

2017 broke the record for increased renewable energy capacity, Reuters reported Sunday. But it still isn't enough to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in line with the goals of the Paris agreement.

These are the conclusions of the Renewables 2018 Global Status Report, the most recent annual report from Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century, an organization that works to facilitate a transition to renewable energy by sharing knowledge, developing policy and urging action.

The report found that the power sector was making inspiring progress in moving towards a renewable future, but that more had to be done by the heating, cooling and transport sectors, which account for 80 percent of global energy demand.

"We may be racing down the pathway towards a 100 percent renewable electricity future but when it comes to heating, cooling and transport, we are coasting along as if we had all the time in the world. Sadly, we don't," REN21 Executive Sec. Randa Adib told Reuters. Renewable electricity strides included the fact that 70 percent of all new power capacity added to the grid in 2017 came from renewable sources. This was mostly due to the falling price of solar and wind power. Renewable power upped its capacity by almost 9 percent compared with 2016, it's largest annual increase ever.

Solar took the lead, making up almost 55 percent of that increased renewable capacity. The REN21 report found that more solar capacity was installed than capacity for fossil fuels or nuclear energy, echoing an earlier UN-backed report that found that more additional solar capacity was installed in 2017 than all other fuel sources combined. Wind made up 29 percent of new renewable capacity, and hydropower 11 percent.

In another hopeful indicator, the report found that adding new renewable energy capacity was cheaper than adding new fossil fuel capacity in many parts of the world and, in some places, even cheaper than continuing to run existing fossil fuel plants.

However, despite these positive tidings, the report acknowledged that greenhouse gas emissions had also increased by 1.4 percent in 2017, the first time they rose in four years. The report linked this to an increased energy demand of 2.1 percent largely due to economic growth.

The report further highlighted the work that needed to be done in the heating, cooling and transportation sectors. While electricity accounts for only 20 percent of final global energy use, renewable energy accounted for 25 percent of global electricity use. On the other hand, heating and cooling account for 48 percent of final energy use, but only about 10 percent of that is powered by renewable sources and around 16 percent by traditional biomass.

Transportation accounts for 32 percent of final energy use, and only around 3 percent of

2017 Was a Record Breaking Year for Renewables, But More Needs to Be Done to Meet Paris Goals

that comes from renewables, according to the report's highlights.

The disparity in progress between the electric and other sectors is reflected in policy: 146 countries (out of 197) have set targets for increasing renewable energy use in the power sector, but only 48 have set renewable targets for heating and cooling and only 42 for transportation.

Source: ecowatch