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# Independent Evaluation of the Impact of the Vienna Energy Forum

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Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight

**OFFICE OF EVALUATION AND INTERNAL OVERSIGHT  
INDEPENDENT EVALUATION UNIT**

**Independent Evaluation of  
The International Vienna Energy & Climate Forum (IVECF)  
Formerly: Vienna Energy Forum (VEF)**



**UNITED NATIONS  
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION**

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## Abstract

The independent evaluation assessed the results of the International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum (IVECF)/ Vienna Energy Forum (VEF), henceforth simply the forum, for the period 2009-2023 with a *special focus on the last five years*. The evaluation used the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coherence, and contributions towards impacts. This involved considering and reviewing the forum's objectives, performance indicators, stakeholder engagement, knowledge dissemination, policy influence, and long-term impacts. The evaluation used a mixed-method approach encompassing quantitative and qualitative analysis with data collected from documents, surveys, interviews, observations, and archival sources.

The forum's primary goal is to create a vibrant, interactive, and inclusive environment that facilitates stimulating discussions on crucial issues related to the sustainable energy discourse and encourages the proposal of practical solutions for promoting sustainable energy development.

**The evaluation found that** the forum is well-aligned with emerging global priorities on sustainable energy. It has seen significant growth in participation over the years, which spotlights its rising significance. The forum has catalyzed policy and technology discussions and community projects globally over the years through its insights and partnerships. It has contributed to the global sustainable energy agenda over the past decade, both through high-level policy impacts at international events like COP as well through on-ground delivery. Through its platforms, various projects have gained visibility and access to potential support, exemplifying its capacity to facilitate meaningful connections and contribute to advancing sustainable energy solutions. Sustaining this impact hinges on expanding its reach and scope further. By exposing industry players to emerging innovations, this forum has also contributed to new product developments and sustained corporate engagement. However, overall data to comprehensively assess this forum's long-term impact remains constrained.

**The evaluation concluded** that the forum, through biennial conferences, remains a critical platform in the global energy dialogue. To maintain its significance and enhance its impact, it will need to continue adapting to the evolving landscape with strategic focus, alignment with UN goals, stakeholder engagement, and efficient management, while deepening its commitment to cross-cutting themes.

**The evaluation recommends** that UNIDO should (1) continue to refine the forum's thematic focus, capitalizing on its unique positioning in the energy and industrial development dialogue, (2) enhance stakeholder engagement through hybrid summits, targeted marketing plus localization, and early and comprehensive planning, (3) streamlining governance structures for more efficient event management, and (4) deepening cross-cutting themes to better integrate gender, youth, and environmental concerns.

**Keywords:** International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum (IVECF); Vienna Energy Forum (VEF); UNIDO and energy; UN and SDG7; independent evaluation.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
ADA	Austrian Development Agency
BMEIA	Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs
COP	Conference of the Parties
EAE/ENE/ESI	Energy Systems and Infrastructure Division
EQ	Evaluation Question
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation
IIASA	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
IKEA	IKEA Foundation
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency
ISID	Inclusive and sustainable industrial development
IVECF	International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum
KII	Key Informant Interview
MTR	Midterm Review
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
REEEP	Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SE4All	Sustainable Energy for All
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
TOC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
VEF	Vienna Energy Forum

## Glossary of evaluation-related terms

Term	Definition
Baseline	The situation, prior to an intervention, against which progress can be assessed.
Effect	Intended or unintended change due directly or indirectly to an intervention.
Effectiveness	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention were or are expected to be achieved.
Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.
Impact	Positive and negative, primary and secondary, intended and non-intended, directly and indirectly, long term effects produced by a development intervention.
Indicator	Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor. Means by which a change will be measured.
Intervention	An external action to assist a national effort to achieve specific development goals.
IRPF	Integrated Results and Performance Framework (IRPF); corporate long-term results framework; selected set of indicators regarding (a) the organization's contribution to development results and (b) organizational performance
Lessons learned	Generalizations based on evaluation experiences that abstract from specific to broader circumstances.
Logframe (logical framework approach)	Management tool used to guide the planning, implementation and evaluation of an intervention. System based on MBO (management by objectives) also called RBM (results-based management) principles.
MTPF	Medium-term Programme Framework; UNIDO's most important strategic planning instrument
Outcome	The achieved or likely short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs.
Outputs	The products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes.
Recommendations	Proposals aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, quality, or objectives; and/or at the reallocation of resources.
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donor's policies. Note: Retrospectively, the question of relevance often becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate given changed circumstances.
Results-Based Management (RBM)	A management strategy – at project and programme, portfolio, organizational, country, and global levels – based



	on managing for the achievement of intended results within a given context by integrating a results philosophy and principles into all aspects of management and by integrating good practices and lessons learned from past performance into management decision-making.
Review	A systematic and evidence-based self-assessment of the performance of a programme or project, aiming at determining performance against established criteria. It can be conducted internally, i.e. by personnel directly involved in a programme or project, or externally, i.e. by personnel hired specifically for the purpose of conducting the review, whereby the overall responsibility for the review rests with the programme or project management. Reviews can be carried out at different stages of the programme or project life cycle, i.e. for programmes and projects with start and end dates as mid-term reviews (MTRs) and terminal self-evaluations
Risks	Factors, normally outside the scope of an intervention, which may affect the achievement of an intervention's objectives.
Strategic change	Major shift in an organization's priorities, resources, capabilities and service to its constituents and stakeholders.
Strategic decisions	Decisions that have major implications for organizational performance, success and often its very continuance.
Strategic management	Strategic management is the set of commitments, decisions, and actions taken by an organization to achieve the objectives and priorities determined in consultation with its stakeholders. The process involving studying both internal and external environments with a view to finding a match between what an organization is expected to and what it can realistically deliver.
Strategic planning	It is the process by which an organization sets its priorities, including on allocation and movement of resources to achieve those priorities. Priorities can be thematic (WHAT and WHY), geographic (WHERE), implementation modalities and partnerships (HOW and with WHOM) or on the use of human and financial resources (HOW).
Sustainability	The continuation of benefits from an intervention, after the development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.
Target group	The specific individuals or organizations for whose benefit an intervention is undertaken.
Theory of change	Theory of change or programme theory is similar to a logic model but includes key assumptions behind the causal relationships and sometimes the major factors (internal and external to the intervention) likely to influence the outcomes.

## Executive Summary

The independent evaluation assessed the results of the Vienna Energy Forum (VEF)/ International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum (IVECF), henceforth called the forum.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation used the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coherence, and contributions towards impacts. This involved considering and reviewing this forum's objectives, performance indicators, stakeholder engagement, knowledge dissemination, policy influence, and long-term impact. The temporal scope of the evaluation was the results enabled by this forum in the period 2009 to 2023 with a *special focus on the last five years*. Based on the findings, the evaluation provides a series of conclusions, lessons, and recommendations for enhancing the design, effectiveness, and efficiency of future forums.

The primary goal of the forum, as part of UNIDO's global forum function, is to create a vibrant, interactive, and inclusive environment that facilitates stimulating discussions on crucial issues related to the sustainable energy discourse and encourages the proposal of practical solutions for promoting sustainable energy development.

### Key evaluation findings:

**Relevance:** The forum has consistently aligned event themes and topics with emerging global priorities on sustainable energy, showcasing responsiveness to stakeholder needs. Over 95% of survey respondents rated the 2023 conference's themes as highly relevant. All thematic areas from industrial decarbonization to buildings and agriculture were seen as pertinent by over 75% of participants. The forum was recognized for its unique convening ability that brings together diverse voices across government, international organizations, industry, academia, and civil society. This "whole of society" approach facilitates crucial dialogues across the policy-solutions spectrum and is considered a key comparative strength, especially for the global South. However, some stakeholders expressed concerns over this forum's expanded climate focus and potential mission creep beyond industrial development. While embraced by most stakeholders, a minority highlighted increased risks and opportunities from such expansion. They emphasized the need to retain a core emphasis on energy access, efficiency, and industrial transitions. Overall, the evaluation notes the need for continued dialogue between UNIDO and its key stakeholders to build consensus on the need for broadening the mission to incorporate a greater focus on climate.

**Coherence:** The evaluation found this forum to align well with other key global processes on sustainable energy. For instance, the 2021 and 2023 forum conferences were timed to feed into critical events like the UN High-Level Dialogue on Energy and Conference of Parties (COP) meetings, showing strategic foresight. This forum has also made unique complementary contributions like the Global Tracking Framework to monitor universal energy access - a key SDG7 pillar. Over 75% of survey respondents agreed that the forum effectively addresses global goals like SDGs as well as their institutional objectives, underscoring VEF's coherence. Compared to other related events, most stakeholders rated this forum's alignment with the broader energy and climate agenda as high. Its emphasis on systems transformation, industrial transitions, access, and efficiency puts it in a good position to sustain coherence with UNIDO's inclusive and sustainable industrial development agenda. Overall, the evaluation found that this forum strives for strong

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<sup>1</sup> In this report, the forum refers to all the activities collective body of the work undertaken under the VEF/IVECF project, while specific biennial conference events are identified with the year in which these took place (e.g., VEF 2021, IVECF 2023).

coherence with relevant global policy processes within its institutional niche. By curating diverse voices and monitoring the evolving sustainable development landscape, it has carved out a distinct profile for itself. Maintaining this identity and coordination is crucial going forward.

**Effectiveness:** The forum has seen significant growth in participation over the years, from 778 stakeholders from 93 countries in 2009 to over 2200 delegates from 145 nations in 2023. This expanding reach spotlights its rising significance. 84% of survey respondents expressed high satisfaction with the IVECF 2023. Interactive sessions, networking opportunities, and exposure to the latest insights were cited as key benefits. Key informant interviews substantiated the usefulness of this forum in shaping dialogues and enabling crucial energy policy milestones. This included contributing to the framing of key global metrics on energy access pertinent to the UN Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) goals. Additionally, the forum was found to have played a key role in emphasizing and integrating social aspects such as livelihoods, health, and gender into energy policy discussions. This inclusion has been pivotal in enhancing policymakers' understanding of the connections between energy policy and various social issues. Sessions at the 2023 conference like 'Energizing Health – SDG 7 for 3 and 13', 'Catalyzing Action for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment', and 'Energy Smart Agri-Food Systems for Climate Action' comprehensively addressed these aspects.

The forum also played an important role in supporting and recognizing impactful initiatives. Through its platforms, various projects have gained visibility and access to potential support, exemplifying its capacity to facilitate meaningful connections and contribute to advancing sustainable energy solutions. This forum, for example, contributed to the signing of a cooperation agreement on a Climate Finance and Energy Innovation Hub between UNIDO, OPEC Fund, and SEforALL to accelerate climate finance and energy innovation in policy, financing, and partnerships. Overall, survey respondents and interviewees validated this forum's effectiveness as a policy-solutions platform seeding milestones, showcasing insights, enabling investment flows, and cross-sectoral cooperation essential for emerging solution viability.

**Efficiency:** This forum delivered its expected results within a small budget while maximizing the use of limited staff and other resources. The total budget released for the 2023 forum, for example, was 683,628 EUR. While this forum has effectively facilitated dialogues and convened experts, there are some opportunities to enhance administrative and financial efficiency. The choice of a high-profile venue like Hofburg Palace incurs higher costs but lends prestige. Thus, shifting venues may involve tradeoffs in the level of participation and engagement, particularly at the higher levels. Improving certain digital systems and their user-friendliness could help expand outreach efficiently. IVECF 2023 provided a hybrid option, which was lauded for widening developing country participation. Continuing to provide options for virtual participation has the potential to widen reach even more, which can further enhance efficiency in terms of cost per participant. Rather than solely relying on securing more travel funding, such technological solutions can offer a sustainable and cost-effective channel for broader representation and engagement from resource-constrained groups and regions, while also potentially having a positive effect on the forum's carbon footprint.

**Progress toward Impact:** The evaluation found that this forum has catalyzed policy and technology discussions and community projects globally over the years through its insights and partnerships. Desk review, survey, and key informant interviews showed that most respondents found this forum to be impactful. This triangulated data showed that this forum had consistently showcased innovative sustainable energy technologies, leading to

increased awareness and adoption. While multiple key informants noted that the forum positively influenced energy policymaking, they believed that direct attribution to policy changes could not be expected from a forum like the IVECF. Instead, the strength of the forum, as part of UNIDO's global forum and normative functions, lies in fostering a global dialogue, sharing innovative ideas, and aligning stakeholders toward common goals in the energy sector. Key respondents also noted this forum's role in contributing to the SDG agenda in earlier years, including informing the definition of SDG indicators on affordable and clean energy. Overall, the evaluation found the forum to have contributed to the global sustainable energy agenda over the past decade, both through high-level policy impacts at international events like COP as well as through on-ground delivery. Sustaining this impact hinges on expanding its reach and scope further.

**Sustainability:** Interviewees and survey respondents agree that partnerships and connections initiated during the forum sustain long after the event concludes. Private sector delegates highlighted enduring collaborations with investors initially established at VEFs. Government officials also pointed to this forum's influence in contributing to long-term national policies on renewables. Stakeholders suggested that past forums have had a significant capacity-building impact, enabling developing country delegates to implement learnings on energy solutions. VEF conferences have also provided meaningful platforms for grassroots communities to share experiences and access global best practices for forum development. By exposing industry players to emerging innovations, this forum has also contributed to new product developments and sustained corporate engagement. However, overall data to comprehensively assess this forum's long-term impact remains constrained.

**Cross-cutting Issues:** Gender and youth inclusion gained greater emphasis at recent conferences through dedicated sessions and expanded participation. 68% of survey respondents affirmed that these issues were prominently embedded in the IVECF 2023 programming. However, the findings also indicated scope for further integration. Even with improving representation, women participants noted that more Leadership roles and substantive discussions focused on gender-specific challenges can advance the discourse. Youth delegates also seek more direct interaction opportunities with leaders.

**Conclusions:** This forum, through biennial forum meetings, remains a critical platform in the global energy dialogue. To maintain its significance and enhance its impact, it will need to continue adapting to the evolving landscape with strategic focus, alignment with UN goals, stakeholder engagement, and efficient management, while deepening its commitment to cross-cutting themes. Four main conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this evaluation:

1. This forum occupies a relevant niche in shaping sustainable energy dialogues, especially on industrial decarbonization. Its pioneering role in framing milestone policies like SDG 7 targets and advancing developing country priorities is reflected across stakeholder evidence. The forum reflected high levels of stakeholder engagement and representation from diverse organizations and countries.
2. However, this forum should further bolster engagement with intergovernmental agencies and better leverage digital platforms to match today's hybrid participation models, maximizing reach beyond physical attendance. There are many parallel sessions, resulting in difficulty with choosing and missing some content.
3. This forum fosters partnerships, capacity building, and financing flows centered on priority topics like gender inclusion. Relevant panels and speakers provided the latest evidence and showcased solutions to key issues. However, administrative delays and

marketing gaps somewhat constrain these opportunities currently. Prioritizing early planning and digital access would optimize achievements.

4. Overall, this forum has positively demonstrated endurance as an anchoring forum advancing social equity in sustainable energy globally, but it must continually expand the representation of marginalized groups within leadership and discussions to sustain differentiation. There was also a lack of concrete outcomes and follow-up actions for driving investments and policies.

5. There are additional opportunities for the forum regarding increased networking and partnerships, private sector participation, showcasing successful projects to catalyze more collaborations, addressing risks like funding shortages affecting participation, and overcoming external challenges impacting content and participation.

## Key Recommendations

The evaluation recommends UNIDO to consider the following areas for action for improving the effectiveness and impact of this forum going forward.

### **Recommendation 1:** Refined Focus for a more strategic UN alignment

- The forum should continue to refine its thematic focus, capitalizing on its unique positioning in the energy and industrial development dialogue. This includes discussions with key stakeholders on the scope of the topics covered at the forum, where some stakeholders are concerned about the dilution of the uniqueness of the forum.
- Aligning closely with specific UN goals where this forum can offer the most value will enhance its relevance and impact.
- Develop a year-long planning cycle to strengthen partnerships with other UN bodies, thereby enhancing participation at higher decision-making levels.

### **Recommendation 2:** Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement

- Adopt blended summit formats allying physical gatherings with cost-effective virtual components and boosting developing country inputs. Adopting more interactive formats and leveraging technology will improve stakeholder engagement and outreach as well as reduce the potential carbon footprint of the forum.
- Implement targeted marketing plus localization nurturing grassroots engagement and inspiration beyond high-level policy dialogues.
- Early and comprehensive planning, coupled with effective use of digital tools, is recommended for enhanced efficiency and impact.

### **Recommendation 3:** Efficient Event Management

- Streamline governance structures to minimize delays, while allocating resources enlarging youth and gender directorship roles driving organic inclusion. This implies that UNIDO management should consider assigning dedicated staff/ function to build institutional memory and relationships for efficient organization of conferences and follow-ups.

### **Recommendation 4:** Deepening Cross-Cutting Themes

- A more concerted effort in integrating gender, youth, and environmental concerns into this forum's structure and discussions will bolster its role in addressing significant global challenges.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is dedicated to promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development. Anchored in the 2013 Lima Declaration and echoed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNIDO's mandate recognizes inclusive and sustainable industrialization as a major driver of sustainable development. This is particularly emphasized through Sustainable Development Goal 9 (SDG9), which focuses on building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation. UNIDO's mandate extends to several other SDGs, including poverty eradication (SDG 1), gender equality (SDG 5), access to clean and affordable energy (SDG 7), job creation (SDG 8), and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17), positioning the organization as a key contributor to global sustainable development efforts. In its global forum function, UNIDO is mandated to provide a platform for dialogue and cooperation among member states, industry leaders, and other stakeholders, and facilitate knowledge exchange and partnerships to advance inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

Vienna Energy Forum (VEF), now rebranded as the International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum (IVECF)<sup>2</sup>, is a biennial conference event co-organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). Since its inception in 2009, the forum has aimed to position itself as a key platform for multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, and interdisciplinary dialogue on sustainable energy, inclusive development, and productive capacities. The forum seeks to contribute to the global dialogue on energy and climate, influencing policy, fostering innovation, and advocating for sustainable energy solutions.

UNIDO, through its Energy Systems and Infrastructure Division (EAE/ENE/ESI), is tasked with the coordination of activities related to the forum (VEF/IVECF). This division primarily focuses on the promotion of sustainable energy solutions and infrastructure, which are crucial for industrial development.

## 1.2. The Forum (VEF/ IVECF)

This forum seeks to facilitate global partnerships, stimulate debates on nexus themes like gender and youth, and catalyze action-oriented solutions to advance the sustainable energy agenda. This year's forum, like previous years, aimed to maintain its tradition of providing an inclusive platform for dynamic and engaging discussions on sustainable energy development. It was designed to facilitate dynamic and engaging discussions on sustainable energy development and to forge global partnerships. It focused on stimulating debates on key nexus themes such as gender and youth and catalyzing action-oriented solutions for the sustainable energy agenda. The forum included a biennial conference with a series of brainstorming workshops, stakeholder consultations, and follow-up activities to ensure sustained impact and visibility. These components were structured to contribute to strengthening global partnerships on sustainable energy and to shape the discourse on energy and climate-related themes, in alignment with the broader goals of co-organizers,

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<sup>2</sup> In this report, the forum refers to all the activities (collective body of work) undertaken under the VEF/IVECF project, while specific biennial conference events are identified with the year in which these took place (e.g., VEF 2021, IVECF 2023).

viz., UNIDO, The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA) and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA).

### 1.3. The Objectives of the Forum

The primary goal of this forum is to create a vibrant, interactive, and inclusive environment that facilitates stimulating discussions on crucial issues related to the sustainable energy discourse and encourages the proposal of practical solutions for promoting sustainable energy development. Achieving inclusivity involves collaboration with various stakeholders, including government bodies, United Nations agencies, bilateral donors, and civil society organizations. The overall objective of the forum is to design a dynamic, engaging, and inclusive platform that allows for thought-provoking dialogue to discuss key priorities and put forth action-oriented solutions to advance sustainable energy development.

