

Position paper for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development

French NGOs

A responsible, coherent energy program, active at every cooperation level, is an essential component of sustainable development. The direct links between energy and climate change on the one hand, and between energy and development on the other, require that governments mobilize with the utmost urgency all the means necessary to implement, the policies absolutely necessary for realizing a transition towards a sustainable energy future.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which are the causes of climate change already taking place, result principally from the consumption of fossil fuels (approximately 65% of the total at the global scale, and 80% in industrialized countries). If the current emission trends are not curbed within the next fifteen years, the ever-increasing consequences of climate change, of which we already see the first signs, will be devastating. Governments must immediately develop strong policies for energy efficiency, for the promotion of renewable energy and the limitation of fossil fuel uses in order to halve global emissions (which amounts to a division of emissions by four on average in industrialized countries, and even more in some cases), an absolutely necessary reduction to be reached by the year 2050.

The challenge that needs to be met : everyone must have access to sufficient energy services while not endangering the planet's climate. In industrialized countries, it is possible to maintain, and even to increase, the level of comfort, while considerably diminishing unsustainable energy uses, and to divide GHG emissions by four between now and 2050. For developing countries, energy use is absolutely necessary for their development. It is therefore critical that energy services are supplied using the minimum quantity of primary energy, and that energy production uses technologies that emit the least possible amounts of GHG.

Review of the international community commitments

The international community's commitments up to now are a step in the right direction, and they must be acted upon.

The Rio Conference in 1992 (during which the Climate Convention, ratified by 191 countries, was signed) thoroughly addressed the complexity of the energy/sustainable development links, as well as the ensuing challenges to be met.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, signed in 1997, the northern countries committed to the following: to reduce their GHG emissions by at least 5% (compared to the 1990 levels) during the period 2008-2012; to enhance energy efficiency; research on, and promotion, development and increased use of, new and renewable forms of energy; to gradually eliminate subsidies in all GHG emitting sectors; to operate transfers of ecologically rational technologies, in particular to developing countries; to facilitate public awareness of climate change; and to provide financial resources, including for the transfer of technologies needed by the developing countries.

In 2001, the 9th UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which was dedicated to energy and transport, insisted on the need for increased accessibility to energy, for enhancing energy efficiency for the development, use and dissemination of renewable energy technologies, and of advanced less polluting technologies for the use of fossil fuels. The CSD emphasized that, to this end, it would be absolutely necessary to allocate sufficient supplementary financial resources and that significant investments would be required, to ensure the transfer of ecologically rational technologies, and to develop capacity building.

In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg established a Plan of implementation, which called for actions aiming to:

- ⇒ Improve access to reliable, affordable, economically viable, socially acceptable, and environmentally sound energy services and resources;
- ⇒ Recognize that energy services have positive impacts on poverty eradication and the improvement of quality of life;
- ⇒ Develop and disseminate alternative energy technologies with the aim of giving a greater share of the energy mix to renewable energies, keeping in mind the need to act without delay, so that they make up a higher percentage of the energy supply;
- ⇒ Diversify energy supply by developing advanced, cleaner, more efficient, affordable, and cost effective energy technologies;
- ⇒ Combine a range of energy technologies, including more advanced and cleaner fossil fuel technologies, in order to meet growing needs;
- ⇒ Accelerate the development, dissemination and deployment of affordable and cleaner energy efficiency and energy conservation technologies;
- ⇒ Phase out subsidies in the areas that inhibit sustainable development;
- ⇒ Develop awareness-raising and training programs on sustainable production and consumption patterns, including human health and safety aspects (particularly among youth and the relevant segments, in especially in developed countries), that are effective, transparent, verifiable, non-discriminatory and non-misleading.

Present situation

Global GHG emissions have increased by 20% (mainly in developing countries) since 1990 the Kyoto Protocol reference year, with a rise of + 2.9% since 2000 in the countries committed to the Kyoto Protocol, and a general uncontrolled increase in the transport sector (+25% between 1990 and 2004 in the rich countries committed to the Kyoto Protocol). Energy consumption is also rising, although energy consumption can vary by a factor of 10 on average between countries, and more than two billion inhabitants still have no access to electricity.

This shows that the actions undertaken are quite insufficient compared to what is required considering the present urgency, investments and the necessary coordination being obviously insufficient to deal with the present challenges.

Energy development consists in implementing, immediately and in a rigorous fashion, policies which rely on an **«energy intelligence » concept**, combining the following parameters :

- ⇒ **energy sobriety**: establishing a clear priority for basic energy services; eliminate the huge wastes in the industrialized countries, and avoiding the emergence of superfluous energy uses in Northern as well as Southern countries;
- ⇒ **energy efficiency**: generalisation of efficient appliances for all uses to which inefficient appliances can be substituted ; using the appropriate type of energy for a particular use (light, heat, mechanical); the systematic recovery of fatal heat production in order to substantially increase efficiency; avoiding oversized supply networks ; enabling local management;
- ⇒ **energy de-carbonization**, by increased use of renewable energies.

The situation is extremely worrisome for disadvantaged populations (in developing countries and poor populations in industrialized countries) for social and economic reasons (quantitative aspects), and also for ecological reasons (qualitative aspects). This leads to the following vicious circles :

- ⇒ many energy sources are readily available through the removal of local vegetation (biomass) : this contributes to resource depletion and to environment degradation, and therefore leads to increased poverty;
- ⇒ "modern" energy sources (such as electricity, coal, gas, oil products, etc.) governed by market mechanisms and which are used inefficiently lead to disproportionate energy service costs compared to the resources available for poor populations, thus constituting another obstacle to their development.

