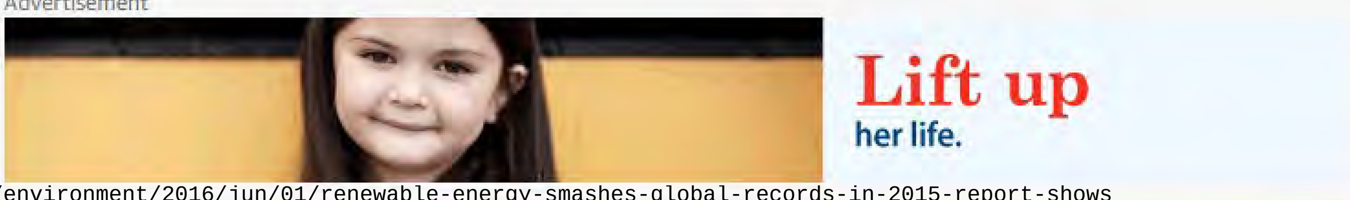
Advertisement



Renewable energy
Keep it in the ground

Renewable energy smashes global records in 2015, report shows

Last year saw record worldwide investment and implementation of clean energy such as wind, solar and hydropower

Arthur Neslen

Wednesday 1 June 2016 15.32 BST

Shares 6980 Comments 512

Save for later



Solar powered water pump in Malawi. African and Latin American countries set some of the world's most ambitious targets for clean energy deployment in 2015. Photograph: Joerg Boethling/Alamy Stock Photo

Advertisement



An upsurge in new wind, solar and hydro plants and capacity saw renewable energy smash global records last year, according to a report on new supply.

Some 147 Gigawatts of renewable electricity came online in 2015 - the largest annual increase ever and as much as Africa's entire power generating capacity.

Clean energy investment increased to $286bn (£198bn), with solar energy accounting for 56% of the total and wind power for 38%.

Overall, more than twice as much money was spent on renewables than on coal and gas-fired power generation ($130bn in 2015), the REN21 global status report found.



Global clean energy employment rose 5% in 2015, figures show

Read more

Christine Lins, REN21's chief, said: "What is truly remarkable about these results is that they were achieved at a time when fossil fuel prices were at historic lows, and renewables remained at a significant disadvantage in terms of government subsidies. For every dollar spent boosting renewables, nearly four dollars were spent to maintain our dependence on fossil fuels."

For the first time, emerging economies outspent richer nations in the green energy race, with China accounting for a third of the global total. Jamaica, Honduras, Uruguay and Mauritania were among the highest investors, relative to their GDP.

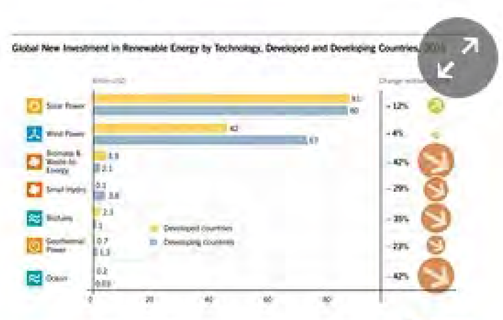
African and Latin American countries also set some of the world's most ambitious targets for clean energy deployment last year, the report says.

But the renewables revolution stuttered in many developed countries, with the significant exception of the US. In Europe, investment plummeted by 21% after the withdrawal of policy supports, such as clean energy subsidies and binding targets.

Despite this, renewables still provide 44% of the EU's electricity capacity, and 15% of its final energy consumption.

Jean-François Fauconnier of Climate Action Network Europe said the report should be a "wake up call" to the European commission, spurring increased 2030 renewable goals in a review later this year. "The EU is at risk of missing the ongoing energy revolution and lagging behind other leading economies for decades," he said.

The UK saw a 25% rise in renewable energy investments last year, the paper finds. But figures for the first quarter of 2016 suggest this may not survive cuts to solar subsidies and a slowdown in onshore wind planning approvals.



Global new investment in renewable energy by technology. Photograph: REN21

Industry reactions to the REN21 paper were buoyant, with the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC) hailing news that 173 countries now have renewable energy targets.