The latest forum conference in 2023 had two main components designed to achieve this overall forum objective. The first component pertained to facilitating stakeholder consultations and shaping the agenda on relevant issues including gender-responsive communications and advocacy. The second component aimed to conduct follow-up activities, including a gender audit. Such follow-up activities included engagement with key global energy partners to enhance the visibility and relevance of the forum's impacts for ensuring the sustainability of the forum as a flagship programme.

Themes for the 2023 forum conference included:

- Solutions for energy systems transformation.
- Solutions for decarbonizing the built environment.
- Solutions for powering sustainable agriculture.
- Solutions for advancing green industrialization and sustainable energy value chains.
- Solutions for nature-based infrastructure.

The 2023 conference anticipated to realize the following results:

- Global Partnership on Sustainable Energy strengthened and global debate and discussions on nexus themes (possibly gender and youth) and innovation strengthened.
- The conference was organized and implemented (under considerations of gender equality/ equity), and its outcomes were disseminated and promoted for sustained impact.
- The forum partnered up with youth and women organizations relevant to its theme and will work alongside them to best respond to women's and youth's needs, and ensure their voices, ideas, and perspectives are showcased.
- A comprehensive integrated marketing and communications strategy was implemented to increase the visibility, and awareness of topics and issues that were highlighted at the conference. A comprehensive social media campaign was planned to further enable greater dissemination throughout our networks and globally.

### 1.4. Evaluation purpose and scope

The main objective of the strategic evaluation was **to independently assess the impact of the forum centered around its conferences (VEF/IVECF). During the inception, it was decided** to primarily focus on the events and activities organized during the last five years, i.e., the VEF 2018 Special Session, Vienna Energy Forum 2021, and IVECF 2023 given the limitations in collecting valid assessments over the distant past. This evaluation examined the forum's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and coherence, as well as its progress toward achieving a significant impact. It also focused on the forum's objectives,

performance indicators, stakeholder engagement, knowledge dissemination, policy influence, and long-term impact.

The following were the objectives of this evaluation:

1. Assess the forum in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coherence, and progress to impact focusing on its objectives, performance indicators, stakeholder engagement, knowledge dissemination, policy influence, and long-term impact.
2. Develop a series of findings, lessons, and recommendations for enhancing the design, effectiveness, and efficiency of future forums and other relevant events.

This assessment considered the following evaluation questions organized by evaluation criteria below:

**Table 1. Evaluation questions pertaining to the Forum in the last five years**

<b>Evaluation questions (EQs)</b>
<b>Relevance</b>
1. To what extent does the forum respond to beneficiaries, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities?
2. Does the forum address key issues, promote sustainable energy practices, and contribute to global energy-related goals and agendas?
<b>Coherence</b>
3. How well does the forum align with existing international energy-related efforts, avoid duplication of efforts, and foster synergies and complementarity with other stakeholders and initiatives?
<b>Effectiveness</b>
4. How effective is the forum in promoting stakeholder dialogue, knowledge sharing, policy influence, and innovation in the energy sector?
5. To what extent has this forum catalyzed innovation and enhanced its geographic and sectoral inclusivity over time?
<b>Efficiency</b>
6. How efficiently have resources been utilized to organize the forum and linked deliverables in a cost-effective and timely manner?
<b>Impact</b>
7. What impact has the forum had on policy decisions, sustainable energy practices, and partnership formation within the energy sector?
8. To what extent has this forum contributed towards SDGs? What impact has the forum had on community building over the years?
<b>Sustainability</b>
9. How sustainable are partnerships, initiatives, and policy changes achieved by the forum, with or without further intervention
10. What steps including activities and media platforms has the forum undertaken to sustain participant engagement and attention over time?
<b>Cross-Cutting Dimensions</b>
11. To what extent were gender, environment, and youth considered in the forum's activities?



## 2. Methodology

This evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Charter of the Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight<sup>3</sup>, UNIDO Evaluation Policy<sup>4</sup> as well as UNEG guidelines, and UNEG Ethical Standards for Evaluations. It followed a mixed-methods, inclusive, and participatory approach<sup>5</sup> with adequate triangulation and counterfactuals to arrive at credible, reliable, and unbiased findings. It utilized a mixture of primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data sources included, among others, interviews with key stakeholders, focus group discussions, online surveys, and direct observations. Secondary data sources included all relevant documents and archival data available from UNIDO and its stakeholders. It was conducted in four phases; some of which ran concurrently: (1) inception; (2) data collection; (3) data analysis; and (4) reporting. The evaluation timeline spanned from October 2023 to February 2024, culminating in the submission and presentation of the evaluation report by the evaluation team.

### 2.1. Inception phase

The inception phase involved a preliminary desk review as well as discussions with key informants. This phase enabled the evaluation team to fine-tune the evaluation approach and methodology, including the evaluation matrix, evaluation questions, stakeholder mapping, and data collection tools. It also helped in crafting a theory of change focusing on the forum's objectives like strengthening global partnerships in sustainable energy and facilitating discussions on key themes and how the forum supports UNIDO in delivering its SDG 7 mandate. Figure 1 and Annex 6 outline a visual representation of the theory of change (ToC) and the associated results matrix to be used for this evaluation.

As a first step, the evaluation developed a Theory of Change (TOC, see Figure 1) to clarify the results chain from the activities and outputs of this forum to its intended outcomes and impacts. The TOC details the causal pathway from activities to outcomes. Activities include organizing brainstorming workshops, stakeholder consultations, gender-responsive communication strategies, and forum report preparation. These led to the organization of the forum conferences, which are followed by activities for sustained impact. The expected outcome is enhanced debates leading to increased awareness, stronger global and multi-lateral partnerships, and increased private sector engagement on sustainable energy and climate issues. These outcomes are expected to enhance UNIDO's contributions to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal #7 (SDG7) on affordable and clean energy as well as UNIDO's inclusive and sustainable industry development goals/ agenda.

This results chain assumes that the increased number and deeper partnerships in the high-level forums lead to the increased impact of the VEF discussions, but that this also greatly depends on the interests of the policy and opinion-makers as well as external events (e.g., geopolitical interests) that can be mobilized for support.

The evaluation next developed tools to collect data and measure the results outlined above.

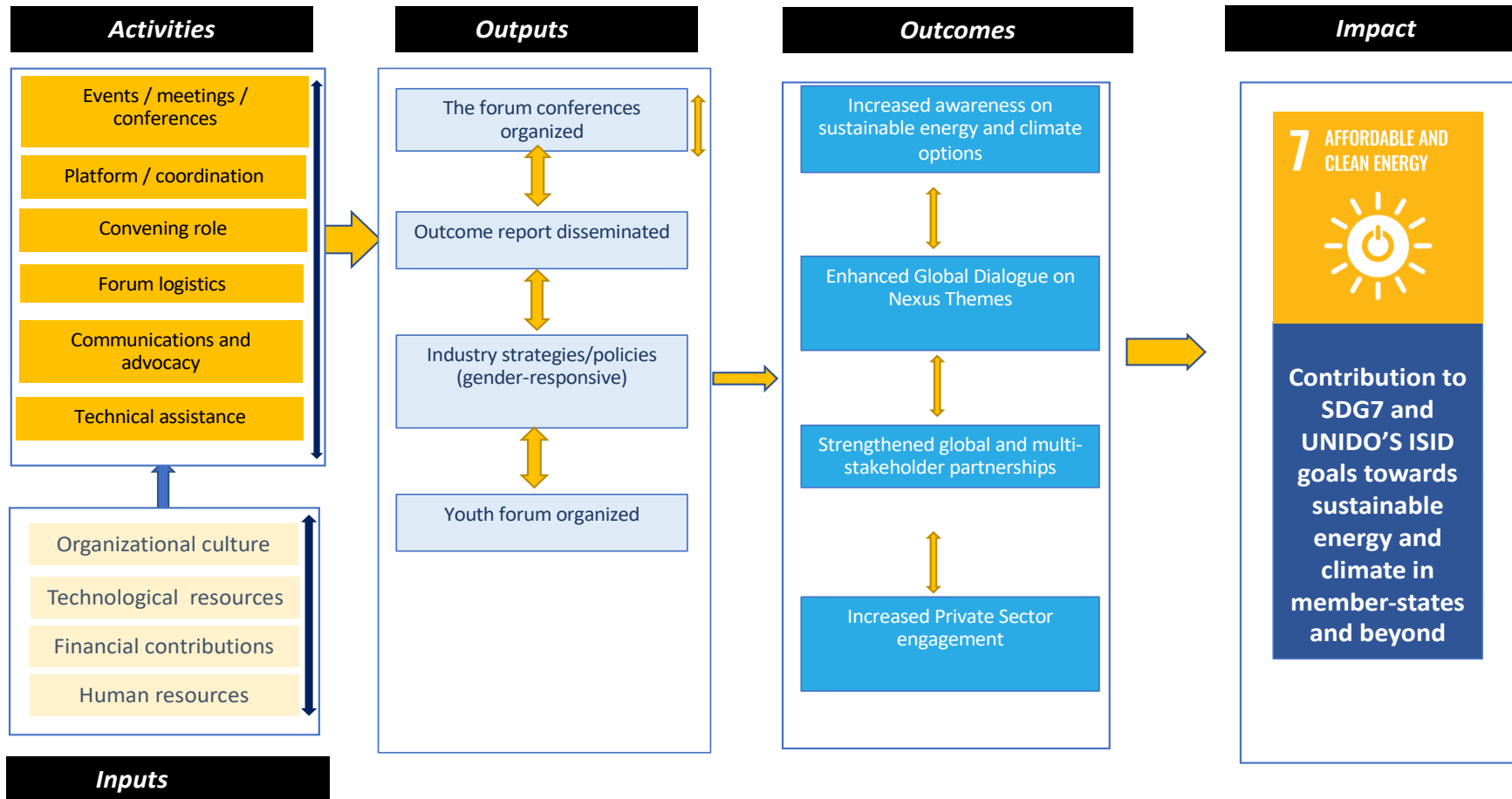
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<sup>3</sup> UNIDO (2020). Director General's Bulletin: Charter of the Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight (DGB/2020/11, 11 December 2020)

<sup>4</sup> UNIDO. (2018). Director General's Bulletin: Evaluation Policy (DGB/2018/08, 1 June 2018)

<sup>5</sup> All relevant stakeholders were consulted via interviews, observations, surveys, etc. They were also invited to provide anonymous feedback. The findings were validated at various points.

**Figure 1. Theory of Change for the Forum (VEF/IVECF)**



**Assumptions:** (1) The more partners will include the forum outcome in high-level fora, the bigger the impact of the discussions, (2) Reaching the outcome of the project greatly depends on the level of policy and opinion-makers the co-organizers can mobilize, (3) External factors, which could negatively affect the organization include logistical and administrative issues and possible travel restrictions. Hence, the hybrid format of the forum is preferred.

## 2.2. Data collection phase

Data collection from various sources and methods was undertaken concurrently. It involved documentary evidence, virtual consultations by way of key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs), online surveys, direct observations, and other data as available.

**Desk review:** The evaluation team reviewed all [relevant documentation](#) including original forum documents, monitoring reports (such as progress and financial reports), technical reports, and previous evaluation reports. Additionally, the team reviewed Forum reports and the website alongside notes from the meetings of committees involved in this forum.

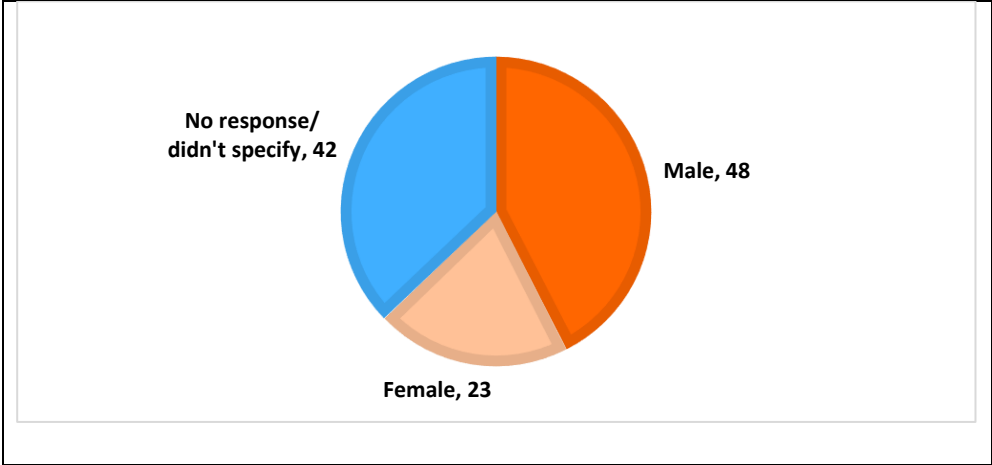
**Stakeholder consultations:** The evaluation team mapped key stakeholders for consultation (Annex 9), which encompassed (i) UNIDO Management (ii) UNIDO staff involved in this forum, (iii) Donor representatives, (iv) Member States' representatives, (v) non-profit and private sector representatives. 21 key informants were interviewed, which provided rich, in-depth qualitative information on all aspects of this forum's work. All interviews were conducted remotely.

**Archival data:** The evaluation team collected relevant information, including human and financial resources, deployed at various departments and locations.

**Direct observations:** The evaluation team observed the 2023 forum conference remotely for direct observation and extracted relevant data during the post-inception phase. By the time the evaluation team was onboarded (a day before the event), it was not feasible to travel to Vienna. As the forum could be observed virtually, it was also not considered necessary to do so.

**Online survey:** The evaluation team conducted an online survey of the forum participants to elicit their feedback on the specific outcomes and impacts identified in the evaluation matrix. The survey was initially launched at the 2023 conference, which only yielded 25 responses. A stratified random sample of 200 stakeholders was subsequently selected, wherein the stratification was on the basis of geographic regions, participant type, and gender. This sample only considered attendees from the last three forums to ensure adequate recall. It is noteworthy that many participants have been regularly attending the forum conferences for over a decade, so several mentioned outcomes from previous conferences as well. Of the 200 participants randomly selected, 88 responded (44%). As there was (statistical) difference in the feedback over these two samples, responses were pooled for analysis and reporting. Thus, a total of 113 participants (43% male, 20% female, 37% unspecified) provided survey feedback. More information on the respondents is provided in the annex.

**Figure 2. Survey respondents by gender**



**2.3. Data analysis phase and reporting**

The third phase involved data analysis. This phase was ongoing, beginning with the document review and collection of data through KIIs, FGDs, and surveys. Both qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques were employed. Content analysis was used to convert content from the documents and interview notes into quantitative data according to the evaluation matrix. Qualitative analysis using NVivo also provided illustrative examples to extract lessons and good practices. Quantitative analysis was conducted with the survey and archival data (e.g., bivariate pivot tables across various methods, t-tests for differences across various organizational units, etc.). Results were disaggregated where applicable. The draft report was shared with key stakeholders for their review and feedback.

**2.4. Evaluation limitations**

The evaluation did not face any major limitations although given the short timeline and budget, the evaluation team had to undertake all data collection virtually. However, given the focus on high-level strategy and the global focus of the framework, the evaluation did not find it necessary to undertake field missions regardless. The evaluation team made every attempt to reach as many stakeholders as possible to mitigate this limitation.

## 3. Evaluation Findings

This section presents evaluation findings organized as per the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coherence, and progress to impact.

### 3.1. Relevance

**EQ1. To what extent does the forum respond to beneficiaries, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities?**

**EQ2. Does the forum address key issues, promote sustainable energy practices, and contribute to global energy-related goals and agendas?**

The forum is widely considered by stakeholders to be a highly relevant, potentially impactful, and uniquely positioned mechanism for convening the global community on issues relating to energy and industry. A review by the evaluation team of the forum outcome reports for the period 2011 to 2021 alluded to the strong alignment of this forum's focus areas with global priorities and debates on sustainable energy over the past decade. For example, VEF 2021 enabled discussion on key topics related to sustainable development in the energy domain such as the inclusion of end users, financing strategies, creation of an enabling environment, creation of green grids, integration of industries especially energy-intensive industries such as the cement industry, adoption of energy-efficient products and achieving international climate targets, etc. VEF 2021 reportedly emphasized the leveraging of the Internet, big data, and digitalization to catalyze change across various domains of the international energy landscape. VEF 2021 was built on VEF 2018 which also emphasized on the need to focus on digitalization as a catalyst for change within the energy domain. The forum has notably addressed international issues related to sustainable energy, including universal access to modern energy services (SDG 7.1), renewable energy generation (SDG 7.2), energy efficiency (SDG 7.3), transport decarbonization, financing, gender inclusivity, and nexus approaches connecting energy with climate change, food security, health, etc. This forum has demonstrated its alignment with Sustainable Development Goals and major agreements like the Paris Agreement. Events focused on regional cooperation and localized solutions also signal relevance to specific contexts and needs. Consequently, it has been highly responsive to emerging priorities related to the sustainable energy discourse.

Convened on November 2-3, the 2023 forum conference (IVECF) was organized by UNIDO together with the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria, the Austrian Development Agency, and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). It assembled leaders to evaluate and accelerate solutions tackling energy system transformation, sustainable buildings and agriculture, green industry and value chains, and nature-based infrastructure, in order to drive investments and coordinate action on pressing climate challenges ahead of COP28.

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*“The theme of this gathering aligns very closely to the priorities of the COP28 presidency. This forum will make a valuable contribution to the*

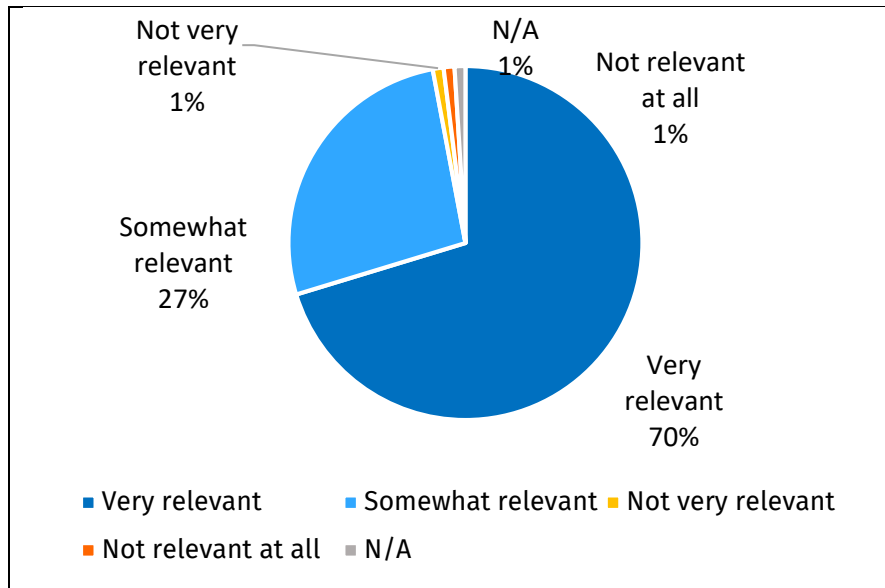
*momentum we need.”<sup>6</sup> – H.E. Mr. Sultan al Jaber, President of COP28 at the IVECF 2023.*

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This is in line with findings from a previous evaluation as the forums have consistently been highly relevant to their stakeholders, transforming Vienna into a key hub for global energy discussions, akin to an 'Energy Davos.' These forums have facilitated focused dialogues among diverse stakeholders, significantly contributing to global sustainable energy policies and initiatives such as the Sustainable Energy for All, closely aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN.

This is also affirmed in survey responses and key informant interviews. 97% of survey respondents indicated that the IVECF 2023 was very or at least somewhat relevant to their work and interests (see Figure 3 **Error! Reference source not found.**).

