

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release:

Date: 29 May 2024

Venue: Nairobi, Kenya

### “Commitment to Energy Efficiency is a Commitment to Our Future,” Says AU Commissioner Abou-Zeid at 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Global Conference on Energy Efficiency



The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Global Conference on Energy Efficiency, held on 22 May 2024, has gathered key leaders and stakeholders from around the world in Nairobi, Kenya to discuss the future of energy efficiency. The conference, jointly organised by the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the Kenyan Ministry of Energy and Petroleum, was inaugurated by African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, alongside Kenya’s Minister of Energy Davis Chirchir and European Union Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson.

The event aimed to explore innovative solutions and strategies to enhance energy efficiency globally. Participants discussed the implementation of innovative technologies and policies to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, with a particular focus on Africa’s potential.

In her opening remarks, Commissioner Abou-Zeid highlighted the importance of energy efficiency as the one of the major solutions to Africa's pressing energy access gap, particularly concerning the lack of electricity and clean cooking solutions. *“With over half a billion people in Africa lacking electricity and almost a billion lacking clean cooking facilities, energy efficiency stands as the primary fuel for progress”* she stated. It not only offers a pathway to modern energy services but also aligns with climate action objectives. She added: *“By optimizing energy usage, efficiency initiatives reduce costs, enhance business and industrial competitiveness, and foster energy equity.”*



Commissioner Abou-Zeid also addressed the significant problem of transmission losses, noting that energy losses in the electricity transmission and distribution sectors in many African countries range between 20% to 40%, compared to the global average of around 10%. Studies suggest that adopting regional efficiency market transformation programs targeting six electrical appliances and equipment could save between 5% to 30% of energy by 2040. *“These savings could modernize energy services for a significant portion of the population and significantly contribute to carbon reduction efforts”*, she said. Commissioner Abou-Zeid also noted that efficiency measures can be applied not only to electricity but evoked *“the significant potential for energy savings in various sectors, including agriculture, transport, buildings, power, and industry”*.

Additionally, Commissioner Abou-Zeid emphasized the need to communicate the importance of energy efficiency in a way that resonates with regular citizens, particularly those without access to energy. *“It is crucial that we move beyond technical jargon and explain the benefits of energy efficiency in everyday language. We need to make it clear how these measures can improve daily lives and foster development, even for those who currently lack access to energy”*, she stressed. She further added that *“Africa must take practical steps to embrace energy efficiency measures while ensuring that access progresses at scale, especially as the continent is at an early stage of industrialization*. This dual approach ensures that while building infrastructure and expanding industries, energy efficiency principles are integrated to support sustainable growth. She highlighted the critical role of energy efficiency in achieving sustainable development goals. *“Energy efficiency is not just a technical issue; it is a catalyst for economic growth, job creation, and environmental protection. Our commitment to energy efficiency is a commitment to our future,”* she stated.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid also took this opportunity to express gratitude towards the Danish government, the Sweden International Cooperation Agency (SDIA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), UNEP’s United for Efficiency, the European Union, and other partners for their continued contribution to Africa’s energy programs. These partnerships are crucial in supporting efforts to establish key frameworks such as the African Single Energy Market (AfSEM), the Continental Power Master Plan (CMP), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and the African Energy Efficiency Strategy.



Speaking at a high-level lunch hosted by Kenya’s Minister of Energy, Davis Chirchir, Commissioner Abou-Zeid emphasized the priority of electricity access. She discussed the significant benefits of establishing the African Single Electricity Market (AfSEM), noting that the larger integrated market space will facilitate the sharing of electricity resources among countries, allowing surplus power from one region to be exported to areas experiencing shortages. She said: *“While harmonizing policies across the continent is a challenging task, the successful establishment of AfSEM will ensure the continent produces enough energy for its own consumption and, eventually, surplus to export”*.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid also highlighted Africa's rapid adoption of technology, stating that the continent is the fastest digitalising region of the world. She mentioned that the African Union is currently developing its Continental AI Strategy, underscoring the potential to leverage AI and digital technologies to increase energy efficiency and productivity.

Finally, she addressed the need to break down silos, advocating for collaborative efforts across sectors to maximize output. *“By working together, rather than in isolation, we can achieve greater efficiency and make significant strides toward our collective energy goals”*, she concluded.

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