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Energy Advisor

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June 13, 2025

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FEATURED Q&A

Can Colombia Take the Fast-Track to a Cleaner Power Grid?



Colombia's La Guajira department (pictured) is home to the country's most abundant wind and solar resources—as well as numerous renewable energy projects that have stalled at various levels of regulatory approval. // File Photo: Alexandre via Adobe Stock.

Q Colombia's government plans to exempt some renewable energy projects from environmental and social permitting processes, Energy and Mines Minister Edwin Palma Egea announced on May 22. Fifty-two percent of ongoing wind and solar energy projects in Colombia are currently stalled at local and regional permitting stages, Palma Egea said. Why has renewable energy—specifically onshore wind and solar—stalled so significantly in Colombia? To what extent, and under what timeframe, could Palma's plan to exempt some renewables projects from permitting lead to a faster expansion of clean power capacity in Colombia? How feasible is Colombia's goal of an entirely carbon-free power matrix by 2030?

A José Fernando Gómez Rojas, executive director, and Valentina Rincón, renewables and transition minerals program leader, both at the Center for Responsible Business and Entrepreneurship (CREER) in Bogotá: "The development of renewable energy—particularly large-scale projects—in Colombia has stalled due to three key factors. First, there is a lack of clear and comprehensive regulation governing project development, including areas such as corporate incentives, community benefit-sharing mechanisms, prior consultation with ethnic communities, tariff frameworks and other critical components. Second, institutional capacity at both national and local levels is either weak or insufficient in terms of human and financial resources, limiting the ability to implement and oversee renewable energy projects in an integrated and territory-sensitive manner. And third, social

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TOP NEWS

RENEWABLES

Small-Scale Solar Surges in Brazil

Distributed-generation solar energy has surpassed 40 gigawatts of capacity in Brazil, according to official figures. DG's power output has grown by more than 30 percent since last summer.

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OIL & GAS

Guyana to Become Latin America's Third-Largest Oil Producer

The ExxonMobil-led consortium operating Guyana's offshore Stabroek Block plans to begin exports from a fourth production facility within three months, bringing Guyana's national crude oil production to more than 900,000 barrels per day.

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OIL & GAS

Petrobras Eyes Africa Expansion

Brazil's state-run oil company, Petrobras, views Africa as its most promising region outside of Brazil for future oil production growth, CEO Magda Chambriard told Reuters in an interview.

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Chambriard // File Photo: LinkedIn Profile of Magda Chambriard.

OIL & GAS NEWS

Fourth Guyana FPSO to Open in August or September: Gov't

The consortium of companies led by ExxonMobil that operates Guyana's offshore Stabroek Block plans to begin full operations at a fourth floating, production, storage and offloading vessel (FPSO) in late August or early September, Guyanese government sources told Reuters on Tuesday. The FPSO, which arrived at the drill site in April and is still being installed, will add 250,000 barrels per day of capacity to Guyana's crude oil output, ExxonMobil announced earlier this year. Total oil output from the Stabroek Block, which is Guyana's only active oil and gas project, is expected to surpass

Guyana is set to become Latin America's third-largest producer of crude oil this year.

900,000 barrels per day after the opening of the "One Guyana" FPSO—making Guyana Latin America's third-largest oil-producing country, surpassing Argentina, Colombia and neighboring Venezuela, according to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Guyana's daily oil production by the end of this year will rank behind only those of Mexico and Brazil. (All of these countries still rank behind the United States and Canada, which are the top and fourth-leading crude oil producers in the world, respectively.) The "One Guyana" FPSO will produce a new grade of crude that will be less dense and more pure than the consortium's existing grades, making it more suitable for refineries outside of the U.S. Gulf Coast, Reuters reported. ExxonMobil controls 45 percent of the Stabroek Block; China's CNOOC controls 25 percent and Hess, which is in the process of being purchased by U.S. oil major Chevron, has the remaining 30 percent of the venture. Each oil company independently manages the export

and sale of its share of production from the offshore FPSOs.

