TRIPLING RENEWABLES: POWERING CLIMATE ACTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a summary of the Tripling Renewables: Powering Climate Action Across Sectors policy brief, published in May 2025.

The first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement, concluded in 2023, calls for tripling global renewable energy capacity by 2030 to stay on track for the 1.5°C goal. This policy brief, prepared to support the next generation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs 3.0), makes the case for embedding renewable energy across sectors, not just as a mitigation tool, but as a systemic enabler of resilience, development, and human wellbeing.

Renewables now dominate new power generation globally, accounting for 86% of new capacity in 2023. Their cost-competitiveness and scalability position them as a foundation for energy transitions aligned with climate goals. But deployment is concentrated. Three geographies - China, Europe, and the United States, account for most new capacity, while Africa accounted for just 0.5% in 2023. Concentration is also sectoral, with power dominating deployment.

More than 65% of countries already include specific renewable energy targets in their NDCs, projecting 5.4 terawatts of capacity by 2030. While this is important, current NDCs would only deliver about half the renewable capacity needed to meet the Global Stocktake tripling goal. There is also a significant misalignment between renewable energy targets in national energy plans and NDCs, with the former being more ambitious. Moreover, most NDCs focus only on power generation and overlook key systems like food, water, and health.

NDC PARTNERSHIP

Unlocking the systemic potential of renewables involves their integration across systems that are essential for development and most vulnerable to climate change. Agrifood systems account for 30% of global energy use but remain heavily fossil-fuel dependent. Water systems, currently accounting for 4% of energy use, are becoming more energy-intensive due to desalination and pumping needs. Health services, especially in low-income settings, are constrained by unreliable electricity access, with nearly 1 billion people served by facilities lacking stable power.

Cross-sectoral deployment of renewables is technically feasible, and can align climate action with development needs, guide investment, and support broader resilience. From solar-powered irrigation to renewable cold chains for vaccines, clean energy can cut emissions, build resilience, and improve lives in tandem. The next generation of NDCs must move beyond headline targets to become actionable frameworks for systemic change. Country demand is already shifting in this direction: over one-third of energy-related support requests to the NDC Partnership now relate to agriculture, transport, and water.

To meet the tripling goal, NDCs must go beyond ambition and become practical tools for coordination, finance, and implementation. Policy makers may consider:

- Aligning targets across climate, energy, and development plans. A coherent approach across national energy plans, sector strategies, and NDCs ensures credibility and policy traction.
- Expanding renewable integration beyond the power sector. NDCs should explicitly chart pathways for renewables in food systems, health services, water access, among others.
- Making cross-ministerial collaboration the norm. Renewable energy should be mainstreamed into agriculture, water, industry, and finance planning, not just energy ministries.
- Developing sector-specific roadmaps to guide implementation. These roadmaps can align stakeholders, clarify investment needs, and build robust project pipelines.
- Mobilizing local governments and communities. Subnational actors are critical for tailoring solutions and ensuring energy access reaches vulnerable populations.
- Supporting innovation ecosystems that adapt solutions to local contexts. Many breakthrough applications emerge from communities and small enterprises. Enabling their scale-up through finance and policy backing is key to inclusive progress.

The world has the technologies, finance, and knowledge to triple renewables by 2030. The next wave of NDCs is a chance to deploy them where they matter most: across systems that sustain populations and economies. The NDC Partnership's NDC 3.0 Navigator and related tools offer practical guidance to help countries embed renewables across sectors, align targets, and translate ambition into implementation. This is not only a climate goal, but also a development and resilience priority.

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NDC PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT UNIT

WASHINGTON, DC, USA OFFICE

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE
10 G Street NE Suite 800
Washington, DC 20002, USA

T: +1 (202) 729-7600
E: supportunit@ndcpartnership.org

BONN, GERMANY OFFICE

UNFCCC, UNOPS
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn, Germany

T: +49 (228) 815-1000
E: supportunit@ndcpartnership.org