

## **Providing clean energy for migrants and vulnerable groups on agenda of event at the Vienna Energy Forum**

VIENNA, 9 May 2017 - New and innovative mechanisms that can help meet the energy needs of migrants, refugees, and vulnerable groups on a sustainable basis and ensure that they are able to sustain their daily lives and prepare for a better future were the topic of a discussion in Vienna today at the Vienna Energy Forum.

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Estimates by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre suggest that by the end of 2015 over 65 million people were forcibly displaced globally, including over 40 million were internally displaced due to conflict and violence, and over 21 million refugees, numbers not seen since the Second World War.

Participants noted that current global challenges such as climate change, human security, political instabilities and economic inequalities have further contributed to the large migration of vulnerable communities.

The refugee crisis remains global and it is evident that current energy systems often used in migrants' countries of origin as well as in temporary or transit camps and settlements are inefficient, costly and mostly fossil-fuel based. While these complexities and challenges are daunting, the integration and settlement of migrants in a new environment pose a huge challenge to the international community. However, the migration crisis also presents an opportunity to provide integrated energy services and related skills to migrants in an effective, low carbon, and cost-efficient manner that would empower them to maintain a better quality of life.

Speaking at the event, Michael Spindelegger, Director General, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), called for stronger international cooperation in the area of migration policies. He said that ICMPD works in partnership with governments, research institutes, international organizations, intergovernmental institutions and civil society in order to address the complexities of migration challenges. He emphasised the vital role of the private sector saying that it should be actively involved in identifying innovative energy solutions.

Daniel Werner, Head of the EU Energy Initiative Partnership Dialogue Facility (EUEI PDF) called for a closer engagement with the private sector, civil society and financial institutions to address the matter, and noted the need for humanitarian aid and development cooperation institutions joining forces in order to promote sustainable energy in migration contexts.

“Exploring the link between energy and migration is of particular importance to the EU Member States; this is highlighted by the Council of the European Union which acknowledges that lack of or uneven access to energy is part of the root causes of irregular migration. As part of its innovation function, the EUEI PDF has developed an analytical matrix to determine the role of energy on migration to structure the debate between stakeholders” said Werner.

Paul Quigley, Senior Energy Officer at UNHCR advocated to link humanitarian and development efforts early on in a crisis to create more sustainable responses by together ensuring refugees are incorporated into national development plans. He pointed out the importance of integrated energy programmes which benefit local populations while also empowering refugees to become consumers and entrepreneurs, strengthening self-reliance and resilience and adding value to local economies.

Sarah Rosenberg-Jansen, Head of Humanitarian Energy, Practical Action, made a case for stronger partnerships and reflected on how organizations such as the ones represented at the event can create synergies and deliver more effective results. Above all, she referred to concrete actions on the ground as interventions should go beyond tackling the issues theoretically but rather lead to tangible real-life solutions.

Tanja Dedovic, Labour Mobility and Human Development Coordinator at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) spoke of IOM's systematic and comprehensive engagement on Migration environment and climate change and highlighted the role of diaspora communities in supporting renewable energy solutions allowing for sustainable economic development and job creation in communities of origin. Following the UN Roadmap towards Climate neutrality by 2020 IOM takes also care of the energy needs of migrants and refugees when they are in transit in a sustainable and environmental friendly manner by providing renewable energy solutions for electricity clean water provision.

The moderator, Gerardo Pataconi, Officer-in-Charge of UNIDO agri-business development department, emphasized the role of technological innovation, the importance of access to energy and its link to productive activities to support people in their home countries and offering them livelihood and employment options to stay instead of migrating, while also assisting those in transit and people settling in their destination countries. He also referred to the essential role of partnerships and the need to bring together the expertise of different organizations and institutions, such as the ones represented on the panel, to develop concrete projects on the ground.

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