Recommendations and demands for commitments

The European Council of March 8-9, 2007, agreed upon an objective for the European Union to save 20% of its energy consumption between now and 2020, through energy efficiency measure in priority sectors such as transport, housing or street lighting. It also confirmed the obligatory objective of a share of 20% renewable energy in the total energy consumption of the European Union between now and 2020.

- ▶ To reach a drastically reduced GHG emission level by 2100, to refrain from consuming of fossil and fissile fuels, while ensuring a level of activity and comfort that is satisfactory for all., requires to switch very rapidly to the **energy efficiency and sobriety measures which represent enormous saving potentials** and to ensure the rapid development of renewable energies
- ▶ The development of **renewable energies and energy efficiency** brings benefits in terms of employment, competitiveness, energy supply security and technological lead for future markets : these factors should be taken into account in the countries currently implementing their energy system.
- ▶ The issues of **energy storage** (particularly in transport), of adapting the supply to the load curve (for electricity) and of energy supply to urban centers are very sensitive and must be subjected to thorough local expertise. Biomass and heating networks must be used as much as possible. It is also necessary to reinforce research in these areas (hydrogen, batteries, power cuts, etc.).
- ▶ **Carbon capture and storage from fossil fuels** needs more research. The sustainability of the process must be demonstrated. It could be considered only if it could facilitate this transition towards a non-polluting energy future. It does not in any way constitute a miracle solution that would allow further uncontrolled growth of energy consumptions that industrialized societies have known until now. Moreover, political focus and public financing for the development of this technology must be additional to those allocated to renewable energies and energy efficiency.
- ▶ **Local authorities** are the institutions that are closest to citizens, where consultation and participation in decision-making can take place. Therefore they have a leading role in the implementation of innovative energy and energy efficiency policies in all their relevant competence areas : building, transport, mobility, territorial infrastructure and planning.
- ▶ **Energy sobriety** could be promoted by: 1) a progressive rise in energy prices: in certain countries, energy bills with increasing prices according to consumption has led to the user's involvement in controlling their consumption (Italy and Laos, for example); 2) by individual GHG emission right allocations with right exchanges or penalties for excess. Such a system would have to be designed, however, in such a way that it does not penalize poor populations: the revenue from the penalties could, for example, feed a "carbon fund" aimed at increasing energy efficiency and upgrading housing for the poor as well as for public transport.
- ▶ The involvement of all citizens and all actors (industries, local authorities) is critical to in order that the energy policies responding to the stakes of sustainable development might be put in place efficiently, it is crucial to mobilize all citizens, along with the ensemble of actors concerned (collectivities, industries, etc...). Large-scale **public awareness and training programs**, reaching everyone, must be organized. These programs must cover the phenomena and their consequences at the global and local levels, as well as the measure to be implement at all levels: individual, territorial, national and international. Because of **the environmental consequences of publicity** (over-consumption, pollution, incentive to non-ecological behaviours), advertisements for the most polluting or energy-consuming products must be tightly restricted: the advertising must clearly indicate the polluting character, energy consumption and/or GHG emissions of the product. It is necessary to prohibit the abusive use of the ecological argument ("greenwashing") that deceives the consumer on the products and goes against incentives to behave and consume in a more responsible manner.

For developed countries, we call for the following main measures:

- ⇒ energy efficiency in all sectors, and allocation the necessary financial resources;
- ⇒ energy savings, and in France, especially in the housing and transportation sectors;
- ⇒ energy sobriety: rationalization of energy needs (waste reduction and encouragement of viable consumption modes);
- ⇒ massive increases in the financing specifically related to R&D on renewable energies (except hydraulic) to lower their costs and increase their output;
- ⇒ advertising: limit (even prohibit) advertising for devices that emit large amounts of GHG. Implement labels showing the energy consumption and/or the quantity of GHG emitted by unit consumption;
- ⇒ users consultation and participation in the development and decision-making processes on energy policies via citizen institutions, with appropriate means;
- ⇒ implement education programs for the public and all actors concerned, on the national and global stakes of energy consumption (climate change, sustainable development).

For the development of poor populations (developing countries and poor populations in developed countries), we call for the following main measures:

- ⇒ support access to basic energy services in developing countries;
- ⇒ eliminate financing by international financial institutions in all sectors GHG emitting (especially fossil energies in particular), to the benefit of energy efficiency and renewable energy;
- ⇒ support (including financially) the developing countries currently installing new energy supply infrastructures so that they use sustainable, clean, modern and least GHG-emitting technologies;
- ⇒ support energy production with local and renewable means using their natural resources. For uses which cannot be immediately supplied by these energies, it will be necessary to use classical energies in a cleaner and more sustainable fashion;
- ⇒ the developing countries so that they use the most effective technologies available (compact fluorescent lamps, very low-consuming household electrical appliances...), abolish the trade in absolute devices.

In the last fifteen years, the international community has undertaken specific commitments in matters of energy and sustainable development; nevertheless, the means which have been implemented up to now will not allow to fulfill these commitments, although the lives of billions of people depend upon it.

We must, with the utmost urgency, start a transition process to prepare an energy future that preserves the climate of the planet while ensuring sufficient energy for everyone. No large-scale policy, has been implemented, including the strategies in terms of employment, energy consumption and energy supply security.

However, climate change is already happening, and we are committed to a process of modification that will lead to major consequences, especially for the populations who are least responsible. The inaction of international and national institutions is unacceptable. These institutions must, in close connection with all the actors concerned, address the environmental and developmental challenges without any further delays.

French NGO's: Friends of the Earth-France, Association 4D (Documents and debates for sustainable development), GRET (a solidarity and international cooperation association), HELIO International, Negawatt, RAC -France (Climate Action Network- France)