**Figure 3. Survey respondent perceptions on the relevance of the IVECF 2023 to their work**



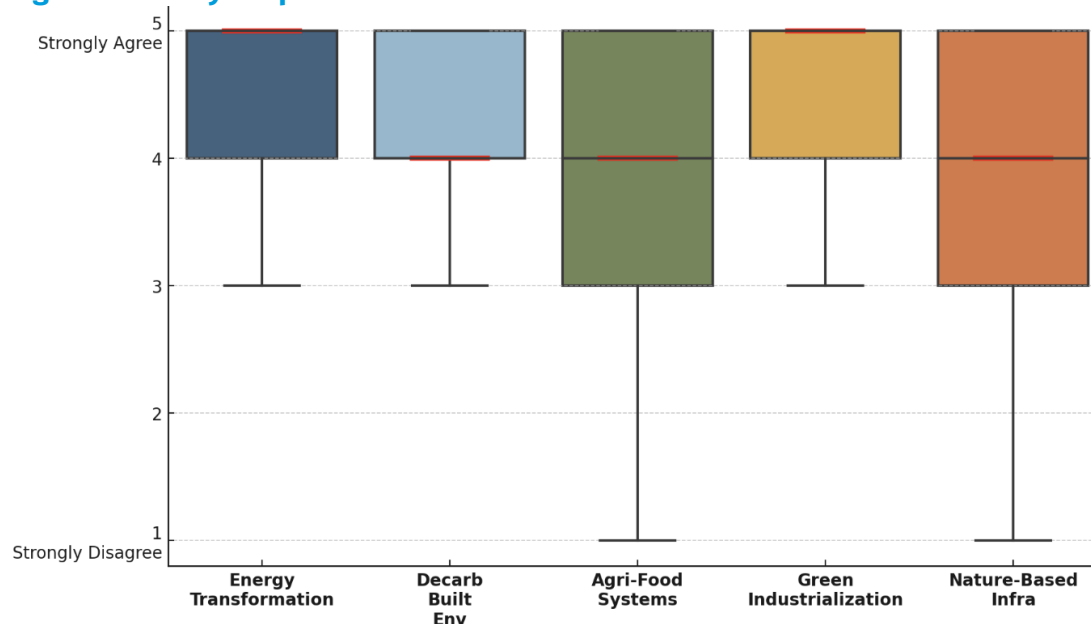
This work's pivotal role over the years in spearheading global agenda-setting and normative goals is highlighted as a valuable impact - establishing Vienna as the pivotal destination for discussing these issues. For instance, veteran stakeholders interviewed who have engaged since initial forums indicated forums' seminal

influence in framing Sustainable Development Goal 7 and associated guiding global metrics on energy access.

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<sup>6</sup> IVECF 2023 Wrap-up Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUTFOCBIZtE>

**Figure 4. Survey Respondents on the Relevance of the IVECF 2023 themes to their work**



Furthermore, as the box plot<sup>7</sup> depiction in Figure 4 shows, all themes addressed by the 2023 forum were rated as highly relevant (Between 68% and 85% of respondents rated the relevance of all themes at either 4 or 5 out of 5). Solutions related to the advancement of green industrialization and sustainable energy value chains were rated the most relevant to respondents' work, followed by solutions related to the decarbonization of the built environment.

This forum is highly regarded for its role in assembling a diverse array of stakeholders from the government, United Nations and its agencies, IGOs, NGOs, academia, industry, civil society, entrepreneurs, and youth groups to discuss pivotal energy and industrial development issues. The diversity of the VEF was lauded across all 21 interviews and emphasized as a key strength. The multi-stakeholder format helping traverse the policy-to-solutions spectrum is considered unique. For instance, a participant explained the value of such diversity explaining that the forum: “brings together voices from diverse groups – cutting edge scientists, policymakers to solutions providers”, allowing holistic dialogue. This convening power is a hallmark of the VEF, enabling rich dialogues and collaborations across various sectors. This unique feature allows for informed debates and the sharing of rich and diverse perspectives, especially valuable for countries in the global South to present their priorities and innovations. Such inclusivity and diversity are seen as a distinct advantage over other forums.

Although this forum has been successful in elevating the voices of the global South, marking a significant shift from the initial forums that were predominantly European-centric, the forum faces challenges in ensuring adequate participation from developing countries, mainly due to budget constraints. To address this, stakeholders suggested enabling virtual/hybrid participation options as well as allocating more resources for broader representation.

<sup>7</sup> Box plot depicts a range of values from minimum to maximum. The box itself include upper and lower quartile values (also known as interquartile range or IQR). The middle line in the box is the median value. Any data value that is 1.5 times the IQR larger than the third quartile or 1.5 times the IQR smaller than the first quartile is considered an outlier and is indicated with dots outside the lines.

The forum has historically played a significant role in shaping global sustainable energy discourse, particularly in the early years by influencing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 7 on sustainable energy access. It continues to promote initiatives such as UNIDO's Gender-Energy Compact and facilitates the launch of new programs, like REEEP's calls for proposals on agricultural energy solutions in Africa.

However, some stakeholders regarded the shift in focus from energy to climate and energy (as well as rebranding from VEF to IVECF), that is incorporating a broader climate agenda, to dilute the forum's core strengths. These stakeholders recommended a renewed focus on specific themes of energy access, industry transformation, and innovation that align more closely with UNIDO's core competencies. However, a majority of the stakeholders agreed with the implemented changes but recommended increased clarification that This forum would still retain its core focus. Additionally, there was a strong call for more continuous and long-term planning by UNIDO, rather than the current approach of commencing preparations closer to the event date. Such strategic planning could significantly enhance both outcomes and participation levels.

Overall, while the forum has made commendable strides in bringing together diverse stakeholders and contributing to global sustainable energy dialogue, the evaluation notes the potential for further enhancement through focused theming and more robust, long-term planning as well as additional and diversified funding sources.

### 3.2. Coherence

#### **How well does This forum align with existing international energy-related efforts, avoid duplication of efforts, and foster synergies and complementarity with other stakeholders and initiatives?**

The evaluation found the forum to be largely coherent with key global processes in various ways. For instance, the VEF 2021 was timed to feed into the High-Level Dialogue on Energy and COP26, showing strategic alignment across sustainable energy-related forums. Similarly, the IVECF 2023 was timed to spark solutions and strengthen investments to contribute to COP28. Initiatives such as the Global Tracking Framework showcase VEF's ability to make distinctive, complementary contributions to the broader discourse on sustainable energy. Similarly, the outcome report for the 2018 VEF showcased that this forum contributed towards the UN High-Level Political Forum's review of Sustainable Development Goal 7 (energy access). Bringing together over 350 experts and leaders, the Special Session encouraged greater dialogue and coordination across ministries, international organizations, businesses, academia, and civil society to improve integrated policymaking. The recommendations from the forum also emphasized forging broader partnerships between public and private entities in areas like establishing regional testing centers for energy innovations or investing across cleaner technology supply chains.

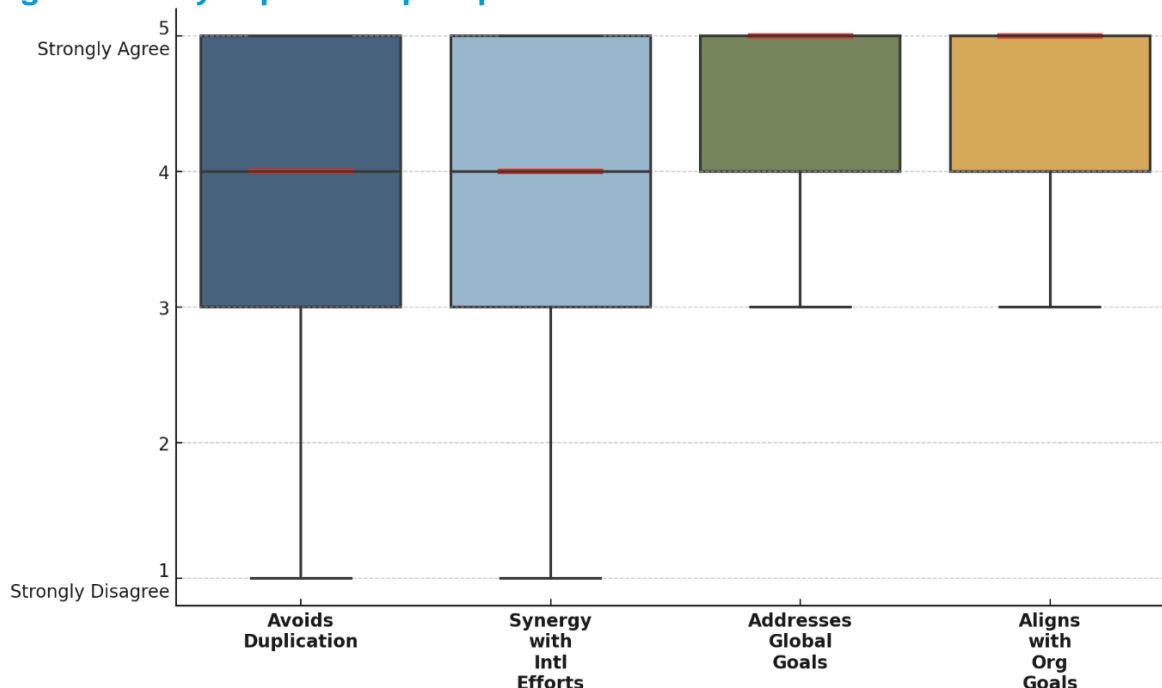
According to Figure 5 (below), 76% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the IVEF 2023 effectively addressed global energy-related goals and agendas, such as SDG 7 whilst 80% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that this forum aligned well with their organizations' sustainability energy objectives showcasing the forum's coherence with their organizations. This suggested the coherence of this forum with both global and institutional energy-related processes and goals.

This aligns with the findings of the Independent Review: Vienna Energy Forum (VEF) – VEF 2009, VEF 2011, VEF 2013, VEF 2015, which noted, 'VEFs were at the forefront of the global



debate on sustainable energy. They addressed the pressing issues of their respective times, influenced the global discourse on sustainable energy, and notably contributed to the 2030 Agenda in general and to SDG7 (Sustainable Development Goal 7) in particular.

**Figure 5. Survey respondents' perceptions related to the coherence of the forum.**



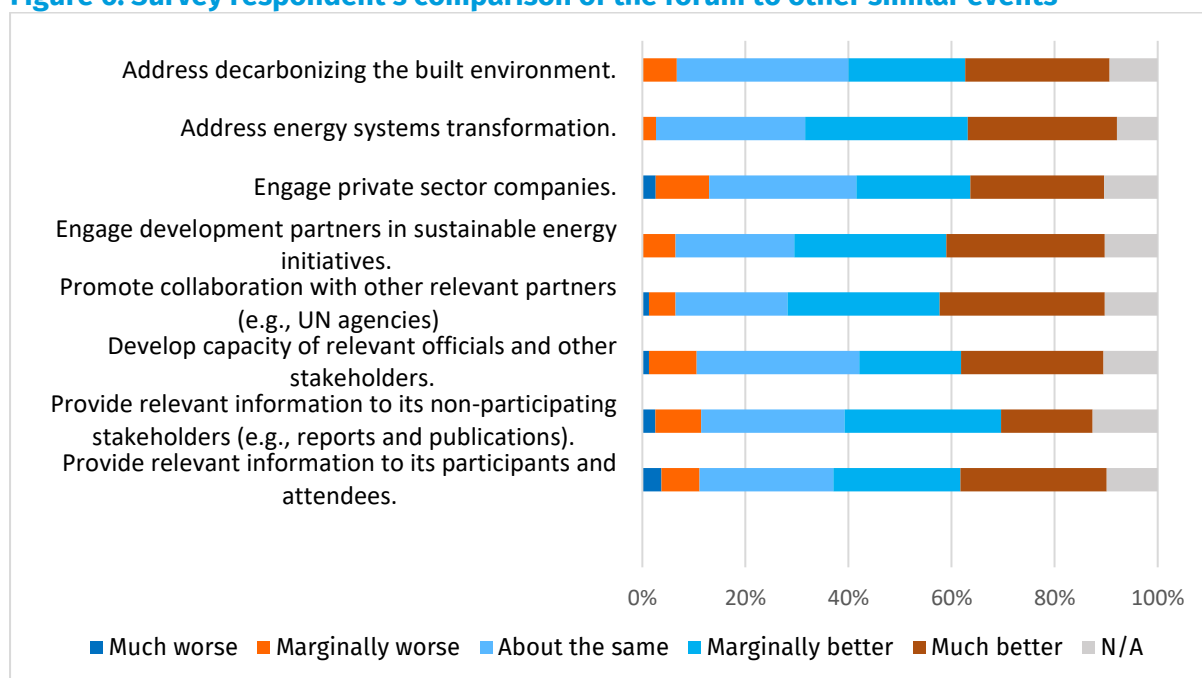
Moreover, compared to other similar initiatives, most survey respondents agreed that the forum has demonstrated higher synergy with other international energy-related efforts (with 72% agreeing or strongly agreeing). The forum was also rated much better by the majority of respondents on different aspects of the energy and climate agenda (

Figure 7), especially when it comes to addressing energy systems transformation with nearly 61% of respondents rating this aspect as addressed better by the forum than other similar events. This demonstrated this forum's strong influence on its niche topics.

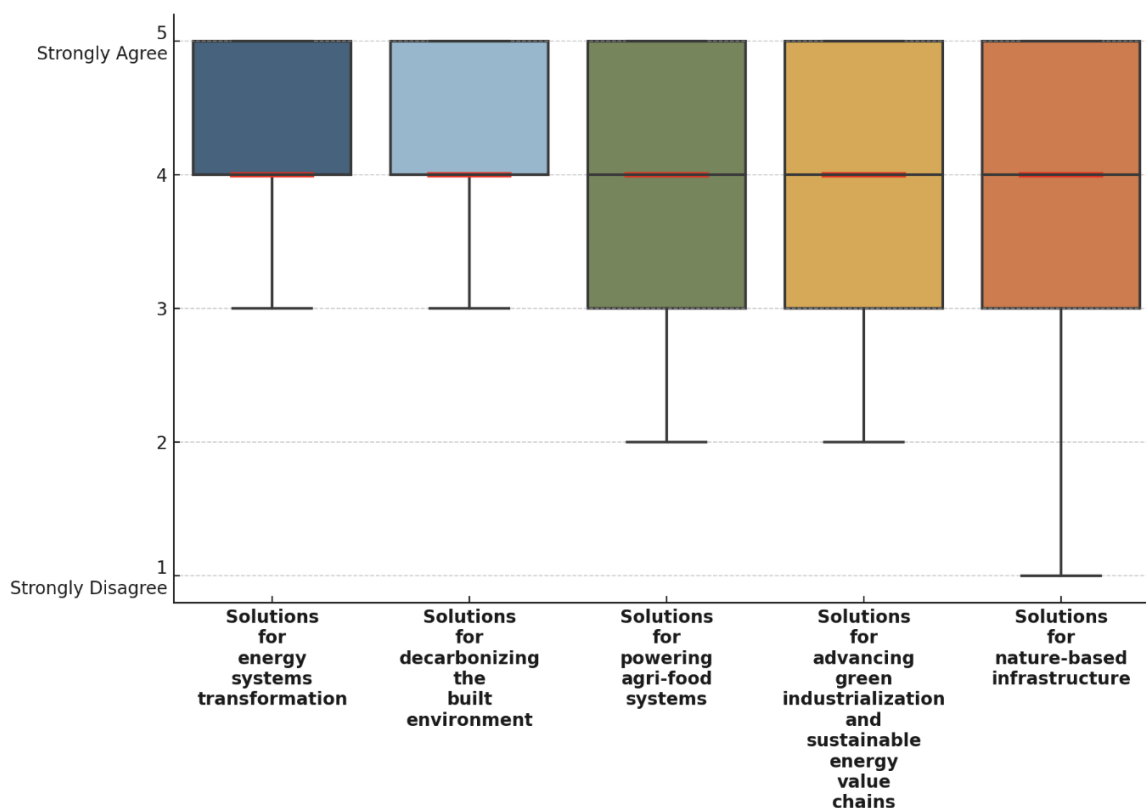
***"At this forum, what we were able to provide is a platform for intersectoral dialogue. It's really about understanding how these sectors interconnect and how they can work together to deliver outcomes in a climate-equitable way."<sup>8</sup>***  
***Chief and Officer in Charge, Division of Decarbonization and Sustainable Energy, UNIDO.***

<sup>8</sup> IVECF 2023 Wrap-up Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUTFOCBIZtE>

**Figure 6. Survey respondent's comparison of the forum to other similar events**



**Figure 7. Survey respondents' perceptions of how well the IVECF 2023 covered the thematic areas**



Interviewees also clearly validated the alignment of this forum's objectives with UNIDO's organizational mandate around inclusive and sustainable industrial development. While some interviewees recommended maintaining a sharper alignment with UNIDO's industrial

development mandates (refer to the feedback related to the risk of dilution through the expanded climate emphasis seen at the IVECF 2023), which stakeholders cautioned may replicate other events, overall respondents underscored the value of forum's close alignment with UNIDO's development mission.

While this forum has an advantage over similar events in terms of efforts made to continuously enable the participation of developing country stakeholders, interviewees also consistently flagged the need to further expand reach and accessibility from under-represented regions given vast development needs. Building on this, interviewees recommended a hybrid approach that combines physical meetings with virtual participation options, thus enhancing access for those unable to afford travel expenses.

The majority of those interviewed favorably assessed this forum's positioning, while some stakeholders suggested a need for a more distinct and clearer role for this forum. Overall, its combined emphasis on both sustainable energy and inclusive industrial development makes it well suited to carve out thought leadership on the inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID) agenda primed to dominate policy for this decade. In terms of synergy, this forum's continuous engagement with partners like REN21 in jointly curating sessions prevents duplication. At the same time, stakeholders also suggested further bolstering ties with other UN agencies through senior leader representation, which can multiply the visibility of achievements.

In terms of alignment with organizational priorities, this forum resonates strongly with UNIDO's ISID mandate. This alignment is evident in this forum's focus on topics and themes that are central to UNIDO's ISID goals of creating shared prosperity through equitable industrialization that is achieved while promoting cleaner and resource-efficient pathways to production,<sup>9</sup> contributing to its wider body of work. Furthermore, this forum intersects with Austrian development cooperation priorities, particularly in sustainable energy, climate, and environmental areas.<sup>10</sup> This synergy is crucial for achieving energy transitions and climate goals, aligning with Austria's vision of making Vienna a central hub for energy dialogues and solutions.

Overall, the forum is well aligned with the global energy-related priorities of UNIDO and its key stakeholders, including that of this forum's main donor Austria, and other Member States. This forum's continuous curation of a diversity of voices combined with targeted niche and knowledge sharing helps it stand out among other national energy forums. Sustaining this profile hinges on continuously monitoring this forum's task environment to ensure not just that the forum does not duplicate the work of evermore proliferating conferences on the topic, but also monitors the evolving needs of member states.

### **3.3. Effectiveness**

Between 2009 and 2021, participation at the forum grew significantly, from 778 participants from 93 member states in 2009 to 2000 participants from 145+ member states in 2022, indicating its increasing global significance.

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<sup>9</sup> UNIDO (n.d.). Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development Brochure. Available from: [https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2014-05/ISID-Brochure-LowRes1\\_EN\\_0.pdf](https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2014-05/ISID-Brochure-LowRes1_EN_0.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs Directorate-General for Development (2022). Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2022–2024. Available from: [https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Dokumente/Publikationen/3\\_JP/Englisch/2022-2024\\_3-YP.pdf](https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Publikationen/3_JP/Englisch/2022-2024_3-YP.pdf)

**Figure 7. Participation at the forum conferences (2009-2023)**



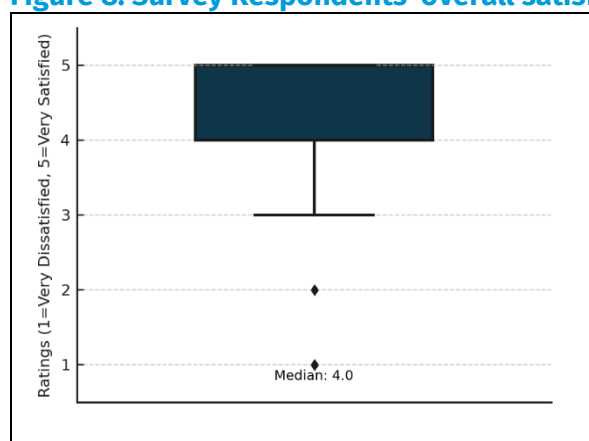
In 2023, participation spanned 145+ countries with 2,267 delegates from government, international organizations, private sector, science, civil society, and other sectors, reflecting this forum’s ability to convene a diverse range of stakeholders.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the IVEF 2023 showcased innovative technologies and transformative solutions and enabled action-oriented high-level discussions, commitments, and partnerships across actors working towards accomplishing the SDGs, pointing to this forum's catalytic potential in driving action. It highlighted innovative energy solutions for sustainable industrial development and provided a platform for high-level discussions while emphasizing the importance of gender and youth inclusion in the sector. The VEF 2021 facilitated high-level ministerial dialogues and panel discussions on pertinent themes like renewable power, energy efficiency, transportation, and industry transitions towards net-zero emissions. For

<sup>11</sup> UNIDO (2023). 8<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee Meeting (15 Dec)

instance, this forum included dedicated sessions to discuss frameworks and roadmaps necessary to promote industry decarbonization in sectors like steel and cement. The forum also helped cultivate new partnerships, like the hydrogen initiatives launched by UNIDO with Austria, Germany, and China in 2021.

