

Civil Society for swift approval of revised energy policy

Country Director for Community Energy Malawi Edgar Bayani and National Coordinator for Civil Society Network on Climate Change (CISONECC) Julius Ng'oma says they are concerned with the delay in the approval of the revised energy policy.

Malawi is currently using an outdated energy policy which was formulated in 2003. The revision of the old policy was necessitated because the old one had various gaps.

The previous policy was being driven by the vision 2020 and Millennium Development goals. However the development agenda has moved on and the MDG's have given way to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) a thing which has compelled Malawi to put energy as a high priority area.

Several stakeholders including the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services (DCCM'S), Christian Aid (CA) and Centre for Environmental Policy (CEPA) have been in the forefront pushing for approval as soon as possible.

The delay to have a revised policy in place has not gone down well with civil Society on Climate Change (CISONECC) and Community Energy Malawi who argue that the dilly dallying in the approval of the revised policy paralyses progress not only in the energy sector but in other energy dependent sectors as well.

"As a stakeholder we understand that the policy is at Ministerial level and what is remaining is for it to be taken to cabinet because 2003 policy has expired. We hope that we should have this policy in place soon," says Bayani.

Bayani further argues that without a revised and up to date policy in place it is difficult to mobilise resources and practitioners just do guess work because they do not have an updated guiding tool.

"If we have this policy in place it will send a signal of Malawi's aspirations because currently there are many challenges facing the energy sector," adds Bayani.

On his part Ng'oma hints that the delay in having the energy policy affects all sectors of the economy because energy is key for development and almost every sector need the energy sector.

"The network has noted with concern that there has been a delay in the approval of revised policy, a situation which paralyses development



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progress in not only the energy sector but all other sectors of the economy that depends on energy. Thus, efficient, reliable, affordable and sustainable energy is indispensable in the implementation and eventual realization of other SDGs and MGDS priority areas relating to health, education, agriculture and food security, and related economic and social inequalities," says Ng'oma.

Ng'oma says the delay in putting in place the energy policy is detrimental to the attainment of the proposed policy goal of Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, efficient and modern energy for all Malawians by 2030.

"Unfortunately, the energy mix as it exists today consists predominantly (89%) of biomass as the main source of energy. Malawi still has no access to modern efficient and reliable energy services, albeit over 90 percent of Malawi's main grid electricity is generated from hydro which is renewable. Hence there is need for a replacement of the traditional fuels by other commercial sources of energy in order to establish a basis for determining the probable energy mix with other fuel sources gaining prominence," says Ng'oma.

According to Ng'oma putting in place a sound energy policy

will provide a broad basis for reduction in biomass usage through increased electrification and development of renewable energy sources.

He further says this situation compels institutions and households to rely on fossil fuels such as diesel-fired electricity generators, firewood and/or charcoal for cooking.

Ng'oma adds that further, over-reliance on one source of energy is a clear manifestation of the country's failure to make meaningful progress in terms of sustainable energy

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development.

"The current energy policy vacuum leaves the country with no proper guidance and coordination related to investment in provision of efficient, adequate, affordable and reliable energy supply. Energy is empowering; it moves families, communities and the

entire nation beyond day-to-day survival thereby ensuring the attainment of the basic human rights," Ng'oma argues.

However Ng'oma says CISONECC acknowledges and recommend the efforts by Government through the Ministry of Natural Resource, Energy and Mining to review the 2003 Energy policy and develop a new policy whose main goal is "Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, efficient and modern energy for all Malawians by 2030."

For Malawi to forge ahead with the sustainable development agenda, Ng'oma says there is need for proper policy guidance and direction related to energy development.

"In essence, the policy is paramount to provide the directly needed guidance and direction in the sector to facilitate investment, legislation enforcement and provision of efficient, adequate, affordable and reliable energy power supply which is a catalyst for sustainable economic, social and environmental development.

In essence, the policy, to a larger extent, should provide a good platform for increased investment in renewable energy and divestment away from fossil fuels in order to achieve the sustainable development," adds Ng'oma.

CISONECC through its membership and other initiatives such as the Big Shift Campaign has been engaging Government through the Department of Energy Affairs to input into the draft revised national energy policy to ensure it reflects the needs and aspirations of the various stakeholders. The network and its members have further engaged Government through the Department of Energy Affairs to lobby for speedy approval of the policy.

Under the power market restructuring the sole power utility in Malawi, Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM) was unbundled by creating two companies one for transmission and distribution while the other be responsible for generation and is known as Energy Generation Company EGENCO.

Under the new fuel importation system, importation of fuels shall be done through annual transparent tenders floated by National Oil Company of Malawi (NOCMA) in liaison with the Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining, in order to allow any company licensed Malawi to participate in the tenders to supply liquid fuel.

Chairman for Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources and Climate Change Werani Chilenga recently told The Nation that the new energy policy is important because the old one is outdated hence unusable. ■