Hokchi Seeking to Change Pemex Deal Amid Delays

Mexico-based upstream oil and gas firm Hokchi Energy is seeking to amend its contract with Pemex in order to do business directly with the state-run company's commercial arm, PMI Comercio Internacional, Reuters reported Wednesday, citing three unnamed sources familiar with the matter. Hokchi is seeking to make the change amid delayed payments from Pemex, the wire service reported. One source told the wire service that Pemex owes Hokchi more than \$300 million. Under a proposed contract, Hokchi would sell fuel oil and gas directly to PMI the same way it would sell to any trader, the wire service reported. Currently, Hokchi sells directly to Pemex, which then can use the product in its own refineries or sell it to buyers worldwide via PMI. Hokchi has already tried to change its contract terms twice, including an attempt earlier this year, though Energy Minister Luz Elena González denied the request, Reuters reported. Neither Mexico's energy ministry nor Pemex responded to the wire service's request for comment. "Our dialogue with Pemex is constant and productive," Hokchi told Reuters in a statement. "Our operations have been maintained," the company added. Pemex had total debt of approximately \$101 billion as of the end of the first quarter, The Wall Street Journal reported June 4. The state-run firm has also had difficulty in reaching its production targets; its output of crude and condensates for this year through April averaged 1.6 million barrels per day, a decline from 1.74 million barrels per day last year, the newspaper reported. Pemex faces "severe structural issues such as corruption, labor liabilities and declining crude oil production," Marina Pera, analyst at Control Risks in Mexico City, told the Energy Advisor in a Q&A published Jan. 31. "Over-reliance on government transfers and on fiscal incentives will persist, perpetuating Pemex's fragile financial situation" this year, Pera added.

NEWS BRIEFS

Peru's Largest-Ever Solar Plant Opens in Arequipa

Spanish renewable energy firm Zelestra on Thursday announced the beginning of full commercial operations at the San Martín solar project in Peru's Arequipa region; the 300-megawatt-capacity plant is now Peru's largest single active solar energy facility. Its opening marks an increase of more than 50 percent to installed solar energy capacity in Peru, according to data from Peru's energy ministry. The San Martín project supported 900 jobs at the height of construction, Zelestra said in a statement.

Venezuela's Citgo to Be Sold by Late August: Judge

A U.S. circuit court judge on Wednesday further extended the timeline of the forced sale of Citgo, the Houston-based oil refiner that is owned by Venezuela's state-run oil company, PDVSA, Reuters reported. Appeals court justice Leonard P. Stark ruled that a winner will be announced on July 2 of the multibillion-dollar auction for the seventh-largest oil refiner in the United States, and a final hearing in the sale process will be held on Aug. 18, according to the wire service.

PDVSA Signs at Least Nine New Contracts With Foreign Firms

Venezuelan state-run oil firm PDVSA has signed at least nine new operation and export contracts with foreign companies in order to account for Western oil majors' exit from the country last month, anonymous sources familiar with the matter told Bloomberg News on June 5. The new companies stepping in to replace firms such as Chevron and Halliburton include Buenos Aires-based Aldyl Argentina SA, as well as Chinese firms Anhui Guangda Mining Investing and China Concord Resources, according to the news service.

Brazil's Petrobras Setting Sights on Africa: Chambriard

Petrobras, Brazil's state-run oil and gas firm, sees eastern Africa as its most promising area of development outside of Brazil, CEO Magda Chambriard told Reuters in an interview on June 5. With environmental permitting delayed in Petrobras' exploration venture in Brazil's northern Foz de Amazonas region, the company is actively looking for new projects to boost its reserves, Reuters reported. Chambriard said she expects Petrobras to receive its final permit by the end of July from federal environmental regulator IBAMA to drill for oil in the offshore area along Brazil's northernmost coastline, which is located in the Amazon biome. Petrobras has a drill ship scheduled to arrive in the region toward the end of this month, the wire service reported. On June 4, the government of Ivory Coast gave Petrobras initial approval in the acquisition process for nine deep-water oil blocks off of its coastline, the company announced in a statement. Petrobras is also developing an offshore field in South Africa, and it plans to begin exploratory drilling at its block in São Tomé and Príncipe later this year, Chambriard told Reuters. Eastern Africa's offshore deposits share geology with Brazil's pre-salt layer, a geological formation that is the location of more than 80 percent of Petrobras' oil production in Brazil. "The correlation between Brazil and Africa is unequivocal," Chambriard said.

RENEWABLES NEWS

Small-Scale Solar Energy Installations Surge in Brazil

Distributed-generation (DG) solar energy—small-scale solar systems installed on personal homes, businesses or small plots of land—has surpassed 40 gigawatts of installed

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conflict remains pervasive, compounded by a polarized discourse surrounding the energy transition. Tensions arise from longstanding territorial disputes, unresolved social liabilities from previous corporate actors and the arrival of new renewable energy developers often unfamiliar with the local socio-cultural context. While environmental licensing procedures are indeed time-consuming and require improvements—especially in ensuring access to information and meaningful community participation—exempting projects from these processes would likely exacerbate social tensions and delay implementation. The absence of clear and consistent standards for company-community engagement and the lack of enforceable legal safeguards for communities would undermine transparency and accountability. Consequently, such exemptions would not ensure faster project deployment and may instead compromise the legitimacy and long-term sustainability of the energy transition. Achieving a fully carbon-free electricity matrix by 2030 is an ambitious but challenging target for Colombia. Although the country already benefits from a relatively clean energy mix due to its dependence on hydropower, expanding the role of solar and wind will require structural reforms—particularly in regulatory frameworks, transmission infrastructure, investment attraction, and institutional and social governance in project-hosting regions. Without significant progress in these areas over the next five years, full decarbonization by 2030 appears unlikely. However, Colombia still has the potential to make substantial progress and position itself as a regional leader in the energy transition."