Moreover, VEF 2018 also reportedly enabled knowledge sharing and discussion on innovative ideas. For example, participants explored how power-to-x systems that transform excess renewable electricity into industrial heat, fuels, or chemical feedstocks might transform manufacturing to reduce emissions. Expert panels also deliberated recent innovations in energy storage systems and digital energy management tools such as blockchain technologies that can enable complex integration of distributed renewable assets like mini-grid networks or rooftop solar installations.

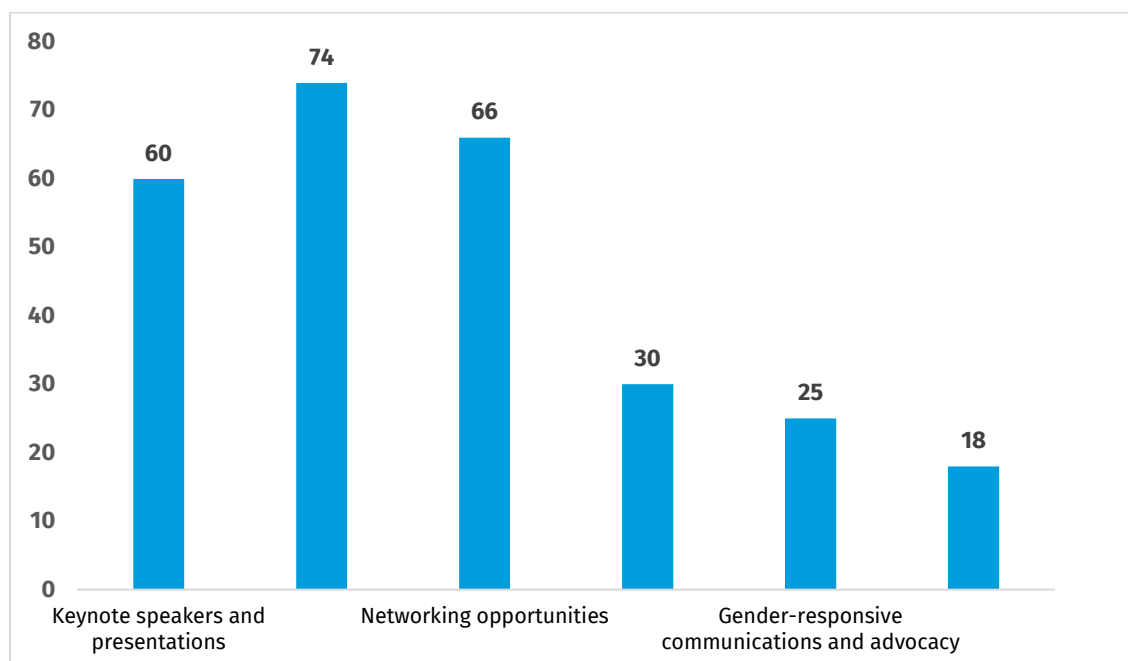
**Figure 8: Survey Respondents' overall satisfaction ratings with the IVECF 2023**



As seen in Figure 8, the majority (77/ 92) of survey respondents were highly satisfied with IVECF 2023.

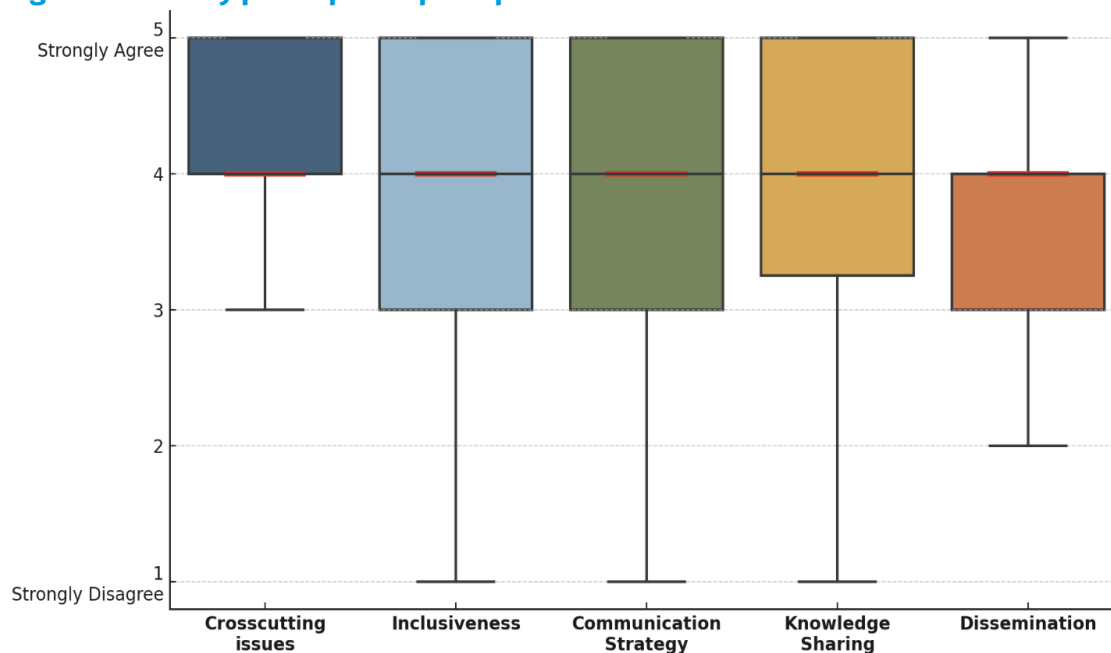
Further, survey respondents identified panel discussions and workshops to be the most beneficial aspect of IVECF 2023, followed by networking opportunities at the Forum.

**Figure 9. Survey respondents' perceptions on the beneficial aspects of the IVECF 2023**



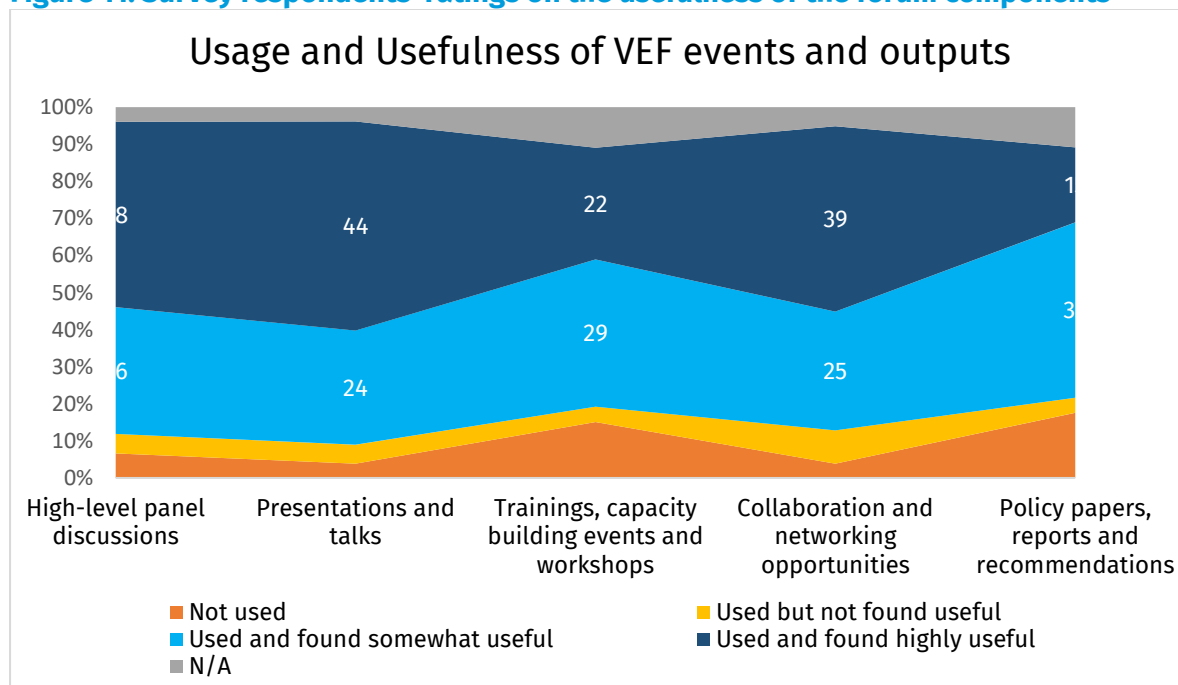
As Figure 10 shows, forum participants found The IVECF to be highly effective in promoting dialogue and knowledge sharing among diverse stakeholders and addressing cross-cutting issues (with 74% and 75% either agreeing or strongly agreeing respectively).

**Figure 10. Survey participants' perceptions on the effectiveness of the forum**



As depicted in Figure 11, most VEF events, and outputs such as high-level panel discussions, presentations and talks, and collaboration and networking opportunities were used and found highly useful by most survey respondents.

**Figure 11. Survey respondents' ratings on the usefulness of the forum components**



Key informant interviews substantiated the usefulness of the forum in shaping dialogues and enabling crucial energy policy milestones. This included contributing to the framing of key global metrics on energy access pertinent to the UN Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All)

goals. For example, one KII respondent stated, "The 2011 & 13 & 15 forums were extremely important as they had a huge impact on informing the SDG agenda. For example, discussions on the Global energy assessment (2012-13) at the VEF contributed to the development of SDG7." This reflects this forum's role in pioneering assessments on normative targets, which have been influential in guiding the policy roadmaps of developing and emerging economies, especially in relation to SDG7.

Additionally, the forum has played a key role in emphasizing and integrating social aspects such as livelihoods, health, and gender into energy policy discussions. This inclusion has been pivotal in enhancing policymakers' understanding of the connections between energy policy and various social issues. Sessions at the VEF 2023 like 'Energizing Health – SDG 7 for 3 and 13', 'Catalyzing Action for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment', and 'Energy Smart Agri-Food Systems for Climate Action' comprehensively addressed these aspects. A KII respondent also highlighted this forum's significant contribution to this evolution, pointing out its role in broadening the scope of energy targets to encompass these vital social dimensions.

Key stakeholders and participants also recognized the forum as a pivotal platform for catalyzing action, effectively highlighting the latest insights to diverse groups and enhancing their credibility. A KII respondent commented on this forum's utility, noting it as a key channel for disseminating knowledge. Industry representatives often use this forum to introduce promising technologies, with examples potentially including innovations in solar energy, fossil-free steel, and climate-friendly housing solutions. Similarly, government stakeholders utilize these gatherings to explore the integration of innovative models and social enterprise initiatives, like clean fuel mini-grids, into their strategies.

The forum has been noted for its role in supporting and recognizing impactful initiatives. Through its platform, various projects have gained visibility and access to potential support, exemplifying this forum's capacity to facilitate meaningful connections and contribute to advancing sustainable energy solutions. This forum also led to the signing of a cooperation agreement on a Climate Finance and Energy Innovation Hub between UNIDO, OPEC Fund and SEforALL to accelerate climate finance and energy innovation in policy, financing, and partnerships.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding the delivery of expected results from the IVECF 2023, both interviews and secondary documents show that the conference was a successful platform for discussions on nexus themes (new partnerships were created and participants found the panel discussions and networking opportunities to be highly beneficial and relevant to their work). Additionally, there was a strong participation of women and youth with 40% of participants being female and 47% being under 35 years old.<sup>13</sup> Outcomes were also disseminated and promoted and visibility was effectively enhanced through the production of the Summary Document, media coverage (e.g. The Economist, Cipher, Forbes), newsletters (43.5% opening rate), and YouTube recordings (1200+ views).<sup>14</sup>

Overall, interviewees validated Vienna Forum's enduring impact as a policy-solutions platform seeding milestones, showcasing insights, enabling investment flows and cross-sectoral cooperation essential for emerging solution viability.

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12 Press Release: UNIDO, OPEC Fund and SEforALL sign a cooperation agreement at COP 28

13 UNIDO (2023). 8th Steering Committee Meeting presentation

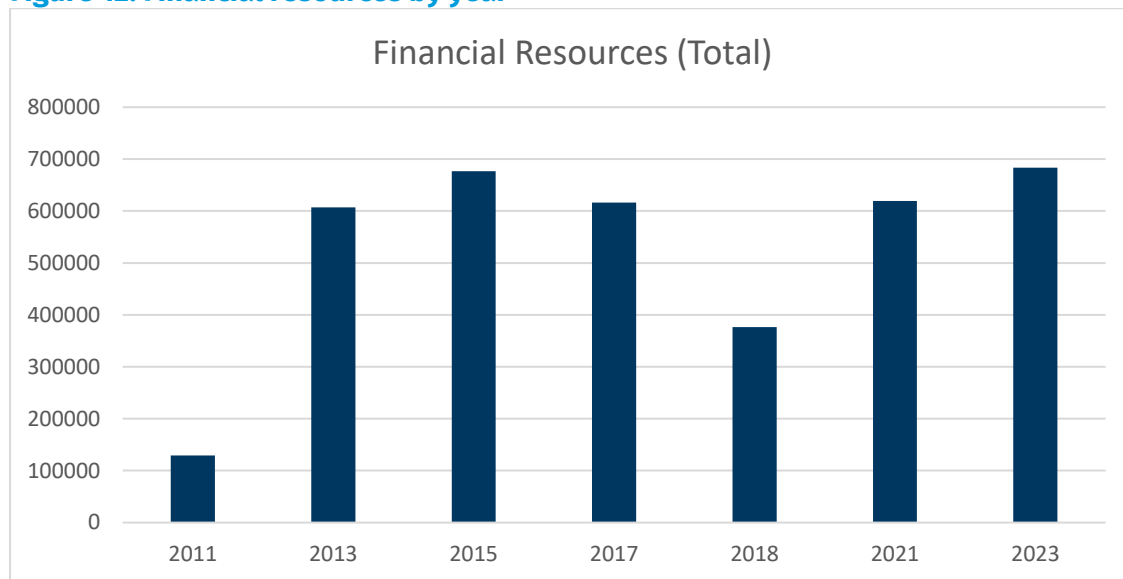
14 Ibid.

### 3.4. Efficiency

#### How efficiently have resources been utilized to organize this forum and linked deliverables in a cost-effective and timely manner?

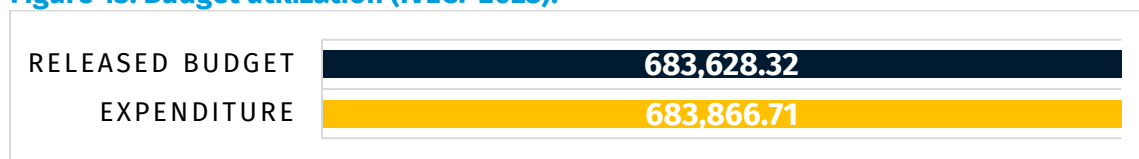
Figure 12 below shows that the expenditure on the organizations of the forums over time has been very stable (generally between 600,000 to 700,000 euros with some variations). The cost of the 2018 session is an anomaly as it was a one-day special session. As the costs have remained stable over more than a decade, the evaluation team focused on the 2023 forum for a deeper examination of the efficiency question for which counterfactual information such as alternative venues were considered.

Figure 12. Financial resources by year



This forum delivered its expected results within a shoestring budget while maximizing the use of limited staff and other resources. The total budget released for the 2023 forum was 683,628.32EUR and total expenditures were 683,866.71EUR.

Figure 13. Budget utilization (IVECF 2023).



The forum has been efficient in allocating resources towards core activities like facilitating dialogues, organizing panels, and promoting knowledge exchange. Respondents noted this forum effectively brought together diverse participants and enabled meaningful discussions, indicating a good return on investment.

The choice of a high-profile venue like Hofburg Palace incurs higher costs but lends prestige, as shifting venues could impact the level of participation and engagement. Improving certain digital systems and their user-friendliness could help expand outreach efficiently. Consequently, survey and KII respondents suggested exploring hybrid options for improved accessibility and cost-effectiveness.

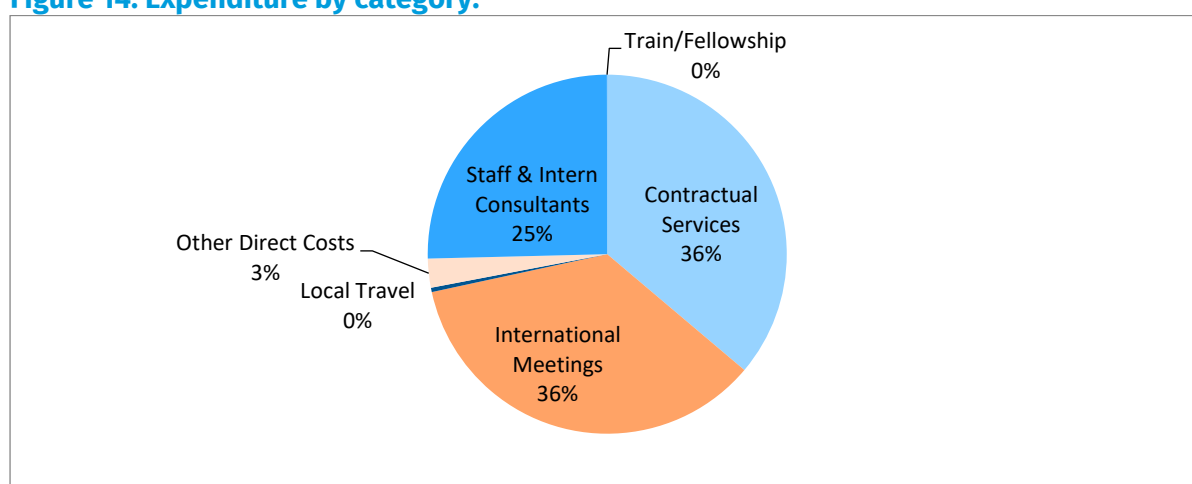


There were also indications of administrative challenges, particularly regarding timely information dissemination and stakeholder coordination. Streamlining processes could improve efficiency. While marketing and publicity efforts were generally positively received, a more strategic approach to local media and public engagement could increase visibility and impact.

This forum made commendable efforts to include diverse voices, especially from developing countries. However, some respondents felt more resources could be allocated to facilitate the participation of delegates from low-income regions through travel and accommodation support.

Leveraging partnerships without significant financial implications was highlighted as an area of efficiency. However, exploring more diverse collaborations, including with the private sector, could enhance resource mobilization.

**Figure 14. Expenditure by category.**



As indicated in the above figure, 'Contracts' and 'International Meetings' had the highest expenses. Followed by 'Staff & Interns', and 'Other Direct Costs'. The categories with the lowest spending include 'Local Travel' and 'Trainings/Fellowships'.

The forum's midterm review made some recommendations for savings by exploring the possibility of other venues<sup>15</sup> and although alternative venues were explored for the 2023 forum (e.g. Messe Wien), the alternative location was significantly smaller, and the booking had already been made with Hofburg (a change would have incurred a significant cancellation fee).<sup>16</sup>

In summary, while the forum used resources effectively to achieve outcomes, there is room for improvement around venue selection, technology, administration, inclusivity support, and diversified funding via partnerships. A strategic approach could enhance impact and sustainability.

