

Post-COVID-19 recovery must prioritise **sustainability**

Nations across the world are currently facing two major challenges: the current global pandemic COVID-19 and the ongoing climate crisis.

While fighting the global pandemic has prompted rapid action all over the world, the fight against the climate crisis – despite increasing alarm calls and clear commitments – is still slow to unfold. Although climate change is progressing more incrementally than the pandemic, if it's not addressed with urgency, it will result in far more devastating consequences.

Nations, regions and cities around the world are rightly focusing on the immediate threat of COVID-19, safeguarding their people, and laying the foundations for economic recovery. Renewable recovery bears a historic opportunity to strengthen economies while putting the world on a more sustainable growth path, making societies more resilient and protecting the environment.

Instead of applying the remedies of past crises, where short-term fixes such as rolling back of emission standards or providing economic stimulus for fossil-fuel intensive industries often resulted in adverse environmental impacts, policy makers around the world should aim to live up to the global Sustainable Development Goals.

Any policy designed over the coming weeks and months needs to foster sustainable over unsustainable business models and behaviours. Renewable energies and wind energy at its core can play a fast, cost-efficient and labour-intensive role in recovery.

In this regard, the energy sector is of two-fold importance. It's one of the single largest emitters of carbon dioxide emissions as well as other air pollutants and is at the same time indispensable for relieving the impacts of the global pandemic.

While there has been considerable progress in decarbonizing the supply of electricity, other sectors such as transportation, industry and buildings are still lagging behind.

The consensus on the need to decarbonize our energy offers an unprecedented contribution to jumpstart economies and to transition to more sustainable

economic models. This can lead to the creation of new jobs, overcoming recessions while combatting the climate crisis.

We are fully aware that any political decisions are dependent on ensuring the safety of all citizens, but the preparation of these policies can start today. They should include:

- An acceleration of plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the target to achieve net-zero emissions
- A drastic reduction of air pollution and environmental degradation
- Increased renewable energy-build-out plans including related infrastructure upgrades
- Incentivizing private sector investment in low carbon sectors and sustainable industries including the electrification of transport, industry and buildings
- The re-design of energy markets to enable flexible power supply and demand
- Reduced administrative barriers against sustainable solutions such as renewable energy and electrification
- The phase-out of direct and indirect fossil fuel subsidies and the introduction of pricing mechanisms that reflect the true economic, social, environmental and health costs
- Increased sustainability requirements catalysing the shift towards a circular economy
- Rejection of proposals to dilute or revoke legislation for environmental protection
- Re-skilling programs for relevant skills such as digital, cyber security and renewable O & M

Benefits will by far exceed investments. Today, we have the opportunity to take decisions that will enable a stronger, more sustainable recovery than that of the 2008 financial crisis, and we can achieve this by investing in sustainable, and renewable technologies. This moment, however, is fleeting. To make an impact, we must act now. Let's do it.