



PRESS RELEASE

37th Cairo Climate Talks

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"Energy Efficiency: The Key to a Sustainable, Climate-Friendly Economy?"

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Compared to renewable energy, energy efficiency creates more jobs here, is easier and faster to implement, requires less investment in many cases and saves money and precious resources, but it doesn't make nearly as many headlines.

Energy efficiency may not be as flashy as a field of solar panels gleaming in the sun and delivering clean energy, but until now renewable energy still accounts for less than 1 percent of Egypt's energy mix. Small changes to our habits at home and work are much likely to have an immediate impact on our energy consumption and our bills as Egypt phases out electricity subsidies over the next five years. Energy efficiency applies not only to electricity but is essential to conserving all fuels, renewable or otherwise.

"The cheapest source of energy is the one we don't use," Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Cairo H.E. Julius Georg Luy opened the [Cairo Climate Talks](#) panel discussion at the German Science Centre in Zamalek Monday evening.

"Fading out subsidies for energy and fuel will be reflected in higher electricity bills that become noticeably more expensive for both private households and business," the ambassador said. "But only now, that energy is approaching its natural market price, energy is finally attributed its real value. We are starting to feel that energy is no longer free of charge. We will soon have to realize that dressing to the weather might be more cost-effective than cooling down buildings to less than 20 °C."

The energy sector has been identified as the dominant contributor to climate change, responsible for one third of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. Improving energy efficiency and using renewable energy sources together will play a critical role in abating global warming.

Ranking among the most energy intensive economies in the MENA region, there is room for improvements in energy efficiency in Egypt. Energy-intensive industries account for 1 percent of factories here but are consuming 65 percent of the electricity, said H.E. Minister of Environment Dr. Khaled Fahmy in his opening remarks.

The government is establishing energy efficiency units within each ministry as Egypt prepares its contribution to the global agreement on climate change reached in Paris in December.

“In the Egyptian INDC plan one of the major cornerstones in addressing greenhouse gas emissions is energy efficiency [...] this is where we think we have a big opportunity, a golden opportunity to meet greenhouse gas targets through energy efficiency in all sectors especially in industry,” H.E. the Minister said.

Fahmy also sees a role for NGOs and the population to push the government toward energy efficiency.

“[Germany’s energy transition] was started by NGOs that made awareness and pressured the government; that’s how you do it in a democratic system. So the government has a role but the people motivate the government and they motivate the Parliament. It’s a democratic system, this is where we are headed,” he said.

“Over the last five years, Egypt is facing a very big crisis in terms of energy, not only that which we are using but the availability itself is a big problem for industry,” said Dr. Ali Abo Sena, Director, Egypt National Cleaner Production Centre, Ministry of Industry and Foreign Trade. “The short-term strategy is for the government to phase out electricity subsidies, which will encourage industry to go further toward energy efficiency. It is estimated that 20 percent of energy used by industry could be reduced by energy efficiency alone.”

Dr. Yasser Sherif, Managing Director Environics, said, we need to not only save energy but to reevaluate why we are using it in the first place.

“Producing more output with less input is fine. But we need to also ask the question do we actually need this output and for whom? Sometimes we produce things we don’t need, like more cars. We may be doing it in an efficient way, but we need to question whether we need it at all.”

Buildings are wasting a tremendous amount of energy, argued panelist Dr. Kurt Wiesegart, Team Leader at MED ENEC – Energy Efficiency in the Construction Sector in the Mediterranean. Enforcing existing laws would lower energy consumption enough so that the country could meet its own energy needs without a crisis.

“Egypt has energy efficiency building codes since 2005, but they are not mandatory. Egypt has an energy saving law, which is still not in place,” Wiesegart said. “The first step has to be done by the government ... to provide the rules, to provide the environment and then if the commitment is there you go.”

Wiesegart also suggests one way we can conserve water and electricity at home: reroute your washing machine so the water that comes out after the wash is used flush the toilet. We don’t need drinking quality water to flush the toilet, he stresses.

“If you start tomorrow and convince your friends, I made a rough calculation, it depends on your willingness but we save millions of tons of water and thousands of kilowatts of electricity that will not be used for pumping,” he said.

“We are always blaming others. We are -- same as the government -- in charge, and we have a certain responsibility for our future and for our kids and grandkids.”

Dr. Ibrahim Yassin, Energy Efficiency Project Manager at UNDP, suggested one simple change that could have a big impact: “Don’t use appliances on standby, switch things like TVs off from their source and it will save you 15 percent of your consumption.”

Background Information:

The Cairo Climate Talks are conceived, organized and hosted as a cooperation between the German Embassy in Cairo, the Egyptian Ministry of Environment, the German Science Center (DWZ), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). For more information, please visit our [website](#) or contact press@cairoclimatetalks.net.

Energy Saver tips

- Install a programmable thermostat to lower utility bills and manage your heating and cooling systems efficiently.
- Turn things off when you are not in the room such as lights, TVs, ACs, entertainment systems, and your computer and monitor.
- Saving water also means saving energy
- Plug home electronics into power strips; turn the power strips off when the equipment is not in use -- TVs and DVDs in standby mode still use several watts of power.
- Lower the thermostat on your water heater.
- Take short showers instead of baths and use low-flow showerheads for additional energy savings.
- Wash only full loads of dishes and clothes.
- Check to see that windows and doors are closed when heating or cooling your home.
- Drive sensibly; aggressive driving such as speeding, and rapid acceleration and braking, wastes fuel.
- Look for appliances with energy efficient ratings