, Vol.13, 2023

Strengthening public health surveillance and risk assessment for health security threats in the WHO South-East Asia Region

This article examines universal health coverage (UHC) scores in relation to the performance in combating COVID-19 in the Southeast Asian region and the Western Pacific region. It finds that UHC scores and risk communication are crucial in effective COVID-19 response.

Kumpol Saengtabtim et al.

International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, Vol. 92, 2023

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Global Public Health Conference (GPHC2023)

This conference will bring together public health experts from across the world to explore how to build an effective health system that also features innovation and sustainability in the post-pandemic era.

Singapore

24 - 25 August 2023

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF



Photo Credit: EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid on Flickr.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

FEMA index offers closer look at social risks in disaster resilience

Introduced in 2022, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Risk Index has been used to identify communities currently at most risk from climate-related dangers. It is now being updated to reflect social vulnerabilities as part of the risk index.

Leslie Kaufman

PropertyCasualtydisaster 360 | 17 April 2023

Six dos and six don'ts for tackling the climate emergency

The humanitarian approach to climate seems to be marked by an over-reliance on clunky frameworks and slow-moving sub-committees and no overall coherent plans. Instead, this can be improved by looking at the lessons learned from the expansion of cash assistance in the humanitarian system.

Sophie Tholstrup

The New Humanitarian | 9 May 2023

Singapore, Indonesia condemn attack on ASEAN convoy in Myanmar

A humanitarian convoy carrying Singaporean and Indonesian embassy officials, junta representatives and ASEAN representatives was attacked as they were travelling to meet an ethnic armed organisation based in Shan State.

Sebastian Strangio

The Diplomat | 9 May 2023

Channeling disaster finance resources in small islands in the G20 Countries

With small island nations facing particular vulnerabilities as a result of climate change, there is a need to channel specific financial assistance. Collaboration and coordination among the various stakeholders is therefore essential in building resilience.

Hafida Fahmiasari, Danang Parikesit and Fauziah Zen

Observer Research Foundation | 9 May 2023

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

The race to net zero : Accelerating climate action in Asia and the Pacific

According to this study, most countries in the Asia-Pacific are insufficiently prepared to face in increasing impacts of climate change, particularly financially. This study further sets out the transformations needed.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

2023

Alternative aid modalities: Community development

In fragile or sanctioned contexts, humanitarian approaches to delivering and monitoring aid have to reflect this situation. This paper puts forward potential recommendations on the incorporation of community-driven approaches in such situations.

Scott Guggenheim and Scott Petrie

Center on International Cooperation

2023

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

In conversation with chef José Andrés

This podcast episode looks at the pros and cons of taking a different approach to humanitarianism – one is smaller, agile, less-structured, more networked, and has a more relationship-based approach.

Podcast

12 April 2023

MIGRATION



Photo Credit: UN Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid on Flickr.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

What role can immigration play in addressing current and future labor shortages?

With a labour shortage worldwide, immigration can help address these concerns. However, the extent to which governments should rely on this solution is dependent on other policy interventions in education and training as well as social policy for the all workers in the economy.

Kate Hooper

Migration Policy Institute | 1 April 2023

Hard borders and little aid: How civilians are escaping Sudan's conflict

With millions attempting to flee the onslaught of violence in Sudan, borders have been choked up with limited aid and stricter border measures. There is also a concern that Sudan may not be able to handle returnees due to the current situation

Azza Guergues, Okech Francis and Philip Kleinfeld

The New Humanitarian | 1 May 2023

How climate migration and adaptation is reshaping lives

Although sustainable farming methods and improved disaster-recovery methods may mitigate the upcoming surge of climate migrants, climate migration will still be a significant factor in the future. As such, this reality needs to be taken into account when coming up with climate policies.

Naila Khan

Non-Profit Quarterly | 4 May 2023

Dwindling aid leaves Rohingya women exposed to rising violence in Bangladesh

Despite persistent threats faced by women who live in the camps, international funds that aid providers and the authorities rely on to provide services for these women are shrinking. It happens as international attention is increasingly directed elsewhere.

Farzana Hossen and Syed Samiul Basher Anik

The New Humanitarian | 9 May 2023

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Addressing human trafficking through health systems: A scoping review

This report addresses the intersection of healthcare and human trafficking by reviewing articles, reports and literature in an effort to shape policy considerations aimed at the prevention of and response to human trafficking.

World Health Organization

2023

Climate change and migration: An omnibus overview for policymakers and development practitioners

With the impacts of climate change intensifying across the world, migration is a valuable tool for adaptation. There is, therefore, a need for a robust policy to ensure that the benefits of this approach are shared among the national, regional and international stakeholders.

Samuel Huckstep and Michael Clemens

London: Center for Global Development

2023

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Toward a Road Map for Digitalization in the EU Humanitarian Protection Space

With a sudden influx of large numbers of arrivals, governments have had to increasingly rely on digital solutions to manage them. This webinar took stock of the effectiveness of these solutions and identified lessons learned and how they might be able to be applied in the future.

Recorded Webinar

27 April 2023