### 3.5. Progress to Impact

#### **What impact has this forum had on policy decisions, sustainable energy practices, and partnership formation within the energy sector?**

<sup>15</sup> UNIDO - Independent review Vienna Energy Forum (VEF) - VEF 2009, VEF 2011, VEF 2013, VEF 2015

<sup>16</sup> Steering Committee Presentation - Venue Options

## **To what extent has this forum contributed towards SDGs? What impact has this forum had on community building over the years?**

According to the evaluation's analysis of the forum's outcome documents, it appears to be contributing to shaping the agenda at events such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 28 and the SDG processes. Growth in participation levels over the decade also indicates the forum's contribution to community building in the sustainable energy sphere. A review of the 2021 VEF outcome document suggested that the forum appears to be shaping policy decisions, adopting sustainable practices, and contributing to the broader energy transition and development goals. For instance, this report highlighted that a key recommendation from the first VEF in 2009 was influential in building momentum for the adoption of a goal focusing on affordable, clean energy for all (SDG 7). Partnerships launched under this forum, like IRENA, have advanced renewable energy deployment globally. The sessions also facilitated national and corporate policymakers sharing plans and best practices to integrate renewables, phase out fossil fuel subsidies, and promote energy efficiency. The 2023 IVECF summary document also suggests the forum's efforts towards global impact by highlighting innovative and currently relevant energy solutions from both developed and developing countries and promoting the participation of youth by providing a platform for youth to discuss the energy transition, climate action, and sustainable development at youth solution days.<sup>17</sup>

***"There are so many experts from different levels, generations, and organizations here, offering so much diversity. It's a wonderful opportunity to meet, hear, and get inspired."*<sup>18</sup> Project Associate.**

Data from the survey shows that most respondents found this forum to be impactful. For example, 59% agreed or strongly agreed that actions and partnerships were formed as a result of this forum and 65% agreed or strongly agreed that this forum influences policy development (see

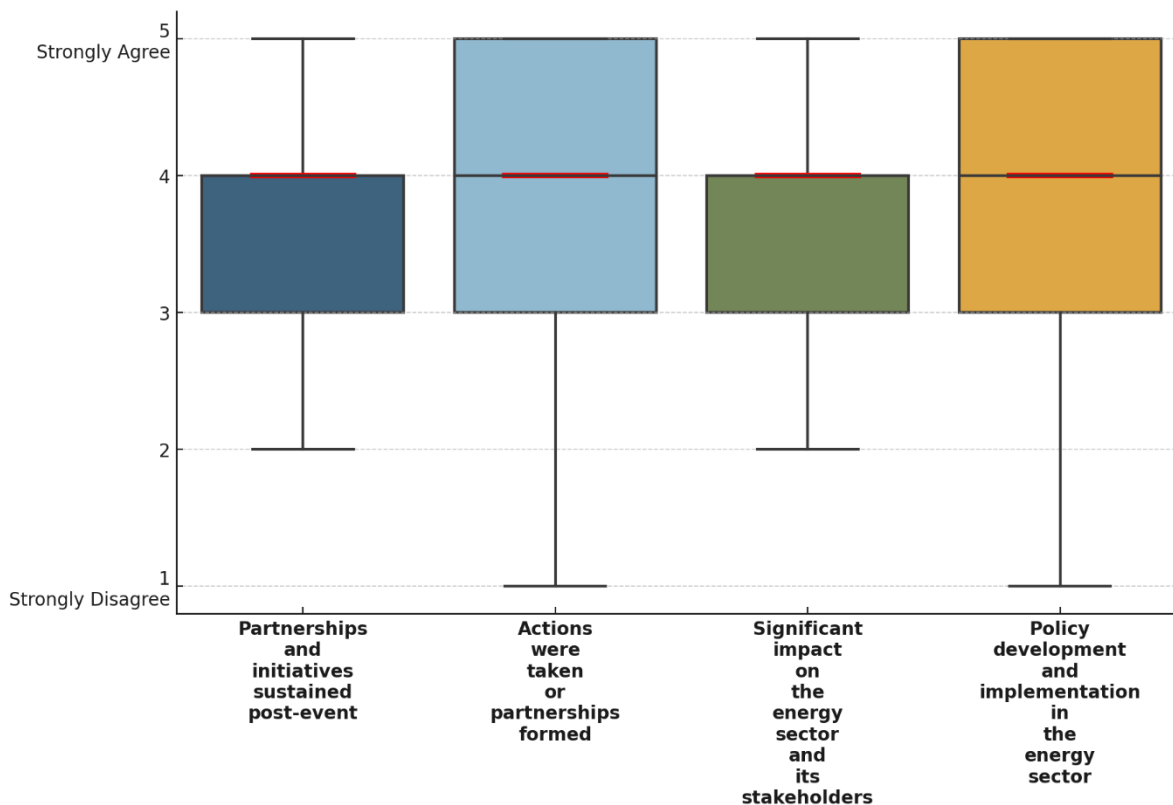
Figure 15 for further perceptions on the IVECF impact).

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<sup>17</sup> UNIDO (2023). IVECF Summary

<sup>18</sup> IVECF 2023 Wrap-up Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUTFOCBIZtE>

**Figure 15: Survey respondents' perceptions on the forum's progress toward Impact**



Desk review and interviews indicate that the forum has consistently highlighted innovative sustainable energy technologies, leading to increased awareness and adoption. For instance, a session titled “Solar Irrigation for Smallholder Farmers – Is It Increasing Resilience and Reducing Poverty?” involved collaboration between GIZ, IKEA Foundation, SNV, Oorja, and SunCulture. This session delved into how solar irrigation could enhance resilience and reduce poverty among smallholder farmers, examining its successes and challenges. The discussion convened diverse perspectives, encompassing donors, implementers, and private sector representatives, each contributing to a holistic understanding of the technology's impact on sustainable agriculture.

This forum has also been crucial in pushing the global agenda towards a quicker energy transition. As per discussions with industry experts during IVECF 2023, several governments have initiated policies to phase out fossil fuels, attributing their inspiration to this forum's dialogues. While multiple key informants noted that the forum positively influences energy policymaking, they believed that direct policy changes cannot be expected from a forum like the IVECF. Instead, the strength of the forum lies in fostering a global dialogue, sharing innovative ideas, and aligning stakeholders toward common goals in the energy sector. Survey respondents and key stakeholders further suggested that including forum outcomes in high-level fora significantly supports forming new partnerships and aids Member States in implementing energy and climate change strategies.

The forum is credited with facilitating partnerships and exchange of ideas between developed and less developed countries, which contributed toward realizing impacts. As one respondent put it, the forum served as a "meeting point for various conversations" that "changed plans and relationships in a way that wouldn't have happened elsewhere." Participants also mentioned the forum's contribution towards innovation and scaling up of solutions including in rural areas. Multiple respondents highlighted the diversity of stakeholders in attendance as a strength of the forum for enabling cross-country collaboration- outcomes that indirectly contribute to the achievement of long-term impacts. However, some respondents voiced that developing countries and grassroots representation could be improved in future forums to allow an even broader exchange of ideas across different levels of development.

Key respondents also noted the forum's role in contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals agenda-setting process in earlier years, including informing the definition of SDG indicators on affordable and clean energy. Some respondents saw its influence on global processes as having diminished more recently. Interviewees had mixed opinions on the forum's impact in driving high-level policy change going forward. Some respondents indicated that immediate policy changes post-forum events are often unlikely but did see the potential for more gradual influence through knowledge exchange networks formed. The assumption here is that the knowledge and partnerships generated are more than a bucket in the drop of overall dialogue that leads to intended impacts and that this can be reasonably attributed to the forum.

The forum's alignment and contribution to Sustainable Development Goals, especially affordable clean energy, was frequently mentioned by survey and KII respondents. While the forum has a limited role in directly shaping national agenda strategies, its influence on global climate discourse is also evident, with discussions and insights referenced in larger negotiations.

Overall, findings indicate the forum has significantly promoted sustainable energy solutions, influenced policies, fostered technology adoption, and engaged communities. Continued efforts to expand its reach and impact are essential for sustaining its energy sector influence globally.

### **3.6. Sustainability**

**How sustainable are partnerships, initiatives, and policy changes achieved by this forum, with or without further interventions?**

## **What steps including activities and media platforms has this forum undertaken to sustain participant engagement and attention over time?**

VEF 2021 identified the deployment of innovative business models as a prerequisite to stimulating renewable energy markets whilst reducing barriers to entry for both entrepreneurs and end users. This forum emphasized the creation of enabling environments by increasing consumer awareness, improving access to climate finance, increasing partnerships, and creating adequate regulatory frameworks to catalyze long-term change. Taking action for sustained change in the energy sector was also stressed by the 2023 forum and this outcome was supported by the survey as 59% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that partnerships and initiatives discussed during this forum were sustained post-event. However, data limitations pose constraints in assessing the durability of partnerships formed during the forum's events over the long term.

This forum's role in capacity building and knowledge transfer is well-documented, with developing country participants appreciating technical workshops enabling the implementation of innovative energy solutions locally. Survey and KII respondents also highlighted the long-lasting impact and knowledge transfer facilitated by the forum. For example, a government stakeholder expressed: "I intend to disseminate the lessons learned to other practitioners to strengthen local capacities for the accelerated development of Small Hydropower Plants. Additionally, I plan to organize local capacity-building workshops to promote the adoption of Technical Development Services and encourage local participation in the study, design, and construction of Small Hydropower Plants."

There is substantial evidence that the forum has empowered communities by providing platforms to share experiences and learn global best practices. Community leaders from various regions have implemented sustainable energy projects inspired by the forum. Long-term community projects initiated through the connections made at the forum were also highlighted. The forum's influence in stimulating market innovations in the energy sector was noted by stakeholders like a technology manufacturer who credited this forum for providing insights leading to new energy-efficient product development. The sustained engagement of various industry players in successive events also indicates recognition of this forum's value.

Overall, findings suggest the forum fostered partnerships and initiatives have been sustainable, with examples of enduring policy changes and applied knowledge sharing. These collaborations have not only shaped national and international strategies but also empowered communities and industry. Continued support to maintain and enhance the sustainability of these outcomes remains essential.

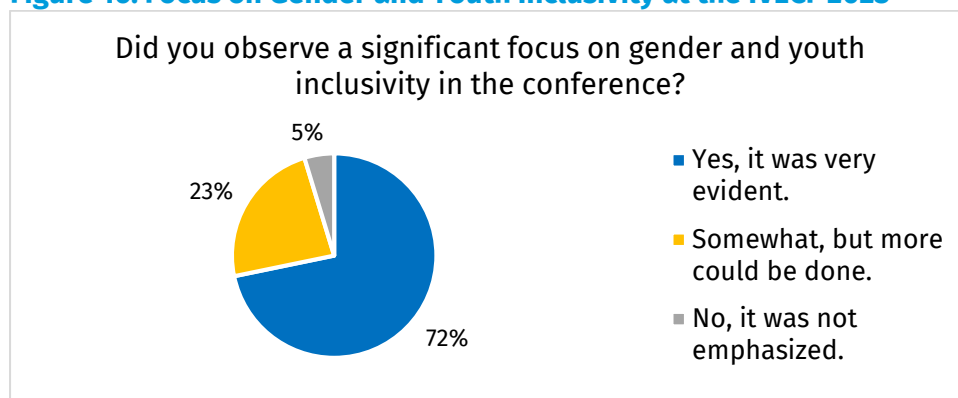
### **3.7. Cross-cutting issues**

#### **To what extent were gender, environment, and youth considered in the forum's work?**

A review of the forum's outcome reports indicated increased consideration of cross-cutting issues such as gender and youth engagement over the years. For instance, the 2021 and 2023 conferences included events focused on gender inclusivity and youth engagement, signifying this forum's effort toward integrating these perspectives. These forums emphasized the need for humanizing energy through the inclusion of women and youth who can play an important role as catalysts for change in energy transition. Youth and

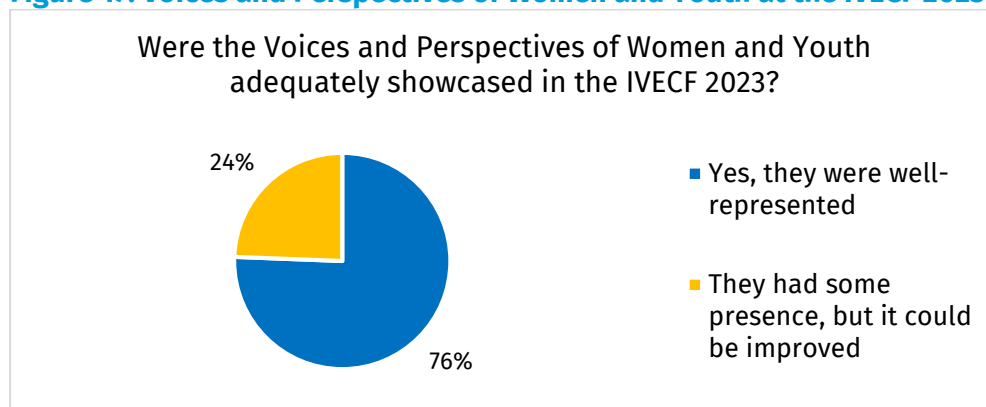
female officials, entrepreneurs, and non-profit practitioners were engaged in panel discussions and debates. While VEF 2018 emphasized the need to support and create opportunities for SMEs and entrepreneurs especially for women and youth, VEF 2021 laid out the groundwork for further discourse around forum development assistance, early-stage funding, and more flexible approaches to financing targeting youth and female entrepreneurs in the renewable energy domain. VEF 2021 recognized the central role digitalization can play in increasing the involvement of youth and women in the renewable energy domain. IVECF 2023 went even further to give voice to youth by adding Youth Solution Days to promote meaningful youth engagement and empower young people to take action towards achieving the SDGs. The forum also made significant efforts to mainstream gender into this forum by seeking gender balance amongst speakers, participants, and facilitators, featuring targeted activities for women and girls, and recognizing the importance of overcoming the persistent gender gap and that women play a strong role as actors for change in the energy sector. The prominence of environmental sustainability as a cross-cutting theme has been a consistent staple across all forum conferences in the context of renewable energy, transport decarbonization, nexus approaches etc. Recommendations/calls for disaggregated data analysis by gender and age also demonstrate intent toward more holistic and inclusive discourse within this forum. While detailed breakdowns require further analysis, most of the survey responses indicate an emphasis on gender and youth engagement.

**Figure 16. Focus on Gender and Youth Inclusivity at the IVECF 2023**



As Figure 16 shows, 72% of the evaluation survey respondents believed it was highly evident that the conference emphasized and focused on gender and youth inclusivity. Similarly, 76% of survey respondents believed that the voices of women and youth were adequately showcased in the IVECF whilst 28% highlighted the need for improvement.

**Figure 17. Voices and Perspectives of Women and Youth at the IVECF 2023**



IVECF made concerted efforts to integrate gender perspectives into its agenda, with several sessions specifically addressing gender issues in energy and climate change. However, feedback from female participants suggests that while representation has improved, there is room for more substantive discussions on gender-specific challenges and solutions. This aligns with findings from the 2017 evaluation of the Independent Review of the Vienna Energy Forum (VEF), encompassing VEF 2009, VEF 2011, VEF 2013, and VEF 2015.

This forum has actively involved youth through dedicated sessions like an innovation challenge. However, some youth representatives suggested more direct interaction opportunities with leaders to amplify their voices and contributions.

*"Having three dedicated days for young people was really helpful to me; I've had a blast." – Member of the Youth Advisory Group.*

Climate change has been a recurring theme in discussions, with several participants emphasizing the need for more targeted sessions dedicated to the practical translation of climate commitments into actionable and implementable strategies

Issues related to sustainable development and conservation were well-represented. For example, one of the survey respondents noted the forum facilitated the exchange of ideas and fostered interactions between young professionals and experts in the field. This engagement was seen as pivotal in enhancing understanding and promoting actionable strategies towards environmental sustainability and energy efficiency.

*"Participating in the Youth Solution Days at the [2023 forum] was an enlightening experience that provided several crucial takeaways. Firstly, the forum reiterated the urgency and global commitment required to address climate change. Learning from diverse perspectives and innovative ideas shared by international delegates highlighted the significance of collaborative efforts towards sustainable energy and climate-resilient development. Secondly, the discussions emphasized the role of technology, innovation, and policy frameworks in achieving sustainable development goals. The incorporation of renewable energy sources, advancements in electric vehicle technology, and the need for eco-friendly practices were focal points that deeply resonated with me. The forum underscored the importance of holistic approaches, considering both societal and environmental aspects. It emphasized the need for inclusive strategies that leave no one behind in our pursuit of sustainable development" – Survey Respondent*

While gender balance in discussions has improved, respondents indicated that creating more leadership roles for women within the forum's structure could further enhance approaches to gender-related energy issues. Additionally, there was a suggestion to establish interactive workshops or mentorship programs to more effectively engage youth, offering practical insights into the clean energy sector and nurturing the development of the next generation of environmental leaders. Moreover, participants expressed a need for stronger grassroots representation, advocating for the incorporation of local community voices to ensure energy policies are responsive to the diverse impacts they have, particularly in less developed regions.

Overall, the forum has made substantial progress in integrating gender, youth, climate, and environmental issues into its agenda and outcomes. However, evidence suggests there is room for more profound engagement and dialogue in these areas. Advancing gender representation in leadership roles, amplifying interactive opportunities for youth, concentrating on implementable climate solutions, and accentuating the effects of environmental policies at the grassroots level could further amplify the forum's significance in tackling these pivotal global challenges.

## 4. Conclusions

Based on the triangulated evidence presented in the previous section, the conclusions of this evaluation can be summarized with the help of the SWOT analysis for the forum considering its activities in the last five year (Table 2).

**Table 2. SWOT analysis of the forum in the last five years**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ High level of stakeholder engagement and representation from different organizations and countries.</li> <li>✓ Well-selected panels and speakers providing latest evidence and showcasing solutions.</li> <li>✓ Strong youth and gender representation.</li> <li>✓ Opportunities for networking and partnership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Too many parallel sessions resulting in difficulty selection for the participants.</li> <li>× Lack of concrete outcomes and follow up actions.</li> <li>× Issues with event logistics - long queues, room labels/maps confusion.</li> <li>× Limited private sector engagement and participation.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats/ Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Fostering more interactive sessions and networking opportunities.</li> <li>✓ Creating partnerships and initiatives as event outcomes.</li> <li>✓ Capacity building for developing countries on energy and climate change.</li> <li>✓ Showcasing successful projects to initiate more projects and partnerships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Lack of funding and/or sponsorships affecting stakeholder participation.</li> <li>× External issues like global conflicts affecting agenda and discussions.</li> </ul>

The Forum remains a critical platform in the global energy dialogue. To maintain its significance and enhance its impact, the forum should adapt to the evolving landscape with strategic focus, alignment with UN goals, stakeholder engagement, and efficient management, while deepening its commitment to cross-cutting themes. Four main conclusions can be drawn from the analysis conducted by this evaluation:

1. The forum occupies a relevant niche in shaping sustainable energy dialogues, especially on industrial decarbonization. Its pioneering role in framing milestone



policies like SDG 7 targets and advancing developing country priorities is reflected across stakeholder evidence.

2. However, the forum should further bolster engagement with intergovernmental agencies and better leverage digital platforms to match today's hybrid participation models, maximizing reach beyond physical attendance.
3. The forum fosters reasonable partnerships, capacity building, and financing flows centered on priority topics like gender inclusion, though administrative delays and marketing gaps somewhat constrain these opportunities currently. Prioritizing early planning and digital access would optimize achievements.
4. Overall, the forum has positively demonstrated endurance as an anchoring forum advancing social equity in sustainable energy globally. However, it must continually expand the representation of marginalized groups within leadership and discussions to sustain differentiation.

Furthermore, the main conclusions for each evaluation criteria are as follows:

### **Relevance**

- The forum has demonstrated high relevance in addressing key global energy and climate challenges. Its alignment with sustainable development goals, particularly SDG7, and its focus on inclusive and sustainable industrial development, resonates with current global priorities.
- The forum's thematic focus areas, such as energy transition, digitalization in the energy sector, and industrial decarbonization, reflect the evolving needs and priorities in the energy domain.