A Liliana Díaz, senior fellow at the Atlantic Council Global Energy Center and term faculty at the Johns Hopkins School of

Advanced International Studies (SAIS):

"Minister Edwin Palma Egea's proposal represents Colombia's belated recognition that bureaucratic paralysis, not technical

constraints, has become the primary barrier to energy security. With 52 percent of renewable projects trapped in local permitting stages while gas reserves dwindle to 6.1 years, Colombia's renewable energy bottleneck reveals a government that prioritized process over pragmatism, leaving billions in private investment stranded and energy security compromised. Colombia's critical juncture stems from a perfect storm of policy miscalculations that squandered the country's natural advantages. With exceptional wind and solar resources, a competitive wholesale power market and relative macroeconomic stability compared to regional peers, Colombia should have attracted rapid large-scale renewable deployment. Instead, the previous energy communities strategy failed precisely because it prioritized small-scale distributed generation over the large-scale projects needed to meaningfully diversify from hydroelectric dependence. When El Niño drought pushed reservoir levels to 29.8 percent capacity in 2024, Colombia faced the harsh reality that a 70 percent hydroelectric dependence requires substantial gas backup—gas that increasingly must be imported at \$15 per million cubic feet, all while President Petro's exploration moratorium prevents domestic alternatives. The irony is stark: Environmental permitting delays block clean energy while forcing greater reliance on costly fossil fuel imports. Palma's exemption proposal, while commercially sensible, arrives after market confidence has already eroded. Major developers like EDF and Enel have withdrawn from projects worth over \$700 million, and even expedited permitting cannot address the transmission infrastructure bottlenecks that will persist until 2027. Colombia's 2030 carbon-free goal remains technically achievable for power generation, but the path requires acknowledging that energy security trumps regulatory perfectionism. The real question isn't whether Colombia can build renewables quickly enough, but whether it can restore investor confidence before its energy crisis becomes a full-blown economic emergency."

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capacity in Brazil, according to data released on Monday by ANEEL, Brazil's national power grid regulatory agency. The figure marks more than 30 percent growth in less than one year, news site Canal Solar reported. More than half of Brazil's overall installed solar capacity—including major, utility-scale solar facilities—is DG, according to ANEEL data. Small-scale solar energy installations have generated \$31 billion and more than 1.2 million direct jobs since 2012, Brazilian solar energy industry advocacy group ABSOLAR estimates. At least 3.5 million DG solar systems are installed across Brazil, 79 percent of which are connected to residential buildings, news site PV Magazine reported. Residential systems account for slightly less than half of Brazil's DG solar power capacity; commercial systems account for 28 percent of DG power capacity despite making up just 10 percent of installations, Canal Solar reported. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) on Brazil's solar energy sector in the Feb. 7 issue of the Energy Advisor.]

POLITICAL NEWS

At Least Seven Killed in Series of Attacks in Colombia

At least seven people were killed Tuesday in a series of attacks in and near the Colombian city of Cali as rebel groups detonated bombs near police stations, the Associated Press reported. Two police officers were among those killed in the attacks, which also left at least 28 people injured, police said. Rebels planted bombs in cars and on motorcycles that were parked near police stations and also waged some attacks with guns and grenades, authorities said. There were 24 attacks the province of Valle del Cauca, where Cali is the capital, and neighboring province of Cauca, according to Colombian police, the AP reported. Authorities said the FARC-EMC, a group of former members of the demobilized Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), were responsible for the attacks. Colombian Defense Minis-

THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

What's Behind a Controversial Oil Spill Law in Guyana?

Q Guyana's government last month passed, and President Irfaan Ali signed, legislation to alter liability for oil companies in the event of an oil spill. The new law requires that firms operating oil and gas assets in Guyanese territory—including the ExxonMobil-led consortium that controls the offshore Stabroek Block—must commit to more regular inspections of equipment; critics argue it creates new discretionary executive powers that could shield companies from liability in the event of an oil spill. How could the new legislation regarding oil spill liability change the long-term economics for the consortium of companies operating the Stabroek Block? To what extent will this legislation affect Guyana's ability to respond to potential oil spills? What does the new law suggest about the nature of Ali's relationship with Guyana's oil sector, considering Guyana is set to hold general elections later this year?

