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Renewables dominated the US power mix for 2016

North America, Carbon Reduction, COP 23, Sustainable Energy

According to a new report, renewable energy dominated the U.S. power mix in 2016 surpassing fossil fuels.

The latest issue of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) monthly "Energy Infrastructure Update" released last week revealed the significant growth in the renewable energy sector in the U.S.

The total of newly installed capacity from renewable energy sources – including solar, wind, hydro, biomass and geothermal – was in excess of 16 GW (61.5 per cent) far surpassing that from natural gas (8.7 GW), nuclear power (1.3 GW), oil (58 MW), and coal (45 MW) combined.

This is the second consecutive year in which the majority of new generating capacity came from renewables.

In 2015, renewables were responsible for 14.4 GW (64.8 per cent) of newly installed capacity, up from 49.6 per cent in 2014.

During 2016, new wind generating capacity grew by 7.9 GW, only just ahead of new solar generating capacity at 7.7 GW.

314 MW came from new hydropower and 197 MW from new biomass – no new geothermal steam capacity was added in 2016.

Just 5 years previously, renewables cumulatively accounted for only 14.3 per cent of total available installed generating capacity; now they provide nearly one-fifth (19.2 per cent).

The individual breakdown was:

- Hydropower (8.5 per cent)
- Wind (6.9 per cent)
- Solar (2 per cent)
- Biomass (1.4 per cent)
- Geothermal (0.3 per cent)

All renewable sources – apart from hydropower – have grown over the past decade; in comparison, shares of energy capacity provided by oil, nuclear power, and coal in the U.S. have all declined.

Today, oil's share stands at around 3.8 per cent, nuclear power 9 per cent, and coal 24.7 per cent — five years previously, they stood at 4.6 per cent, 9.4 per cent, and 29.9 per cent, respectively.

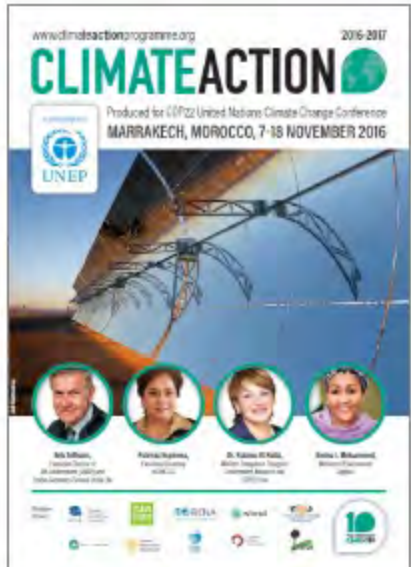
Solar has seen the greatest growth from less than 0.2 per cent in December 2011 to 2 per cent at the end of 2016, almost 12 times greater.

This growth shows no signs of slowing, with new solar capacity in 2016 doubling that added in 2015, from 3.5 GW to 7.7 GW recorded in December.

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