

Are we heading for a modern jazz, unfinished symphony or hard rock energy transition?

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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There is no one-size-fits-all solution with energy transition, but we also don't need to reinvent the wheel every time, says Dr Angela Wilkinson, the World Energy Council (WEC) secretary general and CEO.



Dr Angela Wilkinson, secretary general of the World Energy Council

Africa's population is expected to soar in the next few decades, so getting more energy to the continent's inhabitants is imperative. The International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts that for sub-Saharan Africa to achieve universal energy access by 2030, it would have to invest more than \$100bn a year in the energy sector, which is five times the current level.

In addition, there are places with abundant energy, but we are not connecting it to the people who need it, she says. "Making the market work for more people for many decades is going to be a challenge.

"There's plenty of scope for renewables, gas, responsible oil and hydrogen fuels. We require responsible gas, but not just any form of gas development," said Wilkinson.

"Gas remains a cleaner bridge, but in the long term it needs to improve its performance. This is an opportunity for all of us to move forward faster and further together."

She went on to say that the WEC has developed the [Energy Trilemma Index](#) which tracks the energy transition progress of 128 countries based on three criteria – energy security, energy equity and environmental sustainability. South Africa ranks a dismal 92nd and while its tiny neighbour, eSwatini, was ranked 101 in the latest index, it is “one of the biggest movers in energy transition”.



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Meanwhile, the WEC proposes [three plausible pathways to 2040](#), namely:

1. Modern jazz

A market-led, digitally disrupted world with faster-paced and more uneven economic growth. Recent signals suggest that this entrepreneurial future might accelerate clean energy access on both global and local scales, whilst presenting new systems integration, cyber security and data privacy challenges.

2. Unfinished symphony

A strong, coordinated, policy-led world, with long-term planning and united global action to address connected challenges, including inequitable access and affordable decarbonisation. Recent signals suggest increased activism and commitment to addressing climate change at the sub-national level, and an expansion of the focus from climate change mitigation to a broader, socially inclusive and economically affordable sustainable development agenda.

3. Hard rock

A fragmented world with inward-looking policies, lower growth and less global cooperation. Recent signals, such as the rise of populist leaders and uncertainty about the outlook for international cooperation, imply that this scenario is also evolving into a story of regionally firmer security foundations rather than total fragmentation and “harder rocks.”

“None of these scenarios will, however meet the 2° Paris Accord commitment,” Wilkinson says.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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