United Nations | Committee of Experts on Public Administration 2025

Leveraging key advances in building strong institutions and governance for climate action, focusing on clean energy transition *

Summary

Extreme heat and related events have become more frequent and more deadly due to the increase in global temperatures. Effective governance for extreme heat at all levels is required in response. This includes strategies to prepare for and respond to such events, and to invest in energy resilience and adaptation. Enhancing collective resilience and responding to disparate mandates across institutions requires strengthened collaboration among policymakers and regulators, as well as academia, civil society and private sector actors.

Effective governance for extreme heat: integrating institutional frameworks with the energy shift

The Committee emphasized that extreme heat and related events, such as wildfires, droughts and power grid failures, had become more frequent and far more deadly due to rising global temperatures. Effective governance for extreme heat at all levels was required in response.

Governments would be well advised to begin preparing for extreme heat events with the same sense of urgency and rigour as that associated with preparedness for other climate hazards. Vulnerable population groups with limited access to cooling, ventilation and water faced the highest level of risk during extreme heat events and should be prioritized in extreme heat policies and interventions to help to ensure that no one was left behind.

In addition to the threat to human health and safety, a direct consequence of extreme heat was an increased demand for electricity and the corresponding strain on power grids. Many power grids continued to rely largely on fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas to generate electricity, which in turn contributed to climate change and an increased risk of extreme heat events. The impact of rising temperatures therefore made it imperative to accelerate the transition to renewable energy.

* This brief is an excerpt from the report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration on its twenty-fourth session held from 7 to 11 April 2025. See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2025, Supplement No. 24 (E/2025/44-E/C.16/2025/9). The Committee is a technical advisory body of the Council tasked with providing policy advice and recommendations on issues related to governance and public administration for sustainable development. For more information on the Committee's work, please visit https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/intergovernmental-support/cepa.

The fragmented nature of institutional responsibility for mitigating and adapting to extreme heat was cause for further concern. Preparing for rising temperatures would require strengthened collaboration and coordination among all stakeholders, including policymakers and regulators at all levels of government, as well as with the academic community, civil society and private sector actors such as insurance companies, banks and investors.

Strategies to prepare for and respond to extreme heat events

The Committee underscored the value of effective heat action plans that set out preventive measures and response strategies during heatwaves, ensuring that vulnerable populations received the necessary protection and resources. Chief heat officers could helpfully be designated to lead interdepartmental task forces to design such action plans. The plans should include measures such as identifying triggers and warnings for extreme heat events, identifying populations at highest risk, designing targeted programmes to provide cooling shelters, setting workplace health and safety standards, including for those working in the informal sector, and providing financial support to ensure access to efficient cooling for low-income households.

Ensuring reliable electricity access in public institutions, including health centres and schools, was also crucial for maintaining essential services, such as healthcare and education, during extreme heat events. Those institutions might also serve as cooling centres for vulnerable populations.

While local governments played a vital role in such efforts, they often lacked capacity, particularly in establishing effective coordination mechanisms across departments and promoting multilevel governance structures. In addition, local governments needed to work with other stakeholders, particularly utility companies, emergency services, builders (e.g. to adapt building codes for better insulation) and energy and healthcare providers, in the design of extreme heat response plans.

Targeted awareness campaigns were found to be useful in educating the public and other stakeholders about sustainable urban cooling and available cooling measures (e.g. cooling centres). There was also a need to raise awareness within countries about the broader issue of extreme heat and the importance of addressing the inequalities it exacerbates.

Investing in energy resilience and adaptation

The Committee observed that investment in modernizing power grids was required to manage increased cooling demand. Decentralized energy systems could be promoted by developing microgrids and community-level solar installations to enhance local energy autonomy. Increased investment in solar, wind and battery storage could also reduce fossil fuel dependence. Adopting energy-efficient cooling systems, including by developing new technologies, could further reduce cooling energy demand.

Access to international climate finance was crucial for building institutional capacity, enhancing resilience and facilitating the clean energy transition in developing countries most vulnerable to extreme heat. Subnational governments required particular support in implementing context-specific adaptation measures. Reform of climate finance mechanisms and the establishment of a global heat task force could help in coordinating and accelerating action.

Governments, banks, institutional investors and other actors needed to develop partnerships that made it easier to finance renewable energy investments. Governments could assist directly by lowering regulatory barriers, providing concessionary funds, explaining benefits to the public and otherwise incentivizing investment in renewables.

Enhancing coordination and collaboration

The Committee agreed that global frameworks and multilateral partnerships should be leveraged to promote international collaboration and share best practices and resources, thus enhancing collective resilience and responding to disparate mandates across institutions.

Given the interconnected nature of the impacts of extreme heat across sectors, cross-sectoral coordination was crucial, leading to coherent and sustainable solutions and facilitating national resilience-building. In many cases, it was important to link all those policy elements through a coordinated approach under the broader umbrella of climate action while also understanding accountability framework requirements for effective oversight.

Governments should be encouraged to adopt participatory approaches to engage local communities and other actors to ensure that energy transition and extreme heat strategies reflected local needs and built resilience. Public-private partnerships could be effective in driving innovation and promoting investment in sustainable solutions aimed at combating extreme heat, if properly managed.

Robust data and monitoring systems were indispensable tools for managing the impacts of extreme heat. Collected data from diverse sources could be used for public alerts, early warning systems, community response plans, health surveillance and climate change research.

► **The Committee's deliberations are supported by expert papers prepared by the members in advance of the session. For more in-depth analysis of this issue, see United Nations official document E/C.16/2025/7.**

Action by the Economic and Social Council

On 30 July 2025, the Council adopted resolution 2025/31 on the report of the Committee on its twenty-fourth session (as contained in E/2025/L.23). By this resolution, the Council:

> ***Notes* with concern that many Governments are insufficiently equipped to respond to extreme heat events, which are placing increasing pressure on lives, livelihoods and infrastructure in many countries, and encourages governments at the national and subnational levels to provide institutional and policy support to mitigate the effects of extreme heat and promote adaptation efforts, with an emphasis on protecting those in vulnerable situations, including women, children, older persons and displaced persons, and those residing in densely populated urban areas**.