### **Coherence**

- The forum maintains coherence with broader UN and international agendas, particularly in advancing global climate and energy goals. The forum's initiatives complement other international efforts, contributing to a unified approach towards sustainable energy and climate action.
- There is scope for enhanced coherence in terms of synergizing with other UN agencies and global events to amplify impact and avoid duplication of efforts.

### **Effectiveness**

- The forum effectively brings together diverse stakeholders, facilitating rich dialogues and knowledge exchange. This multi-stakeholder approach enhances the forum's capacity to influence policy and practice.
- However, there is potential for increased effectiveness through more continuous, multi-year planning and a sharper focus on specific thematic areas.

### **Efficiency**

- The forum demonstrates efficient use of resources in core activities but faces challenges in areas like venue selection, technological infrastructure, and administrative processes. Strategic resource and funding management could enhance the forum's impact and sustainability.
- Greater resource allocation towards inclusivity and diversifying funding sources could improve the efficiency of the forum's reach and impact.

### **Impact**

- The forum has influenced global energy policies, fostered technology adoption, and engaged diverse community groups. Its role in energy transition and shaping both global and local energy discourses is well-recognized.
- This forum's alignment with and contribution to SDGs, particularly in advancing affordable and clean energy, underscores its substantial impact on the global energy landscape.

### **Sustainability**

- The sustainability of partnerships and initiatives fostered by the forum is evident, with numerous examples of enduring collaborations and policy influences. These outcomes contribute to long-term impacts in the energy sector.
- Continued support and strategic planning are essential to sustain and enhance these partnerships and initiatives.

### **Cross-Cutting Dimensions**

- The forum has integrated gender and youth considerations into its agenda, though there is room for deeper engagement and more impactful discussions in these domains.
- The forum's focus on climate change and environmental concerns aligns with global sustainable development objectives, but there is potential for more focused sessions and the inclusion of grassroots-level perspectives.
- Enhancing gender representation in leadership roles, creating interactive opportunities for youth, and focusing on actionable climate solutions can further strengthen the forum's effectiveness in these critical areas.

## **5. Recommendations and Management Response**

The evaluation recommends that UNIDO should consider the following recommendations for improving the effectiveness and impact of the forum going forward.

### **Recommendation 1:** Refined Focus for a more strategic UN alignment

- This forum should continue to refine its thematic focus, capitalizing on its unique positioning in the energy and industrial development dialogue. This includes discussions with key stakeholders on the scope of the topics covered at the forum, where some stakeholders are concerned about the dilution of the uniqueness of the forum.
- Aligning closely with specific UN goals where this forum can offer the most value will enhance its relevance and impact.
- Develop a year-long planning cycle that helps strengthen partnerships with other UN bodies and enhance participation at higher decision-making levels.

### **Recommendation 2:** Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement

- Adopt blended summit formats allying physical gatherings with cost-effective virtual components and boosting developing country inputs. Adopting more interactive formats and leveraging technology will improve stakeholder engagement and outreach.

- Implement targeted marketing plus localization nurturing grassroots engagement and inspiration beyond high-level policy dialogues.
- Early and comprehensive planning, coupled with effective use of digital tools, is recommended for enhanced efficiency and impact.

**Recommendation 3: Efficient Event Management**

- Streamline governance structures to minimize delays, while allocating resources enlarging youth and gender directorship roles driving organic inclusion. This implies that UNIDO senior management should consider assigning dedicated responsible staff/function to build institutional memory and relationships for efficient organization of forums and follow-ups.

**Recommendation 4: Deepening Cross-Cutting Themes**

- A more concerted effort in integrating gender, youth, and environmental concerns into this forum's structure and discussions will bolster its role in addressing these global challenges.
- 

**5.1. Management Response**

#	Recommendation	Management Actions	Responsible function/entity	Target Date
1.	Refined Focus for a more strategic UN alignment	1. Alignment with key UN global forums and processes specifically those related to SDG7, 9 and SDG 13. 2. Positioning the IVECF 2025 for setting the stage for post 2030 Agenda as well as the implementation plan following the 2nd Global Stock-take. 3. Partnering with UN DESA, COP and G20 hosts in organization of events.	Chief, TCS/ECA UNIDO	30/04/2024
2.	Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement	1. Leveraging other co-organizers' network of stakeholders, putting an emphasis on the early engagement of the Austrian industries. 2. Keeping the engagement in between the events by organizing workshops that will set the agenda and focus.	Project Steering Committee Members Chief, TCS/ECA and IVECF team UNIDO	31/12/2024
3.	Efficient Event Management	1. Ensure timely mobilization of the co-organizers. 2. Ensure earlier resource mobilization and establishment of the team. 3. Confirmation of the theme as well as the date of the next event at an early stage. 4. Exploring more cost-effective venue options that would be suitable to the more refined focused and a more strategic UN alignment.	Project Steering Committee Members Chief, TCS/ECA and IVECF team UNIDO	31/12/2024
4.	Deepening Cross-Cutting Themes	1. Deeper integration of the gender and youth as well as innovation and financing as cross-cutting themes across the agenda. 2. Youth: especially, youth workshops as well as discussion with the leaders should be weaved into the event's programme.	Chief, TCS/ECA and IVECF team UNIDO	31/12/2024

	<p>This way they will be able to reach new audiences that wouldn't usually attend youth or gender focused events.</p> <p>3. Gender: Make further efforts to achieve gender parity in all the aspects (speakers, participants) by leveraging UNIDO's network.</p> <p>4. Engaging Working Group Members (women's and youth organizations) in creating and validate the programme of the event.</p> <p>5. Innovation and financing remain the key to each pillar of the agenda, further efforts will be made to weave those two themes into each discussion such us through strategic partnerships (Working Group Members).</p>		
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## 6. Lessons learned

1. Striking a strategic balance between breadth and depth of thematic focus is crucial for maintaining the forum's relevance and unique value proposition. While covering a wide spectrum of emerging issues in sustainable energy, climate action, and inclusive industrial development is essential for alignment with global priorities and the SDGs, it is equally vital to focus on specific topics where UNIDO can leverage its key niche and expertise and offer distinctive insights and drive tangible progress. By engaging diverse stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society, in defining this strategic focus, the forum can ensure it remains responsive to evolving needs and opportunities while retaining its core identity as a leading global platform for advancing sustainable energy and inclusive development.
2. Meaningful inclusivity is an ongoing process and requires intentional design and continuous effort. The forum should strive to bring diverse voices to the table, especially from developing countries, youth, and women, as this diversity of perspectives is essential for finding innovative and equitable solutions to sustainable energy challenges. By treating inclusivity as an ongoing process and continuously working towards achieving intersectional diversity, the forum can leverage the power of diverse perspectives to drive tangible progress on sustainable energy and climate action.
3. Continuously enhancing the hybrid design of the forum can further strengthen its accessibility and impact. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards virtual and hybrid events, and the forum has successfully adapted to this new reality. By proactively integrating the latest digital tools and platforms into its existing hybrid format, the forum can continue to expand its reach, reduce participation barriers, and create more adaptable and cost-effective engagement models. Leveraging the lessons learned from its recent hybrid experiences, the forum can pioneer innovative ways to foster meaningful interactions, knowledge exchange, and collaboration among its diverse stakeholders, both online and in-person. Continuously refining and optimizing the hybrid design will enable the

forum to deliver a seamless and impactful experience, regardless of the challenges and opportunities that the future may bring.

4. Leveraging digital tools, regional events, and targeted outreach can help deepen relationships, translate ideas into actions, and amplify success stories. While the forum serves as a powerful catalyst for dialogue, networking, and action, its long-term influence depends on the ability to keep the momentum going throughout the year in continuous communication, knowledge sharing, and progress-tracking mechanisms.

Note that lessons #1 (strategic thematic focus) and #2 (meaningful inclusivity) are transferable and highly relevant to strengthening UNIDO's global forum function as a whole.

## Annex 1: Terms of reference for the evaluation

### PROJECT BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

#### Project factsheet for the latest VEF project

<b>Project title</b>	International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum 2023
<b>UNIDO ID</b>	220053
<b>Country(ies)</b>	Global
<b>Project donor(s)</b>	Austria
<b>Project approval date</b>	
<b>Planned project start date (as indicated in this forum document)</b>	01.09.2022
<b>Actual project start date (First PAD issuance date)</b>	
<b>Planned project completion date (as indicated in this forum document)</b>	31.08.2024
<b>Actual project completion date (as indicated in the UNIDO ERP system)</b>	31.12.2024
<b>Project duration (year): Planned: Actual:</b>	24 months
<b>Government coordinating agency</b>	Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA), Austrian Development Agency (ADA),
<b>Executing Partners</b>	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)
<b>Donor funding</b>	445,107
<b>UNIDO input (in kind, EUR)</b>	250,000
<b>Total project cost (EUR), excluding support costs</b>	652,500
<b>Mid-term review date</b>	n/a
<b>Planned terminal evaluation date</b>	November 2023 to March 2024

(Source: Project document, UNIDO ERP system)

#### Project context

The International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum (VEF) started as a biennial Forum, which is co-organized by its founding members UNIDO, the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). Starting with the first Vienna Energy Conference (VEC) in 2009, the Vienna Energy Forum (VEF since 2011) was organized biennially in June at the Hofburg Imperial Palace. This year the newly named International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum (IVECF) will take place from 2 to 3 November 2023.

Every Forum is managed as a separate project with respective SAP ID.

In November 2008, a decision was taken to organize a biennial global energy event in Vienna in close cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA) and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). The first Vienna Energy Forum convened in 2009 against a backdrop of heightened urgency and the growing awareness that the global economy requires a fundamental rethinking and restructuring.

The VEF 2009 unanimously recommended the establishment of Energy Development Goals, planting the seed for the discussions that followed and which culminated with the agreement to include an energy goal in the SDGs.

The main objective of VEF 2011 was to mobilize political support and action for sustainable energy for all (SE4All) by 2030 and launch a debate on the framework and elements of a sustainable energy agenda – what later became and was agreed upon as SDG 7 by the international community. It was at this VEF that the specifics of targets for each of the three elements of SDG 7 were proposed and later agreed upon by the United Nations General Assembly. In addition, the UN Initiative Sustainable Energy for All was created with headquarters in Vienna and an Office at the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

The VEF 2013 focused on examining what it would take to achieve the vision of Sustainable Energy for All by 2030. In addition to refining the elements of the targets for SDG 7, This forum focused on issues of the implementation, including policies, finance, enabling technologies, and most importantly the need to develop appropriate metrics to track the progress. UNIDO and UN Women organized a special session on the economic empowerment of women in the energy sector.

The VEF 2015 focused on the need and benefits of synergies across several areas: synergies among the three targets of SDG 7, synergies between climate and development, and synergies across what was tentatively referred to as “nexus plus” between energy, transport, food, water, and health, and synergies among the global, regional, national, and subnational agendas.

One of the main contributions of VEF 2017 was the discussion on innovation and the need for a global system transformation beyond the energy sector.

The VEF Special Session 2018 provided inputs to the review of SDG 7 at the High-level Political Forum 2018. The discussions focused on how decarbonization, decentralization, and the digital revolution were transforming the energy system and how this was driven by policy developments and innovations in technology, regulatory and market frameworks, financial instruments, operational and planning practices, and business models.

Originally scheduled for 2020, the sixth VEF was postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The VEF 2021 met from 5-7 July 2021 in a virtual format due to continuing restrictions as a result of the pandemic. This forum was designed to facilitate a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, and inter-disciplinary dialogue on sustainable energy for inclusive development and productive capacities. Guided by the motto “Where Action Meets Ambition” and designed as the first virtual VEF, the 2021 edition included a Youth Day on the 5th of July 2021, followed by the VEF on the 6th and 7th of July 2021. Project objective and expected outcomes.

The premise on which This forum was established is that many societal challenges, whether related to poverty, climate change, security, health, or income generation, are all closely linked to the nature of the energy systems that are in place and whether these are accessible and affordable. This forum aims at debating real and practical solutions for moving forward toward the world's sustainable energy future.

The main objective of all VEF projects is to design a dynamic, engaging, and inclusive platform that allows for thought-provoking dialogue to discuss key priorities and put forth action-oriented solutions to advance sustainable energy development. Inclusivity is sought by partnering with different stakeholders at the government, UN, bilateral donor, and CSO levels.

This year's IVECF has two components to achieve this objective:

**Component 1:** Organize VEF 2023:

- Organization of a series of brainstorming workshops and stakeholder consultations that will shape the VEF 2023 agenda and speakers' list.
- Gender-responsive communications and advocacy (Develop and implement publicity and promotion strategy of this forum and its outcomes via various types of media sources and channels catering to key stakeholders.)
- Forum report: Prepare and publish the forum report and conduct follow-up activities, including a gender audit.
- Follow-up activities for sustained impact (Engage with key global energy initiatives and partners to enhance visibility and relevance of VEF's impacts and to ensure the sustainability of the VEF as a flagship programme.)

**Component 2:** Organize Youth IVECF

The following are, in brief, some of the expected results of this forum/programme:

- Global partnership on Sustainable Energy strengthened and global debate and discussions on nexus themes (possibly gender and youth) and innovation facilitated.
- VEF 2023 was organized and implemented (under considerations of gender equality/ equity), and its outcomes were disseminated and promoted for sustained impact.
- VEF 2023 will partner up with youth and women organizations relevant to its theme and will work alongside them to best respond to women's and youth's needs, and ensure their voices, ideas, and perspectives are showcased.
- A comprehensive integrated marketing and communications strategy will be implemented to increase the visibility and awareness of topics and issues to be highlighted at VEF 2023. A comprehensive social media campaign will further enable greater dissemination throughout our networks and globally.

***Project implementation arrangements***

VEF is co-organized by its founding members UNIDO, the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA), Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation & Technology Austria (BMK), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA).

As part of the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the key objectives of the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) include combating poverty in developing countries, securing peace and human security as well as preserving the environment, and



protecting natural resources. Strengthening infrastructure, particularly in the water and sustainable energy sectors is another focal area. Austria has obtained considerable experience and knowledge in the field of renewable energy and is ready to share it.

BMEIA has supported the Global Forum on Sustainable Energy (GFSE), which grew out of the outreach efforts of the World Energy Assessment. GFSE is an established multi-stakeholder platform and a partner in the field of international “energy for sustainable development”. It contributes to both the international discourse and information dissemination on sustainable energy. Since 1999, the GFSE has been hosting annual meetings on energy-related issues. Vienna, hosting ten international organizations dealing with energy issues, has developed into an international energy hub over the years. The Foreign Ministry’s participation in the VEFs is an expression of Austria’s consistent commitment to promoting sustainable energy and the international debate on energy.

Sustainable energy supply has constituted a thematic priority of the Austrian Development Agency for many years. The ADA is responsible for implementing bilateral programs and projects in ADC’s partner countries. ADA is thus well equipped to share Austria’s internationally respected energy know-how with its partner countries, with a special focus on renewable energies. With its approach of working closely with public institutions, civil society organizations, and enterprises alike, supporting regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and its commitment to multilateralism, ADA first and foremost promotes cooperation and integration.

The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) is an independent scientific institute that researches the environmental, economic, technological, and social changes we face in the 21st century. Energy research, being one of the Institute’s core research activities, explores energy technology innovation, energy security, energy access and poverty, sustainable energy, and climate change. Its major focus lies on the linkages between these areas and other important global issues such as health, environment, food security, gender, and equity. IIASA’s energy research, for example, the 2012 Global Energy Assessment (GEA), serves as an input to policymaking at both national and international levels. It is also an important contribution to the work of the UN on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and relevant institutions such as UNIDO, SEforALL, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The support of the Vienna Energy Club network including the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP), Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL), and the World Energy Council Austria (WEC) further brings together a rich range of perspectives and key energy questions.

At UNIDO, the Energy Systems and Infrastructure Division (EAE/ENE/ESI), is responsible for coordination of VEF-related activities. EAE/ENE/ESI focuses on promoting sustainable energy solutions and infrastructure for industrial development. The Division positions UNIDO strategically in the global energy and climate change forums and coordinates the global network of regional centers and partnerships.

Considering the changing circumstances concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and the landscape of global energy events the co-organizers recommend an interactive hybrid format, an in-person format with the opportunity for virtual participation.

## **Main findings of the Mid-term review (MTR)**

Energy Forums 2009, 2011, 2013, and 2015 were independently evaluated in 2016, and brought the following conclusions and recommendations for implementation which will be verified during this evaluation:

### **a) Sustainability**

The VEF process would be **sustainable** if a longer-term strategy is in place. In addition to present co-organizers, that is, the Government of Austria, UNIDO, IIASA, and SE4All, it is desirable that new/potential co-organizers and partners such as the City of Vienna, Austrian Private Sector (particularly industry), and others should be involved to formulate that strategy. According to the long-term strategy, the co-organizers would commit themselves and will allocate the required resources in time.

Recommendation 1.1: UNIDO, in coordination with its co-organizers / partners, should lead the efforts to formulate a long-term VEF Strategy to secure the sustainability of the VEF process. Such a strategy should be developed **without delay** and approved by all co-organizers and partners.

Recommendation 1.2: According to the above-mentioned strategy, required resources should be committed by all partners in time and starting at least **two years in advance** of the next VEF.

Recommendation 1.3: Provided that the resources are available, a continuous/permanent VEF Team including at least some core team members with experience from the previous VEF(s) should be established within UNIDO **without delay**.

### **b) Better timing**

The overview table of the VEFs shows that UNIDO's VEF projects were approved rather late in the process. Therefore, better timing is needed and, for instance, steps to achieve the "better timing" would be:

- i. Declaration of commitment by co-organizers: Work on the new (next) VEF should begin almost at the closure of the present (previous) VEF. Therefore, approval of new budgets and declaration of commitments should be made in good time, that is, preferably before the end of the present VEF.
- ii. Approval of budgets and allocation of resources should have precedence over the announcement of the theme, date, and venue of the next VEF. Therefore, first, the budget (or a bridging budget) should be approved then the theme, date, and venue of the next VEF should be set/decided upon two years in advance.
- iii. The formation of a permanent and professional VEF Team is needed to keep the institutional memory alive, to do the forward-looking planning, and to make the proper resource allocations. This organizational team would be in addition to a Core Group of co-organizers working on technical and policy issues.
- iv. The publicity campaign should immediately start after the closing of the present VEF. The campaign should include the presentation of the results (conclusions/recommendations / impacts) of the present VEF and the introduction of the new VEF.
- v. Keynote speaker of the VEF deserves special mention. Experience showed that the popularity and media coverage of the VEF could increase many folds if a well-known keynote speaker is available (re.: VEF 2011 and Keynote Speaker ex. Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger). Therefore, early efforts should be concentrated to identify a "good" Keynote Speaker.

Recommendation 2.1 A "Core Group" of co-organizers should be invited to meet initially by UNIDO, preferably **two years in advance**, to make recommendations on the important

parameters of the next VEF such as budget, theme, date, and venue. The composition and modus operandi of the Core Group should be defined by the sustainability strategy.

Recommendation 2.2 Upon recommendations of the Core Group and as detailed by the VEF Team, the agreement on the close cooperation and division of labor among the co-organizers and partners should be decided upon early, preferably **two years in advance but not less than one and a half year in advance** of the next VEF.

#### **c) Better follow-up**

In cooperation with its co-organizers and partners, a better follow-up/feedback collection methodology must be developed by UNIDO. Continuous and interactive communication with all stakeholders in general and with participants in particular is needed. Therefore, for instance, the steps to achieve "better follow-up" would be:

- i. Effective recording and use of institutional memory is desired. To a great extent, it is possible by creating a permanent VEF Team.
- ii. Immediate responses from participants and also from co-organizers, sponsors, partners, etc. should be collected during and without delay after the VEF.
- iii. Network(s) of all stakeholders should be created, updated, and utilized. It is one of the most valuable assets of the VEF process.
- iv. Project Logframe analysis of previous VEFs was not easy (even impossible) since follow-up of the development intervention and impact of the VEF was not made.
- v. Follow-up activities could help to identify future participants with the right profile and to streamline the publicity and advocacy campaigns.

