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I give the floor to Juliette Tuakli.

Juliette Tuakli

I would like to express my pleasure at seeing Africa in a plenary session at the beginning of the World Policy Conference yesterday, that was very heartening. As other members have stated, the global health crisis and poverty are pushing a green and digital transformation in Africa. When a speaker stated yesterday that climate wars are to be won in Lagos, Delhi, and Bogota, not Brussels, I felt he hit the nail on the head. The impact of inequitable distribution of energy and shortages of energy on health and education is considerable in our continent. An estimated 600 million people in Africa have had no experience of electricity, that is half of the entire population of Africa. In addition, there is growing recognition of our vulnerability to climate shocks and the impact on the livelihoods of our youth, both present and in the future. There is still a considerable dependence on rain-fed agriculture and pastoralism, and these are essential to food production and security in much of the continent. In addition, energy shortages are also fueling a growing drive for greater access to both electricity and clean energy. It is worth noting that our energy poverty is not homogeneous, for example, in South Sudan only 5% of the population have access to electricity, compared to South Africa and in the country where I reside, Ghana, where about 80% of the population has access to electricity. However, the prospects for expansion of access to grid-based electricity are slim each year and yet our electricity consumption will more than double over the next 20 years, driven by growing per capita income, increased and very rapid urbanization and continued economic transformation. A minimum predicted 50% population increase for our already 1.2 billion population, which as was mentioned earlier today, puts us in a larger situation than even India.

Sub-Saharan Africa has both a vastly greater energy potential for solar and to a lesser extent wind power, I will not go into the reasons for that, but also lower renewable energy infrastructure costs. Renewable energy options appear particularly viable for our off-grid remote or isolated areas where electricity access remains a real and pressing challenge. I fully expect that we will leapfrog to distributed energy systems, much in the way that we leapfrogged or skipped over land-based telephone lines to cellular phones. However, in the absence of private investors creating innovative investment financing, businesses and households will continue to resort to small-scale fossil fuel power from coal to kerosene, or diesel to gasoline. The consequences of



which, to quote Winston Churchill for the second time today, would be ‘too ghastly to contemplate’.

The growth in our energy and electricity demands does however present extraordinary economic opportunity for financing mechanisms that go beyond the traditional public-private finance models we are used to, alongside multilateral and developmental assistance opportunities. Some of these opportunities would come from the African Development Bank and the African diaspora. The African Development Bank has just agreed to partner with WHO on the Africa Connect initiative, which will strategically tap into the African diaspora’s investments into health and infrastructure on the continent. I think it is good for us to remember the official developmental assistance to Africa in 2021 stood at USD 35 billion. However, this was just 36% of the value of remittances from the diaspora, at USD 95.6 billion, with Egypt and Nigeria representing at least 50% of all remittances into the continent and providing almost a form of concessional financing. This new initiative is particularly important for us and for African-led financing initiatives that address both our clean energy and our electricity needs, which are particularly essential to our health and education.