T7 Task Force Climate and Environment

POLICY BRIEF

ACCELERATING RENEWABLE ENERGY DEPLOYMENT FOR ENERGY AND NATURE SECURITY

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Abstract

The current crisis in Eastern Europe highlights, more than ever, the need for a clear pathway for accelerating the renewable energy transition to address the twin challenges of energy security and climate change. However, the deployment of renewables is often slowed down by planning processes that do not sufficiently account for biodiversity, agricultural, and social impacts from the very outset. Proactively identifying preferential areas for renewable energy deployment will help accelerate the required buildout while reducing negative impacts. Identifying these higher benefit, lower risk areas requires integrating ecological and socio-cultural values into planning and procurement processes. G7 countries should proactively identify *preferential areas for renewable energy siting* within their own territories, guided by the latest climate and biodiversity science. Additionally, G7 countries should call upon bilateral and multilateral development finance institutions to ensure that their financing and technical assistance likewise supports all countries to undertake integrated spatial planning assessments to define preferential areas to harness renewable energy sources for the production of electricity, while ensuring the preservation of natural habitats, agricultural production, and addressing the interests of local communities.

Challenge

The current crisis in Eastern Europe highlights, more than ever, the need for a clear pathway for accelerating renewables for energy security concerns, in addition to addressing climate concerns. However, the deployment of renewables is often slowed down by planning processes that do not sufficiently account for biodiversity, agricultural, and social impacts from the very outset. Proactively identifying preferential areas for renewable energy deployment will accelerate the required buildout. Identifying these higher benefit, lower risk areas requires integrating ecological and socio-cultural values into planning and procurement processes. This helps avoid project conflicts, delays, and higher costs so deployment can go faster. There is an abundance of these areas—we can have a rapid renewable energy buildout AND safeguard nature and community interests. But this will not happen on its own given current projections under business-as-usual. We must therefore put in place the right framework conditions, using latest science, to inform faster, large-scale and nature- and agriculture-friendly roll-out of renewable energies across the world.

Proposals

Building on last year's G7 commitment to action for net-zero power, we urge G7 members to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy to achieve net-zero power while simultaneously protecting natural ecosystems and agricultural production. G7 countries should proactively identify *preferential areas for renewable energy siting* within their own territories, guided by the latest climate and biodiversity science. Additionally, G7 countries should call upon bilateral and multilateral development finance institutions to ensure that their financing and technical assistance likewise supports all countries to undertake integrated spatial planning assessments to define preferential areas to harness renewable energy sources for the production of electricity, while ensuring the preservation of natural habitats, agricultural production, and addressing the interests of local communities.

Implementation

The elevated energy security concerns stemming from the crisis in Eastern Europe, together with the global climate change threat, demand urgent action by the G7 countries. The global transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy solutions may be accelerated by the actions of the G7 countries, which together account for nearly 40% of the global economy, 30% of global energy demand, and 25% of energy-related carbon-dioxide emissions (CO_2).[1] While renewable energy targets among G7 countries call for achieving net-zero by 2050, and halving CO2 emissions by 2030[2], it is not clear that there are clear pathways to achieve these targets without causing significant impacts to nature or local communities.

To effectively map and plan for the accelerated deployment of low impact renewables, the G7 should set an example for the rest of the world by calling for, and developing for each Member State, sensitivity maps and implementation plans that identify a range of low to high biodiversity and social impact areas that may

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be suitable for renewable energy siting. To implement this strategy, the G7 may coordinate globally with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)[3] which currently manages critical global renewable resource data[4] as well as many country-specific details. At a regional level, the European Commission in its proposed REPowerEU is considering measures to accelerated renewable energy deployment by enabling faster project permitting that will be supported by national plans that clearly identify suitable 'go-to' areas.[5] Development of vital planning instruments may consider country-specific platforms such as Site Renewable Right[6] and other available geospatial mapping tools.[7] Finally, the G7 should seek the support of multi-lateral development organizations including the United Nations[8] and the World Bank[9] to support these efforts financially and to further encourage the rest of the world to pursue a similar strategy.

Endnotes

[1] https://www.g7uk.org/what-is-the-g7/
[2] https://www.g7uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Summary-of-Carbis-Bay-G7-Summit-Communique-PDF-248KB-2-pages-.pdf
[3] https://www.irena.org/
[4] https://www.irena.org/remap
[5] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A108%3AFIN
[6] https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=93588641abed4a6eba5e38dbb5ce006a&extent=-14590304.7423%2C2371251.1944%2C-7154510.6308%2C6999054.6349%2C102100
[7] https://mapre.lbl.gov/
[8] https://un-energy.org/
[9] https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/energy

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About the Authors

Andrew Deutz – The Nature Conservancy

Dr. Andrew Deutz is the Director of Global Policy, Institutions and Conservation Finance at The Nature Conservancy. He is an expert in international environmental law, policy and diplomacy. He directs the TNC's global policy work spanning the areas of biodiversity, sustainable development and conservation finance, as well as overseeing relationships with international organizations, multilateral development banks and foreign aid agencies.

Prior to joining TNC, he served in several leadership roles with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and has also served as the acting Lead Forest Negotiator for the US State Department and as Forest Policy Advisor to the World Bank. He holds a doctorate in International Environmental Law from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

Bruce McKenney – The Nature Conservancy

Bruce McKenney has worked for more than 25 years at the intersection of environmental, climate and development challenges. As Global Director for Renewable Energy at The Nature Conservancy, he leads a strategy to accelerate the transition to renewable energy for a clean, green and equitable energy future. In his previous role at The Nature Conservancy, Bruce led the Development by Design global program, reducing biodiversity impacts of the energy and infrastructure sectors and contributing to the conservation of millions of hectares of lands and waters around the world.

Prior to joining TNC in 2006, Bruce worked as a Senior Associate at Hardner & Gullison, an Associate at Industrial Economics and as Director for Natural Resources and Environment at the Cambodia Development Resource Institute. He has served as a member of the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council and has been a Sawhill Global Leadership Fellow. Bruce holds a bachelor's degree with honors in political science from Brown University and a master's degree in public policy from Harvard University.

Mark Lambrides – The Nature Conservancy

Mark Lambrides has more than 30 years of experience working to drive the transition to clean renewable energy solutions around the world. At The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Mark leads the organization's efforts to build partnerships and influence change leading to climate mitigation through an accelerated renewable energy transition. He works closely with TNC's

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international programs in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America to help develop and implement efforts to deploy renewables that bring climate, conservation and community benefits while avoiding significant biodiversity and social impacts.

Mark has a long history of working with international finance and policy institutions, where he designed multi-stakeholder initiatives in the renewable energy and energy efficiency arena. Prior to joining TNC in 2018, he worked at the World Bank, where he managed the preparation and implementation of renewable energy, energy efficiency and grid rehabilitation project investments in Latin America and the Caribbean. Previously he developed and led the Sustainable Energy Division at the Organization of American States (OAS), where he coordinated energy policy and technical assistance initiatives for more than 15 years. He earned a master's degree in international relations from the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of The Johns Hopkins University and has a bachelor's degree in political science and Spanish from Kalamazoo College.

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