Steve Sawyer, GWEC's secretary general said: "A record 63.5 GW of wind power was installed worldwide in 2015, demonstrating the maturity of the sector; and showing how renewables are supplying competitive, reliable and clean energy to fuel economic growth and cut CO2 emissions."

Around the world, 8.1million people are now employed in the clean energy industry - excluding hydropower - 3.5 million of them in China. In the US, more people now work in the solar industry than in oil and gas extraction.

While employment in the clean energy sector grew by 6% in 2015, jobs in the oil industry contracted by 18%, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency.

Advertisement

But the fast-maturing renewables sector still has to overcome storage limitations, and the world's dependence on infrastructure systems geared towards fossil fuels.

Arthouros Zervos, the chair of REN21 said: "The renewables train is barreling down the tracks, but it is running on 20th-century infrastructure - a system based on outdated thinking where conventional baseload is generated by fossil fuels and nuclear power."

A build-out of decentralised and community-based generation was urgently needed to accelerate the clean energy transition, he said.

More news Topics Renewable energy Energy Solar power Wind power Hydropower More...

Save for later Reuse this content

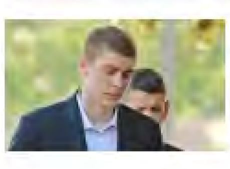
Most popular


Argentina v Chile: Copa América - as it happened


John Oliver buys and forgives $15m worth of medical debt


'20 minutes of action': father defends Stanford student son convicted of sexual assault

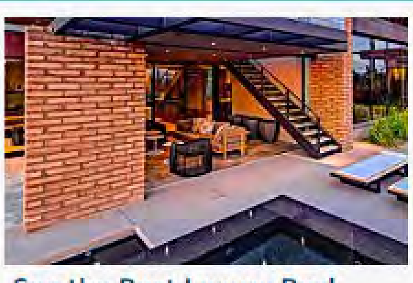

Hillary Clinton has delegates to clinch Democratic nomination, says AP count


Stanford sexual assault case: victim impact statement in full

promoted links from around the web
Recommended by Outbrain


The most addictive game of the year! Build your city!
FORGE OF EMPIRES


France Plans to Install 600 Miles of Solar Roads Within 5 Years
GREEN BUILDER


See the Best Luxury Real Estate in the World [Photos]
MANSION GLOBAL BY DOW JONES


10 deadly phrases that can kill relationship
DATING TIPS

Where the World's Billionaires Live
MANSION GLOBAL BY DOW JONES

Gamers around the world have been waiting for this game! Build your city!
ELVENAR

7 tricks for how to learn any language in 7 days
BABBEL

10 Australian Universities Offering 100% Free Tuition Today - Apply
AFRISCHOLARSHIPS

Outbrain
About this Content

comments (512)

This discussion is closed for comments.

Order by Oldest | Threads Collapsed 1 2 3 4

buckfast1985 6d ago 26
Smashing
Report

Princeofpeace → buckfast1985 6d ago
This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our community standards. Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see our FAQs.

frankbveltz → buckfast1985 6d ago 2
It is great news...just dont dare to criticise teh Guardian or your posts will be deleted.
Report

(512)

This discussion is closed for comments.

buckfast1985 6d ago 26
Smashing
Report

Princeofpeace → buckfast1985 6d ago
This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our community standards. Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see our FAQs.

frankbveltz → buckfast1985 6d ago 2
It is great news...just dont dare to criticise teh Guardian or your posts will be deleted.
Report

+ Show 1 more reply

Nanu 6d ago 49
Great news, but this should be a mere beginning! It is not enough.
Report

Gelion → Nanu 6d ago 10
It is great news .. but ...

CO2 levels rose over 400ppm in the southern hemisphere recently and this is very bad news. It would take the Big 6 emitters, the US, China, Japan, India, Russia and Germany, who output 65% of all Human CO2 emissions, to go carbon neutral tomorrow not for the world to have run away climate change by mid century.

Or we will need them to make substantial changes AND use geo-engineering.

Using solar, wind, tidal and other green energy to tackle the issue is not enough now on its own.
Report

NoNameToday → Gelion 6d ago 11
Geo-engineering needs to be kept as a last resort, it could easily have unforseen consequences.
Report

+ Show 4 more replies

View more comments

popular

across the guardian | in environment