Recommendation 3.1 UNIDO should, in close cooperation with its co-organizers and partners, lead the work to develop a monitoring and follow-up mechanism to create/keep/update the institutional memory and contribute to the potential network of stakeholders.

Recommendation 3.2 **Without delay**, UNIDO should, together with its co-organizers and partners, start an effort to promote the participation of the private sector in the VEF. Target groups may include but are not limited to the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO), Federation of Austrian Industry (Oel or IV), etc. From UNIDO's point of view, aiming at increasing the participation of industry should have priority.

#### **d) Possible savings**

Savings in the organization of VEF may be possible but they may not be cost-effective. Savings might be possible in:

- **Facilities:** Selecting either Vienna International Centre (VIC) or Austria Center Vienna (ACV) as the venue instead of Hofburg Palace may look less costly. However, over the years, VEF has already been identified with Hofburg and Hofburg has the location advantage and historical attractiveness. Savings may be achieved by:
  - a. Moving VEF to VIC (M and C buildings) or
  - b. Moving plenary to ACV, side events to VIC, or
  - c. Moving VEF to ACV or
  - d. Moving plenary to Hofburg, side events to VIC.

Possible savings will be upset by logistic difficulties of split-venue solutions or applicable higher UNOV rates for interpretation in VIC options or losing the prestigious Hofburg logo. All that may not justify the change of venue to achieve a limited economy.

- **Catering:** The cost is similar in all locations. Economy is only possible by reducing standards and intensity, which may not be recommendable.
- **Travel** support to selected speakers and developing country participants: costs will be reduced by lowering the numbers, which may not be recommendable.

Recommendation 4.1 UNIDO should assess further if other possible approaches could be considered for savings, based on the accumulated experience of previous VEFs.

Recommendation 4.2 UNIDO and other co-organizers should promote the involvement of the City of Vienna in the VEF process. Then Vienna Rathaus (City Hall) can be an alternative venue of comparable attractiveness to Hofburg Palace. Its availability and costs should be investigated.

### **Budget information**

**Table 3. Financing plan summary - Outcome breakdown**

Budget Line	2022	2023	2024	Total
	(EUR)	(EUR)	(EUR)	
Outcome: Global Partnership on Sustainable Energy				
Output 1: Successful Organization of IVECF 2023				
1100 International Consultants/Staff		75,171.00	39,537.00	114,708.00
1700 National consultants/staff	9,000.00	36,000.00	13,500.00	58,500.00
2100 Contractual Services	4,050.00	322,250.00	15,000.00	341,300.00
3500 International meetings (travel)		40,000.00		40,000.00
Sub-total output 1	13,050.00	473,421.00	68,037.00	554,508.00
Output 2: Successful Organization of Youth for IVECF 2023				
1100 International Consultants/Staff		33,700.00	0.00	33,700.00
2100 Contractual Services		10,000.00	0.00	10,000.00
3500 International meetings (travel for youth)		30,000.00		30,000.00
Sub-total output 2		73,700.00	0.00	73,700.00
Project Management and Monitoring				
1100 International Consultants/Staff	16,950.00	33,900.00	30,942.00	81,792.00
Sub-total output PMM	16,950.00	33,900.00	30,942.00	81,792.00
Evaluation				
1100 International Consultants/Staff			40,000.00	40,000.00
Sub-total output Evaluation			40,000.00	40,000.00
<b>Total Budget (EUR)</b>	<b>30,000.00</b>	<b>581,021.00</b>	<b>138,979.00</b>	<b>750,000.00</b>
UNIDO budget	30,000.00	220,000.00		250,000.00
ADA		264,734.00	45,000.00	309,734.00
MOFA/IDF		123,893.81		123,893.81
Others		40,000.00	10,000.00	50,000.00
Total pledged	30,000.000	648,627.81	55,000.00	733,627.81
<b>Total Programme Budget (EUR)</b>	<b>30,000.00</b>	<b>581,021.00</b>	<b>138,979.00</b>	<b>750,000.00</b>
Donor Budget	30000.00	428,627.81	45000.00	503,627.81

SC – Support Costs (13%) (donor funding only)	3,900.00	55,721.62	5,850.00	65,471.62
<b>Total Donor Budget</b>	<b>33900.00</b>	<b>484,349.43</b>	<b>50850.00</b>	<b>569,099.425</b>

Source: Project document

**Table 4. Co-financing source breakdown excluding support cost**

<b>Name of Co-financier (source)</b>	<b>In-kind</b>	<b>Cash</b>	<b>Total Amount (€)</b>
Austrian Development Agency		309,734	309,734
		123,893.81	123,893.81
		50,000	50,000
<b>Total Co-financing (€)</b>			<b>483,627.81</b>

Source: Project document

**Table 5. UNIDO budget allocation and expenditure by budget line**

<b>Budget Line</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Total</b>
	(EUR)	(EUR)	(EUR)	
<b>Outcome: Global Partnership on Sustainable Energy</b>				
<b>Output 1: Successful Organization of VEF 2023</b>				
1100 International Consultants/Staff		55,171.00	39,537.00	94,708.00
1700 National consultants/staff	9,000.00	31,000.00	13,500.00	53,500.00
2100 Contractual Services	4,050.00	15,950.00		20,000.00
3500 International meetings				0.00
<b>Sub-total output 1</b>	<b>13,050.00</b>	<b>102,121.00</b>	<b>53,037.00</b>	<b>168,208.00</b>
<b>Output 2: Successful Organization of Youth for IVECF 2023</b>				
1100 International Consultants/Staff				
2100 Contractual Services				
3500 International meetings (travel for youth)				
<b>Sub-total output 2</b>		<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	
<b>Project Management and Monitoring</b>				
1100 International Consultants/Staff	16,950.00	33,900.00	30,942.00	81,792.00
<b>Sub-total output PMM</b>	<b>16,950.00</b>	<b>33,900.00</b>	<b>30,942.00</b>	<b>81,792.00</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>				
2100 Contractual Services				
<b>Sub-total output Evaluation</b>				

<b>Total Budget (EUR)</b>	<b>30,000.0</b>	<b>136,021.0</b>	<b>83,979.0</b>	<b>250,000.0</b>
	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Project document and UNIDO Project Management ERP database as of 30/11/2023

**Table 6. UNIDO budget allocation and expenditure by component**

#	Project components	Total allocation (at approval)		Total expenditure (at completion)	
		Euro	%	Euro	%
1	Successful Organization of the IVECF	168,208	67.28%	248,611.76	99.44%
2	Project management and monitoring	81,792	32.71%		
3	Evaluation	0	0	0	0%
	<b>Total</b>				

Source: Project document and UNIDO Project Management ERP database as of 30/11/2023

### **Scope and purpose of the evaluation**

The purpose of the evaluation is to independently assess the impact of the Vienna Energy Forums held between 2009 and 2023. The evaluation has the following objectives:

- Assess this forum in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coherence, and progress to impact focusing on this forum’s objectives, performance indicators, stakeholder engagement, knowledge dissemination, policy influence, and long-term impact.
- Develop a series of findings, lessons, and recommendations for enhancing the design of new and implementation of ongoing projects by UNIDO.

### **Evaluation approach and methodology**

The TE will be conducted in accordance with the UNIDO Evaluation Policy<sup>19</sup>, the UNIDO Guidelines for the Technical Cooperation Project and Project Cycle<sup>20</sup>, and the UNIDO [Evaluation Manual](#).

The evaluation will be carried out as an independent in-depth exercise using a participatory approach whereby all key parties associated with this forum will be informed and consulted throughout the process. The evaluation team leader will liaise with the UNIDO Independent Evaluation Unit (EIO/IEU) on the conduct of the evaluation and methodological issues.

The evaluation will use a theory of change approach<sup>21</sup> and mixed methods to collect data and information from a range of sources and informants. It will pay attention to triangulating the data and information collected before forming its assessment. This is essential to ensure an evidence-based and credible evaluation, with robust analytical underpinning.

The theory of change will depict the causal and transformational pathways from project outputs to outcomes and longer-term impacts. It also identifies the drivers and barriers to achieving results. Learning from this analysis will be useful for the design of future projects

<sup>19</sup> UNIDO. (2021). Director General’s Bulletin: Evaluation Policy (UNIDO/DGB/2021/11)

<sup>20</sup> UNIDO. (2006). Director-General’s Administrative Instruction No. 17/Rev.1: Guidelines for the Technical Cooperation Programme and Project Cycle (DGA1.17/Rev.1, 24 August 2006)

<sup>21</sup> For more information on Theory of Change, please see UNIDO [Evaluation Manual](#).

so that the management team can effectively use the theory of change to manage this forum based on results.

### **Data collection methods**

The following are the main instruments for data collection:

- (a) **Desk and literature review** of documents related to this forum, including but not limited to:
  - The original project document, monitoring reports (such as progress and financial reports, mid-term review reports, technical reports, back-to-office mission report(s), end-of-contract report(s), and relevant correspondence.
  - Notes from the meetings of committees involved in this forum.
  - Review of Forum reports and website.
  
- (b) **Stakeholder consultations** will be conducted through structured and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Key stakeholders to be interviewed include:
  - UNIDO Management and staff involved in This forum; and
  - Representatives of donors, counterparts, and other stakeholders.
  - Pre- and post-forum surveys on the value and anticipated impact of the 2023 Forum
  - Network analysis to gauge the expansion of stakeholders since 2009
  
- (c) **Attendance at the 2023 forum:**
  - On-site observation of the organization of This forum
  - Interviews of partners and participants.
  
- (d) **Online data collection** methods will be used to the extent possible.

### **Key evaluation questions and criteria**

The key evaluation questions (corresponding to the six OECD/DAC criteria) are the following:

#### Relevance:

- 1) To what extent does the forum respond to beneficiaries, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities?
- 2) Does the forum address key issues, promote sustainable energy practices, and contribute to global energy-related goals and agendas?

#### Coherence:

- 3) How well does the forum align with existing international energy-related efforts, avoid duplication of efforts, and foster synergies and complementarity with other stakeholders and initiatives?

#### Effectiveness

- 4) How effective is the forum in promoting stakeholder dialogue, knowledge sharing, policy influence, and innovation in the energy sector?
- 5) To what extent has the forum catalyzed innovation and enhanced its geographic and sectoral inclusivity over time?

#### Efficiency

- 6) How efficiently have resources been utilized to organize the forum and linked deliverables in a cost-effective and timely manner?

### Impact

- 7) What impact has the forum had on policy decisions, sustainable energy practices, and partnership formation within the energy sector?
- 8) To what extent has the forum contributed towards SDGs? What impact has the forum had on community building over the years?

### Sustainability

- 9) How sustainable are partnerships, initiatives, and policy changes achieved by the forum, with or without further interventions?
- 10) What steps including activities and media platforms has the forum undertaken to sustain participant engagement and attention over time?

### Cross-Cutting Dimensions (Gender/Human Rights/Social and Environmental Safeguards)

- 11) To what extent were gender, environment, and youth considered in the forum's activities?

### **Evaluation process**

The evaluation will be conducted from October 2023 to March 2024. The evaluation will be implemented in five phases, which are not strictly sequential, but in many cases iterative, conducted in parallel and partly overlapping:

- 1) Desk review and data analysis;
- 2) Inception phase: The evaluation team will prepare the inception report providing details on the evaluation methodology and include an evaluation matrix with specific issues for the evaluation to address; the specific site visits will be determined during the inception phase, taking into consideration the findings and recommendations of the mid-term review.
- 3) Interviews, survey, and literature review;
- 4) Data analysis, report writing, and debriefing to UNIDO staff at the Headquarters; and
- 5) Final report issuance and distribution with a management response sheet, and publication of the final evaluation report on the UNIDO website.

### **Table 7. Schedule and deliverables**

The following schedule and deliverables are expected from the evaluation:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Estimated month</b>
Preparation of evaluation terms of reference	EIO	October 2023
Identification and recruitment of evaluation team (ET) members	PM	October 2023
Literature review and preparation of evaluation methodology	ET	November 2023
Virtual observation of the 2023 IVECF	ET	November 2023
Inception report	ET	December 2023



<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Estimated month</b>
Interviews with UNIDO staff and stakeholders; Presentation of preliminary findings to Field stakeholders	ET	Mid-January 2024
Preparation of draft report	ET, supported by EIO	February 2024
Presentation of preliminary findings	ET	February 2024
Review of the draft evaluation report, based on stakeholder feedback and submission of final report	ET	March 2024
Finalization and Issuance of the final report	EIO	March 2024

### ***Evaluation team composition***

The evaluation team comprises:

- 1) One international senior evaluation consultant with strong expertise in evaluation and research in international development and policy making.
- 2) One EIO Evaluation staff member.

The tasks of the international senior evaluation consultant are detailed in the job description, attached to these terms of reference (see Annex 2).

All members of the evaluation team must not have been involved in the design and/or implementation, supervision, and coordination of any intervention to be assessed by the evaluation and/or have benefited from the programmes/projects under evaluation.

### ***Reporting***

#### **Inception report**

These Terms of Reference (TOR) provide some information on the evaluation methodology, but this should not be regarded as exhaustive. After reviewing this forum documentation and initial interviews with this forum manager, the Team Leader will prepare, in collaboration with the team member, a short inception report that will operationalize the TOR relating to the evaluation questions and provide information on what type and how the evidence will be collected (methodology). It will be discussed with and approved by the EIO.

The Inception Report will focus on the following elements: preliminary project theory model(s); elaboration of evaluation methodology including quantitative and qualitative approaches through an evaluation framework (“evaluation matrix”); Unit of work between the evaluation team members; field mission plan, including places to be visited, people to be interviewed and possible surveys to be conducted; and a debriefing and reporting timetable<sup>22</sup>.

#### **Evaluation report format and review procedures**

<sup>22</sup> The evaluator will be provided with a Guide on how to prepare an evaluation inception report prepared by UNIDO Independent Evaluation Unit.

The draft report will be delivered to the UNIDO Independent Evaluation Unit (with a suggested report outline) and circulated to UNIDO staff and key stakeholders associated with this forum for factual validation and comments. Any comments responses, or feedback on any errors of fact to the draft report will be sent to UNIDO's Independent Evaluation Unit for collation and onward transmission to the evaluation team who will be advised of any necessary revisions. Based on this feedback, and taking into consideration the comments received, the evaluation team will prepare the final version of the terminal evaluation report.

A presentation of preliminary findings will take place at UNIDO HQ.

The evaluation report should be brief, to the point, and easy to understand. It must explain the purpose of the evaluation, what was evaluated, and the methods used. The report must highlight any methodological limitations, identify key concerns, and present evidence-based findings, consequent conclusions, recommendations, and lessons. The report should provide information on when the evaluation took place, the places visited, who was involved, and be presented in a way that makes the information accessible and comprehensible. The report should include an executive summary that encapsulates the essence of the information contained in the report to facilitate dissemination and distillation of lessons.

Findings, conclusions, and recommendations should be presented in a complete, logical, and balanced manner. The evaluation report shall be written in English and follow the outline given by the UNIDO Independent Evaluation Unit. The final report will be cleared by EIO.

### ***Quality assurance***

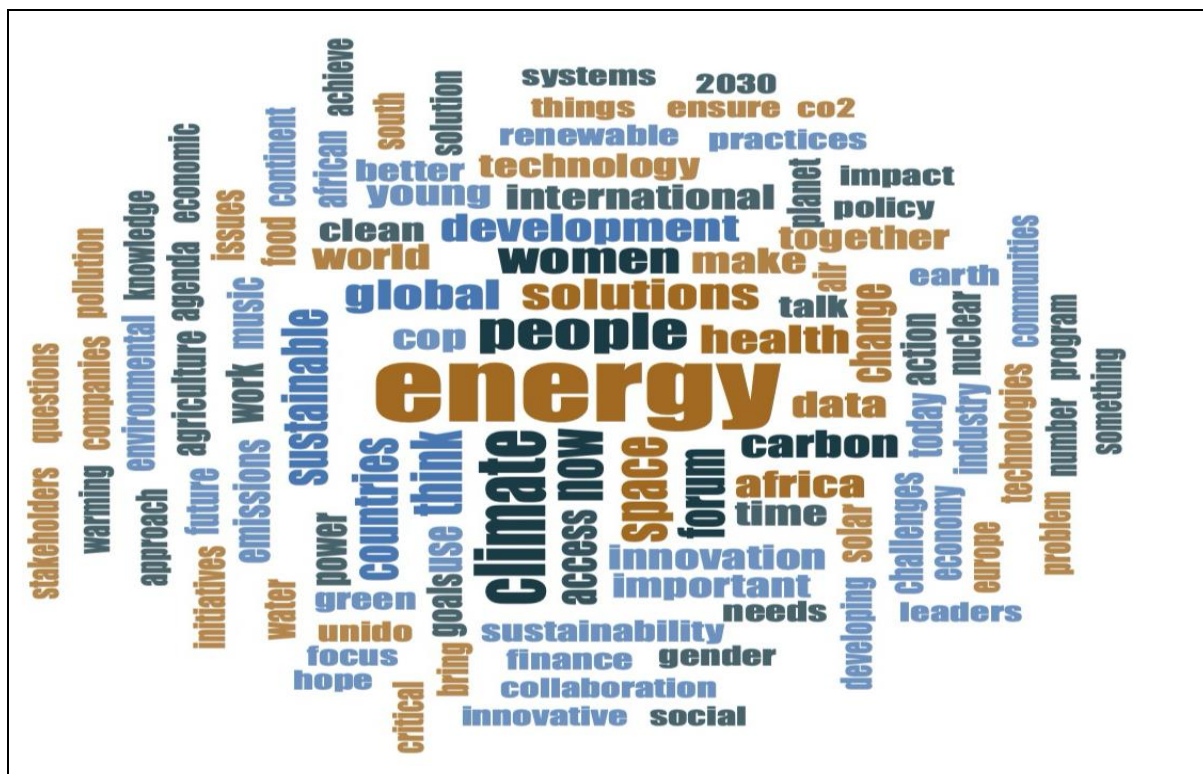
All UNIDO evaluations are subject to quality assessments by the UNIDO Independent Evaluation Unit. Quality assurance and control are exercised in diverse ways throughout the evaluation process (briefing of consultants on methodology and process of UNIDO Independent Evaluation Unit, providing inputs regarding findings, lessons learned, and recommendations from other UNIDO evaluations, review of inception report and evaluation report by UNIDO's Independent Evaluation Unit).

The quality of the evaluation report will be assessed and rated against the criteria outlined in the Checklist on evaluation report quality. The applied evaluation quality assessment criteria are used as a tool to provide structured feedback. UNIDO Independent Evaluation Unit should ensure that the evaluation report is useful for UNIDO in terms of organizational learning (recommendations and lessons learned) and is compliant with UNIDO's evaluation policy and these terms of reference. The draft and final evaluation report are reviewed by the UNIDO Independent Evaluation Unit, which will circulate it within UNIDO.

