

Background and roundtable objectives

The Namibia Energy Roundtable, hosted by the World Economic Forum in collaboration with the Namibian Presidency, convened key global and regional stakeholders from the energy landscape to discuss Namibia's energy transition priorities and its green hydrogen plans. With opening remarks from the President of Namibia, H.E. Dr. Hage G. Geingob, the meeting brought together high-level representation from Namibian government, international energy transition experts from academia and civil society, as well as senior executives from regional and global companies.

Namibia's energy transition roadmap and priorities

The President of Namibia presented his vision for an energy transition in Namibia which unites economic development and climate neutrality goals. With its *Action Plan Towards Economic Recovery and Inclusive Growth*, Namibia is looking to provide growth stimuli to its economic sectors, responding to socioeconomic challenges such as income inequality, as well as exploring green growth pathways for Namibia, with the aim to become the first carbon-neutral African nation.

As part of these ambitious plans, the country is looking to implement national green hydrogen and green ammonia strategies, while harnessing its abundant renewable energy resources (such as solar, wind and hydro) for renewable power production for domestic use and regionally through the Southern Africa power pool. The country is currently planning a large-scale green hydrogen project in the South of the country, which could become a potentially transformational project in the green hydrogen landscape and on the African continent. The production of ammonia and synthetic fuels in the region could contribute to efforts to decarbonize hard-to-abate sectors both in Africa and abroad.
As a small economy, which is heavily affected by climate change and its destructive consequences, in particular in its agricultural sector, the President stressed the country's commitment to tackle climate change for the sake of its citizens and the global community.

In the World Economic Forum's Energy Transition Index (ETI), which benchmarks progress with the global energy transition, Namibia is currently ranked 59 out of 115 countries, and is ranked second-highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. Namibia's ETI score has increased by 3 points between 2012 and 2021 and there has been significant improvement in their Energy System Performance.

Key discussion take-aways

The country's ambitions to position itself as a green energy hub were very positively received by the roundtable community, and the large opportunities around adopting low-carbon technologies and using domestic renewable resources for growth and development, were stressed by several participants. The importance and signal effects of such commitments from governments, supported by long-term roadmaps and robust policy frameworks, were underlined by the community, and were seen as a key contribution to strengthening the voice of African countries in the global energy transition debate.

A few key themes for enabling a successful transition in Namibia emerged during the discussion.

First, the importance and the value of regional collaboration and integration. Namibia has close historic, economic, and cultural ties with neighboring countries. There are large opportunities to collaborate regionally around the energy transition and renewable energy projects, in order to create regional economic value, shared prosperity and win-win situations. Collaborations around renewable and infrastructure projects could unlock economies of scale, facilitate access to capital donors and lower the cost of capital. Regional export and technology import (e.g. electrolyzers) opportunities should not only be searched abroad, but also within the African continent, which is greatly facilitated by the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

Secondly, regional collaboration will also be key to build out the necessary infrastructure around these energy transition plans – in particular power transmission power lines, but also hydrogen transport infrastructure and road

infrastructure. Partnerships around the development of infrastructure will be key to increase interconnectivity between countries, and to avoid duplication.

Thirdly, the financial sector and multilateral agencies will have a key role to play in supporting Namibia's energy transition: Participants highlighted the need to mobilize green finance from a variety of parties, including multilateral agencies, in particular to support pre-feasibility studies and increase bankability and capital affordability. Public-private partnerships, which may be international as well as regional, will also be crucial in this context. Conducting proper project due diligence, taking into account the local context before realising any projects, were highlighted as crucial.

Additionally, Namibia can collaborate with international partners on research and infrastructure and technology development. The upcoming COP26 summit can be a stage for Namibia to articulate its needs for funding as well as to seek further partnerships.

Lastly, it was recommended not to overlook the considerable opportunities around hydrogen and renewables on a smaller scale, at the community and SME level, as well as for electricity access. Namibia plans to provide universal access across the country by 2030 and to generate 75% of this power from renewable energy sources. Because of the low population density of Namibia, providing conventional grid access is not a viable option in some regions. Decentralized renewable solutions like mini grids consisting of solar power generation backed up with batteries and small-scale hydrogen storage systems can provide reliable and affordable access to electricity in these circumstances. Solar pumps can also be a key solution, which can be used to provide water for households and agriculture as well as for electricity generation. The importance of using the full toolbox of technology solutions was mentioned as important to target a sustainable and secure energy mix. For projects on all scales, including local suppliers and training local technicians in the maintenance, are key for the long-term sustainability of these systems, and can create a significant number of jobs at a local level.

Conclusion and next steps

Namibia has recognized the opportunity to align its development and growth trajectory with its energy transition goals. There is a unique opportunity for Namibia and other countries in the region to adopt low carbon technologies and use domestic renewable resources to enable growth, prosperity and inclusive access to energy.

Regional collaboration and integration will be key to successfully develop and scale renewable technologies in the region, and to attract foreign investments. By jointly building out transport and transmission infrastructure, and engaging in both regional as well as international trade, the region can become an energy hub for renewable energy, green hydrogen and fuels.

Namibia has bold ambitions to establish itself as a leading country in the global energy transition. With its abundant renewable resources, its committed leadership and stable policy regime, it meets the requirements to realize these ambitions, and to seize the opportunities around job creation, energy access and inclusive growth that the energy transition offers.

The Energy, Materials & Infrastructure platform at the World Economic Forum stands ready to support the green energy transition in Namibia and the region and will continue to provide its multi-stakeholder platform to foster regional dialogue and mobilize collaborative action.

Related initiatives at the World Economic Forum:

- Accelerating Clean Hydrogen: For more information, click here or contact Noam.Boussidan@weforum.org.
- Mobilizing Investment for Clean Energy in Emerging Economies: For more information, click here or contact Justine.Roche@weforum.org.
- Country Transitions and Benchmarking: For more information, click here or contact Dominique.Hischier@weforum.org or HarshVijay.Singh@weforum.org.