

Today, 50 years on from the oil shock that led to the founding of the International Energy Agency (IEA), the world once again faces a moment of high geopolitical tensions and uncertainty for the energy sector. There are parallels between then and now, with oil supplies in focus amid a crisis in the Middle East – but there are also key differences: the global energy system has changed considerably since the early 1970s and further changes are taking place rapidly before our eyes.

One thing that hasn't changed since the 1970s is the IEA's commitment to its core mission of safeguarding energy security. As we have demonstrated throughout the global energy crisis that erupted in February 2022, the IEA is ready to respond quickly and effectively to sudden disruptions in energy markets. At the same time, we continue to dedicate significant efforts to anticipating and addressing the challenges that are evolving and emerging across the entire global energy system. This is an area where the data and analysis of the *World Energy Outlook (WEO)* are so valuable.

With the insights of this new *WEO* in mind, I want to highlight some important differences between where the energy sector was 50 years ago and where it is today. The 1973-74 crisis was all about oil, but today's pressures are coming from multiple areas. Alongside fragile oil markets, the world has seen an acute crisis in natural gas markets caused by Russia's cuts to supply, which had strong knock-on effects on electricity. At the same time, the world is dealing with an acute climate crisis, with increasingly visible effects of climate change caused by the use of fossil fuels, including the record-breaking heatwaves experienced around the world this year.

A crisis with multiple dimensions requires solutions that are similarly all-encompassing. Ultimately, what is required is not just to diversify away from a single energy commodity but to change the energy system itself, and to do so while maintaining the affordable and secure provision of energy services. The growing impacts of global warming make this all the more important, as an increasing amount of energy infrastructure that was built for a cooler, calmer climate is no longer reliable or resilient enough as temperatures rise and weather events become more extreme. In short, we have to transform the energy system both to stave off even more severe climate change and to cope with the climate change that is already with us.

A second difference between the 1970s and today is that we already have the clean energy technologies for the job in hand. The 1973 oil shock was a major catalyst for change, driving a huge push to scale up energy efficiency and nuclear power. But it still took many years to ramp them up while some other key technologies like wind and solar were still emerging. Today, solar, wind, efficiency and electric cars are all well established and readily available – and their advantages are only being reinforced by turbulence among the traditional technologies. We have the lasting solutions to today's energy dilemmas at our disposal.

The third difference is that clean energy transitions have real momentum at the moment. In the 1970s, many countries were going from a standing start as they scrambled to respond to the oil shock. As we show in this *WEO*, clean energy deployment is moving faster than many people realise. And it can and should go faster still for us to meet our shared energy and climate goals. In addition, we have international processes and accords in place today, such as the Paris Agreement, that provide an important framework for stronger action by governments.

And one final difference is, unlike in 1973, we have the IEA. I firmly believe that the Agency has a crucial role to play – by safeguarding against traditional energy security vulnerabilities, by anticipating new ones, and – in the words of our most recent Ministerial mandates – by “leading the global energy sector’s fight against climate change”.

The world is much better prepared than we were 50 years ago. We know what we need to do and where we need to go. At the same time, the challenges are much broader and more complex – energy security and climate are interwoven, and claiming that we need to focus on just one or the other is a blinkered view. We can still learn from the response to the oil shock of 1973 and from the approach that led to the Paris Agreement of 2015: governments must work together to address our major common challenges because a patchwork of individual efforts will fall short.

We need to co-ordinate and co-operate – those in the lead and with greater resources need to help those further behind who have less. Each country must find its own path, but it still needs some signposts along the way. This *WEO* highlights, once again, the choices that can move the energy system in a safer and more sustainable direction. I encourage decision makers around the world to take this report’s findings into account – in the lead-up to the COP28 climate change conference in Dubai later this year and beyond.

I would like to commend my IEA colleagues who worked so hard on this *WEO* – alongside many other key reports, activities and events – for all their efforts, under the outstanding leadership of Laura Cozzi and Tim Gould.

We have chosen to dedicate this edition to a longtime friend of the *WEO* and leading figure in the history of the IEA, our former Executive Director Mr Robert Priddle, who sadly passed away in September. After serving as Executive Director between 1994 and 2002, Mr Priddle continued to make a major contribution for many years as editor of the *WEO*. In this role, his deep understanding of energy and geopolitical matters, as well as his exceptional communication skills, raised our work to a new level. We will miss him greatly.

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