## Annex 2: Stakeholders consulted (by type)

Type of Stakeholders	Number
Government organizations/ member-state representatives	7
UN agencies	3
Non-profit organizations	2
VEF 2023 speakers and moderators	3
Research institutes and universities	2
World Energy Council	1
UNIDO and project staff	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

## Annex 3: Word cloud



The word cloud was created using NVivo software based on the transcript of the Solution Talks at the International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum, held on November 2, 2023. This visualization represents the frequency of key terms discussed during the forum, as extracted from the event's YouTube video. Larger text in the word cloud indicates higher frequency of use. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJMi3WTU80Y>

## Annex 4: List of documents reviewed.

### Vienna Energy Forum Outcome Documents

1. Vienna Energy Forum. (2009). Outcome Document
2. Vienna Energy Forum. (2011). Outcome Document
3. Vienna Energy Forum. (2013). Outcome Document
4. Vienna Energy Forum. (2015). Outcome Document
5. Vienna Energy Forum. (2017). Outcome Document
6. Vienna Energy Forum. (2018). Outcome Document
7. Vienna Energy Forum. (2021). Outcome Document
8. Vienna Energy Forum. (2023). Outcome Report for High-level Roundtable on Green Public Procurement
9. International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum. (2023). Summary

### Vienna Energy Forum Programmes

1. Vienna Energy Forum. (2011). Programme
2. Vienna Energy Forum. (2013). Programme
3. Vienna Energy Forum. (2015). Programme
4. Vienna Energy Forum. (2017). Programme
1. Vienna Energy Forum. (2018). Programme

### Vienna Energy Forum Project Documents

1. Vienna Energy Forum. (2011). Project Document
2. Vienna Energy Forum. (2013). Project Document
3. Vienna Energy Forum. (2017). Project Document
1. Vienna Energy Forum. (2018). Project Document
5. IVECF. (2023). Project Document

### Vienna Energy Forum Virtual Series Policy Briefs

1. Vienna Energy Forum. Virtual Series Policy Brief: Food Systems
2. Vienna Energy Forum. Virtual Series Policy Brief: Industry
- Vienna Energy Forum. Virtual Series Policy Brief: Products

### IVECF Financial and Planning Documents

- IVECF. (2023). Budget
- IVECF. (2023). Expenditure

### UNIDO documents

- UNIDO GC.16/CRP.5, Development and expansion of UNIDO's partnership approach: the Programme for Country Partnership (20 November 2015)
- UNIDO (2022). Annual Report 2021.
- UNIDO (2021). Annual Report 2020.
- UNIDO (2020). Annual Report 2019.
- UNIDO (2019). Annual Report 2018.
- UNIDO (2021). 2022-2025. Medium-term programme framework. Integration and scale-up to build back better (Brochure)
- UNIDO (2017). Medium-term programme framework, 2018-2021 (IDB.45/8/Add.2, 12 May 2017)
- UNIDO. (2006). Director-General's Administrative Instruction No. 17/Rev.1: Guidelines for the Technical Cooperation Programme and Project Cycle (DGAI.17/Rev.1, 24 August 2006)

- UNIDO (2019). Abu Dhabi Declaration. UNIDO 18th General Conference, 3-7 November 2019, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- United Nations development system reform. IDB.50/11-PBC.38/11
- UNIDO Summary Report from Event at IVECF 2023: Catalysing the Sustainable Development Goals through Clean Cooking
- UNIDO Council on Ethanol Clean Cooking (CECC) Brochure

### **Evaluation guidance documents**

- 1 UNIDO. (2021). Director General's Bulletin: Evaluation Policy (DGB/2021/11, 21 September 2021)
- 2 UNIDO (2019). Director General's Bulletin: Charter of the Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight (DGB/2019/07, 26 March 2019)
- 3 UNIDO. (2018). UNIDO Evaluation Manual.
- 4 UNIDO. (2018). UNIDO Evaluation tools. Guidance for integrating gender in evaluations of UNIDO projects and programmes (prepared by the UNIDO Independent Evaluation Division, August 2018, Rev.1)
- 5 UNIDO. (2018). UNIDO Evaluation tools. Guidance for preparation of an evaluation inception report (prepared by the UNIDO Independent Evaluation Division, August 2018)
- 6 UNIDO. (2018). UNIDO Evaluation tools. Guidance for the assessment of the UNIDO Field representation performance (prepared by the UNIDO Independent Evaluation Division, May 2018)
- 7 UNIDO. (2017). UNIDO Evaluation tools. Guidance and checklist on lessons learned quality criteria (prepared by the UNIDO Independent Evaluation Division, December 2017)

### **Other**

OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation (2019): Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. Adopted 10 December 2019.

- UNIDO (2023). 8<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee Meeting (15 Dec)
- Press Release: UNIDO, OPEC Fund, and SEforALL sign a cooperation agreement at COP 28
- Messe Wien Exhibition & Congress Center; UNIDO Conference 2023 proposal
- IVECF wrap-up video (2023).

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUTFOCBIZtE&ab\\_channel=InternationalViennaEnergyandClimateForum](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUTFOCBIZtE&ab_channel=InternationalViennaEnergyandClimateForum)

### **Websites**

<https://www.unido.org/events/international-vienna-energy-and-climate-forum>

<https://www.ivecf.org>

## Annex 5: Evaluation Results Matrix

**Overall objective:** Contribute to SDG7 and UNIDO's ISID goals towards sustainable energy and climate in member-states and beyond.

Outputs	Outcomes (Including Targets, if any)	Performance Indicator of Outcome	Data Source	Data Collection Method
Forum events, follow ups and other activities	Increased awareness on sustainable energy and climate options	Level of awareness among stakeholders on sustainable energy and climate options	Documents, stakeholder consultations, archival data.	Content analysis, surveys, interviews, FGDs, and archival data analysis
Forum events, follow ups and other activities	Enhanced Global Dialogue on Nexus Themes	Number of dialogues or forums discussing Nexus Themes  Stakeholders/participants' perception of the relevance of themes	Documents, stakeholder consultations, archival data.	Content analysis, surveys, interviews, FGDs, and archival data analysis
Forum events, follow ups and other activities	Strengthened global and multi-stakeholder partnerships	Number of new or strengthened partnerships	Documents, stakeholder consultations, archival data.	Content analysis, surveys, interviews, FGDs, and archival data analysis
Forum events, follow ups and other activities	Increased Private Sector engagement	Number of private sector entities engaged	Documents, stakeholder consultations, archival data.	Content analysis, surveys, interviews, FGDs, and archival data analysis

### Assumptions:

1. The more partners include the VEF outcome in high-level fora, the bigger the impact of the VEF discussions.
2. Reaching the outcome of the project greatly depends on the level of policy and opinion-makers the co-organizers can mobilize.
3. External factors which could negatively affect the organization include logistical and administrative issues and possible travel restrictions. Hence, the hybrid format of the forum is preferred

## Annex 6: Data Collection and Analysis Strategy

<i>Evaluation criteria and questions</i>	<i>Data source</i>	<i>Analytical method</i>
<i>Relevance</i>		
1. To what extent do the VEF objectives respond to beneficiaries, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities?	Stakeholder consultations (Interviews, FGDs, Survey)	Content analysis Survey analysis
2. Does this forum address key issues, promote sustainable energy practices, and contribute to global energy-related goals and agendas?	Documents and stakeholder consultations (Interviews, FGDs, Survey)	Content analysis Survey analysis
<i>Coherence</i>		
3. How well does this forum align with existing international energy-related efforts, avoid duplication of efforts, and foster synergies and complementarity with other stakeholders and initiatives?	Documents and stakeholder consultations (Interviews, FGDs, Survey)	Content analysis Survey analysis
<i>Effectiveness</i>		
4. How effective is this forum in promoting stakeholder dialogue, knowledge sharing, policy influence, and innovation in the energy sector?	Documents and stakeholder consultations (Interviews, FGDs, Survey)	Content analysis Survey analysis Comparative analysis Archival data analysis
5. To what extent has this forum catalyzed innovation and enhanced its geographic and sectoral inclusivity over time?	Documents and stakeholder consultations (Interviews, FGDs, Survey)	Content analysis Survey analysis Comparative analysis Archival data analysis
<i>Efficiency</i>		
6. How efficiently have resources been utilized to organize this forum and linked deliverables in a cost-effective and timely manner?	Stakeholder consultations (Interviews, FGDs, Survey)	Content analysis Survey analysis

		Financial statement analysis Counterfactual analysis
<i>Impact</i>		
7. What impact has This forum had on policy decisions, sustainable energy practices, and partnership formation within the energy sector?	Documents and stakeholder consultations (Interviews, FGDs, Survey)	Content analysis Survey analysis Archival data analysis
8. To What extent has This forum contributed towards SDGs? What impacts have This forum had on community building over the years?	Stakeholder consultations (Interviews, FGDs, Survey)	Content analysis Survey analysis Archival data analysis
<i>Sustainability</i>		
9. How sustainable are partnerships, initiatives, and policy changes achieved by This forum, with or without further interventions?	Stakeholder consultations (Interviews, FGDs, Survey)	Content analysis Survey analysis
10. What steps including activities and media platforms has This forum undertaken to sustain participant engagement and attention over time?	Stakeholder consultations (Interviews, FGDs, Survey)	Content analysis Survey analysis Archival data analysis
<i>Cross-Cutting Dimensions</i>		
11. To what extent were gender, environment, and youth considered in the VEF?	Stakeholder consultations (Interviews, FGDs, Survey)	Content analysis Survey analysis



## Annex 7: Interview Protocols

Interview details:

Name, organization and position	
Location	
Time	
Interviewee(s)	

The following interview protocol for remote/virtual interviews is comprehensive. Interviewers should customize and adapt questions for each interview based on the interviewee's role, time constraints, response, and level of knowledge/ familiarity with topics revealed during interviews. (Note that all interviews should start with informed consent. The interviewee should be made aware that the information they provide will remain confidential and anonymous, they should be told how the information will be used and for what purpose, and they should agree to continue the interview.)

Interview Question	Response
<b>Relevance</b>	
1. Can you describe your role and how it intersects with the Vienna Energy Forum's objectives? In what ways do you believe the VEF aligns with the priorities and policies of key stakeholders, beneficiaries, and partner/institution needs?	
2. What impact do you perceive the VEF has had on addressing global energy challenges and promoting sustainable solutions? How does it contribute to international energy and sustainability frameworks like SDG7?	
<b>Coherence</b>	
3. How do you assess the VEF's alignment and synergy with other global energy initiatives? In what ways has it avoided duplication and fostered effective collaboration?	
<b>Effectiveness</b>	
4. From your perspective, how has the VEF facilitated dialogue, knowledge exchange, and new collaborations? Can you provide specific examples or evidence?	
5. To what extent has the VEF influenced policy decisions, innovative energy solutions, and global or local partnerships and investments in the energy sector?	
6. Can you provide examples or insights on how This forum has stimulated innovation in its domain? Additionally, how has it expanded its reach in terms of geographic and sectoral inclusivity over time?	
<b>Efficiency</b>	
7. How would you evaluate the VEF's resource and funding efficiency in achieving its outcomes? Are there areas where resource utilization could be improved?	
<b>Impact</b>	
8. What tangible impacts can be attributed to the VEF in terms of sustainable energy solutions and energy transition? How has it influenced global and local policies, technology adoption, and community engagement?	
<b>Sustainability</b>	
9. In your view, how sustainable are the partnerships and initiatives fostered by the VEF? Is there evidence of enduring policy changes or ongoing application of shared knowledge?	
10. Can you describe the extent of various activities and the use of media platforms by This forum to sustain participant engagement and attention? Could you provide specific examples of how these strategies have been effective over time?	
<b>Cross-cutting Issues</b>	

11. To what extent have gender, youth, climate change, and environmental concerns been integrated into the VEF's agenda and outcomes? Where do you see room for improvement?

## Annex 8: List of Stakeholders

- Steering Committee Members
  1. Manfred Bürstmayr, Austrian Development Agency (ADA).
  2. Anton Wein Wislocki, Federal Ministry of Republic of Austria European and International Affairs (BMEIA).
  3. Haider Jasmin, Federal Ministry for Climate Action, the Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK).
  4. Elfriede-Anna-More, Federal Ministry for Climate Action, the Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK).
  5. Shonali Pachauri, International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA).
  
- Participants and organizers of the side events at the 2023 forum
  6. Philip Cornell, Global Practice Lead at Economist Impact
  7. Ramy George Yacoub, Youth Delegate.
  8. Neha Jain, Entrepreneur.
  9. Pravashen Naidoo.
  10. Wei Huang, Director of Planning, Information and Knowledge Management, IAEA.
  11. Bianca Carpinelli, Associate Coordination Officer, IAEA.
  12. Irina Lazzarini, Principal Specialist, SEforALL.
  13. Giulia Manconi, Senior Programme Officer Energy Security, OSCE.
  14. Irene Giner-Reichl, Global Women's Network for Energy Transition.
  15. Regina Wiala Zimm, City of Vienna.
  16. Lara Schmidt, City of Vienna.
  17. Eva Janechoa, Austrian Energy Agency.
  18. Leonardo Barreto, Austrian Energy Agency.
  19. Martin Niemez, UNDESA.
  20. Dominika Zahrer, UNDESA.
  21. Rana Adib, REN 21.
  22. Alexandra Chupina, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership, REEP.
  23. Paola Frankl, International Energy Agency.
  24. Hugo Salamanca, International Energy Agency.
  25. Reyna Ubeda, International Communication Union.
  26. Cristina Bueti, International Communication Union.
  27. Ivo Wakounig, Senior Advisor, World Energy Council – Austria.
  28. David Arinze, United Nations Maor Group for Children and Youth, SDG 7 Youth Constituency.
  29. Asma Rouabhia, United Nations Maor Group for Children and Youth, SDG 7 Youth Constituency.
  30. Jens Burgtorf, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (GIZ).
  31. Kerstin Linden, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (GIZ).
  32. Jens Jaeger, Alliance for Rural Electrification.
  33. Mate Heisz, Solar Power Europe.
  34. Grace Young, Student Energy.
  35. Sheila Oparaocha, Energia.
  36. Jakob Muellner, Wien University.

- Speakers at the 2023 Forum

37. Roberta Boscolo, Climate and Energy Lead, WMO.

38. Rana Adib, Executive Director, REN21.

39. Helen Watts, Executive Director, Student Energy.

40. Cornelius Patt, Founder and Principal Investor, Voltares Group.

- UNIDO Project Managers and project leads over the years

41. Rana Ghoneim, UNIDO.

42. Tareq Emtairah.

43. Takeshi Nagasawa.

44. Kandeh Yumkell.

45. Pradeep Monga.

## Annex 9: Evaluation work plan

Activity	Responsibility	Estimated month
Preparation of evaluation terms of reference	EIO	October 2023
Identification and recruitment of evaluation team (ET) members	PM	October 2023
Literature review and preparation of evaluation methodology	ET	November 2023
Virtual observation of this forum conference	ET	November 2023
Inception report	ET	December 2023
Interviews with UNIDO staff and stakeholders; Presentation of preliminary findings to Field stakeholders	ET, supported by EIO	Mid-January 2024
Preparation of draft report	ET	February 2024
Presentation of preliminary findings	ET	February 2024
Review of the draft evaluation report, based on stakeholder feedback and submission of final report	ET	March 2024
Finalization and Issuance of the final report	EIO	March 2024

## Annex 10. Action on Previous Recommendations

Recommendation from the Mid-term evaluation of the VEF, 2017	Status of the implementation
<b>Concept related recommendations:</b>	
<u>Recommendation 1.1:</u> UNIDO, in coordination with its co-organizers / partners should lead the efforts to formulate a long-term VEF Strategy to secure the sustainability of the VEF process. Such a strategy should be developed <b>without delay</b> and approved by all co-organizers and partners.	This forum Steering Committee decided to develop a long-term strategy that responds to the challenges and opportunities of post 2030 Agenda. This evaluation is expected to inform the strategy.
<u>Recommendation 1.2:</u> According to the above-mentioned strategy, required resources should be committed by all partners in time and starting at least <b>two years in advance</b> of the next VEF.	As per previous practices, resources were not committed in time. Some were received 9 months before, while the partner contributions were received only 3 months before the event.
<u>Recommendation 1.3:</u> Provided that the resources are available, a continuous / permanent VEF Team including at least some core team members with experience from the previous VEF(s) should be established within UNIDO <b>without delay</b> .	UNIDO suggested creating a permanent team, unfortunately this forum Steering Committee could not commit at this point.
<u>Recommendation 2.1</u> A “Core Group” of co-organizers should be invited to meet initially by UNIDO, preferably <b>two years in advance</b> , to make recommendations on the important parameters of the next VEF such as budget, theme, date and venue. Composition and modus operandi of the Core Group should be defined by the sustainability strategy.	The meeting is expected to take place in early April after findings of this evaluation have been reviewed by concerned stakeholders.
<u>Recommendation 2.2</u> Upon recommendations of the Core Group and as detailed by the VEF Team, the agreement on the close cooperation and division of labour among the co-organizers and partners should be decided upon early, preferably <b>two years in advance but not less than one and a half year in advance</b> of the next VEF.	During preparations of the IVECF 23, IIASA took leadership in drafting two papers informing the themes and discussion on energy systems transformation and built environment. The next Project Steering Committee (Core Group), based on the results of this evaluation is expected to discuss next steps. The plan is to kick off close cooperation and division of labour among the core group members.
<u>Recommendation 3.1</u> UNIDO should, in close cooperation with its co-organizers and partners, lead the work to develop a monitoring and follow-up mechanism to create / keep / update the institutional memory and contribute to the potential network of stakeholders.	The Standard Operating Procedures were developed after VEF 2021. They contributed to the creation of institutional memory. It currently includes contact list and the potential network of partners (media, thematic, academia, private sector and youth).
<u>Recommendation 3.2</u> <b>Without delay</b> , UNIDO should, together with its co-organizers and	IVECF 2023 built up the participation of the relevant private sector. UNIDO targeted

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partners, start an effort to promote the participation of private sector in the VEF. Target groups may include but not limited to the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO), Federation of Austrian Industry, etc. From UNIDO's point of view, aiming at increasing the participation of industry should have priority.

**Recommendation 4.1** UNIDO should assess further if other possible approaches could be considered for savings, on the basis of the accumulated experience of previous VEFs.

**Recommendation 4.2** UNIDO and other co-organizers should promote the involvement of City of Vienna in the VEF process. Then Vienna Rathaus (City Hall) can be an alternative venue of comparable attractiveness to Hofburg Palace. Its availability and costs should be investigated.

SMEs and entrepreneurs. The focus of the event was on technological solutions from private sector, which were presented at the main Stage. The IVECF Forum team reached out to both WKO and Federation of Austrian Industries. Next time, this forum intends to leverage the Austrian Core Group Members networks in order to mobilize Austrian industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic as well as war in Ukraine seriously (more than 20% increase in the last three years) affected the prices of the catering, venue, travel etc. This forum explored alternative venues such as Messe Wien.

The City of Vienna became a co-organizer of the Youth Solutions Days and led the organization of the study tours. The Rathaus was not available to host the event.

## Annex 11: Overview of previous VEFs

Dates of Forum	Project approval date	Theme	Number of participants*	Budget UNIDO, EUR	Budget others, EUR	Budget total, EUR**
22-24 June 2009	25.03.2009	VEC: Towards an Integrated Energy Agenda Beyond 2020: Securing Sustainable Policies and Investments	778	150,000	138,000	288,000
21-23 June 2011	09.02.2011	VEF: Energy for all - time for action	1,200	150,000	427,000	577,000
28-30 May 2013	09.05.2012	VEF: One year after Rio+20: energy and jobs for a sustainable future	1,621	250,000	430,000	680,000
18-20 June 2015	17.12.2014	VEF: Sustainable Energy for Inclusive Development	1,700	250,000	389,601	639,601

\* Number of participants as given in the final report of the forums. The number of registrations was much higher.

\*\* The Government of Austria covered venue, technical infrastructure, interpretation services, luncheons and dinners, as well as registration services. Also, The Government of Austria covered all costs related to 3 parallel sessions and in cooperation with IIASA organized 1 plenary session at forums organized in 2009, 2011, 2013, and 2015.

Source: Mid-term Independent Review



## **Annex 12: Suggestions from survey respondents (summarized)**

1. Increase focus on water aspects and water-energy nexus
2. Showcase more technological solutions and innovations
3. Enable greater participation and engagement of private sector companies
4. Allocate budgets to support the execution and implementation of solutions
5. Reduce organizational overheads and administrative costs
6. Improve forum website design and user-friendliness
7. Invite more high-level policymakers and decision-makers
8. Promote more partnerships and collaboration agreements, especially in view of events like COP
9. Increase interactive sessions, workshops, discussions, and networking opportunities
10. Improve regional representation and participation beyond Europe/Africa, especially from Latin America and Asia
11. Present more success stories and case studies across different contexts
12. Increase youth participation further through leadership programs, fellowships, and research funding
13. Focus agendas on driving climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, especially for vulnerable countries
14. Improve logistical aspects - venue facilities, transportation, scheduling, document distribution, etc.
- 15., Develop clear forum outputs and declarations to drive policy action and investments
16. Forge better links with global climate financing mechanisms and funds
17. Incorporate more private sector voices and facilitate business/investment partnerships
18. Broaden the scope to include adaptation, resilience, and sustainable development issues beyond emissions reductions