A Melinda Janki, international lawyer who formerly worked in the oil industry: "The new law passed by the current PPP/C government does not increase environmental protection but seeks to reduce it and to replace legal obligations with a discretionary regime in a new government-controlled entity. It violates article 149J of the Constitution because it is not a reasonable legislative measure to prevent pollution but is instead a crude attempt to protect ExxonMobil Corporation and its subsidiary ExxonMobil Guyana Ltd. (EMG) from liability and leave Guyana with the bill for economic and environmental harm. Guyana's Environmental Protection Act and jurisprudence already impose unlimited liability on polluters to clean up and restore the environment and

compensate people for loss. Plus, EMG has accepted environmental permits on condition that it is liable for all costs of clean up, restoration and compensation, and that it will provide insurance in line with industry standards and an unlimited parent company guarantee to cover its liability. EMG has already been fined for safety, has admitted in court to using faulty equipment, has submitted in court insurance for Egypt not Guyana, and boasts publicly of operating above the limits in its environmental impact statements. EMG's maps show that an oil

“This law is a recipe for litigation...”

— Melinda Janki

spill could reach Jamaica. This new law does not meet Guyana's international legal obligations particularly the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. It exposes how incapable Guyana is of dealing with an oil spill and that the Caribbean states are at risk of significant economic loss from harm to their shipping, tourism and fishing businesses. Investors need legal certainty and a strong regulatory authority that can ensure safe operations. When enforcement is subject to political direction not legal rules, the financial risks for investors go up significantly. This law is a recipe for litigation and could result in political and diplomatic fallout."

EDITOR'S NOTE: More commentary on this topic appears in the Q&A of the June 6 issue of the Energy Advisor.

NEWS BRIEFS

Gang Violence Has Displaced Nearly 1.3 Mn in Haiti: United Nations

Gang violence in Haiti has internally displaced nearly 1.3 million people in the Caribbean nation, according to a report released Wednesday by the United Nations International Organization for Migration. The figure marks a 24 percent increase as compared to last December, the agency said. The country's capital, Port-au-Prince, "remains the epicenter of the crisis," but gang violence is spreading to other areas of the country, including in the Centre and Artibonite departments, forcing tens of thousands of people to flee, the agency added.

IMF Adding \$1 Billion to Loan Package for Ecuador

The International Monetary Fund announced on Wednesday that it will add \$1 billion to an existing loan package for Ecuador, bringing the size of the four-year arrangement that was first agreed to in April 2024 from \$4 billion to \$5 billion. The IMF said it granted authorities request for more funds in light of "a more challenging external environment," specifically highlighting a recent downturn in oil prices. Crude oil—Ecuador's top export product—has lost 16 percent of its value on global markets since late January.

Fernández de Kirchner's Sentence Reaffirmed

Argentina's supreme court on Tuesday ruled against former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in her appeal of a six-year prison sentence and lifelong ban from holding public office, the Associated Press reported. It's unclear when the 72-year-old Fernández de Kirchner would begin serving a sentence, which stems from a decades-old corruption conviction; she rejected the decision on Tuesday, and her lawyers vowed to appeal the case "to all international human rights organizations," the AP reported.

ter Pedro Sánchez pinned responsibility for the attacks on a rebel leader known as Iván Mordisco, Bloomberg News reported. President Gustavo Petro also accused Mordisco of being involved in the attempted assassination of conservative senator and presidential hopeful Miguel Uribe Turbay, who was shot in the head at a rally on Saturday. Uribe remains hospitalized in critical condition. Authorities charged a 15-year-old boy in the shooting, the AP reported. The alleged shooter is currently hospitalized, recovering from leg wounds sustained during the assassination attempt, according to the wire service.

BUSINESS NEWS

Brazil Justices Rule on Liability for Social Media Companies

A majority of Brazil's supreme court justices on Wednesday voted in favor of a ruling that opens the possibility for social media companies to be held liable for illegal posts on their platforms, the Associated Press reported. The decision, which has not yet been finalized, could lead to social media companies that operate in Brazil being forced to preemptively remove potentially harmful content, the AP reported. Brazilian law currently states social media platforms must remove illegal third-party content only after a court order is issued; Wednesday's ruling aims to create a new obligation for the platforms to self-moderate any unlawful posts, the wire service reported. Companies that fail to remove damaging content, as determined by Brazil's justice system, would likely face financial penalties, Reuters reported. Justices have not yet determined how regulations will be enacted in terms of enforcing the supreme court's ruling, according to the AP. The decision comes as social media companies have received increased scrutiny from Brazilian judges and lawmakers in the wake of the January 2023 attempt to overturn the results of Brazil's 2022 election by supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro, Reuters reported.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Brazil's Inflation Rate Slows Ahead of Rate-Setting Meeting

Brazil's year-on-year rate of inflation eased by around two-tenths of a percentage point last month, according to data released on Tuesday by federal statistics agency IBGE, beating median expectations from analysts polled by both Reuters and Bloomberg News. Prices increased by 5.32 percent last month compared to May 2024 and rose by 0.26 percent from April, according to IBGE. Food and beverage prices in Brazil increased less than expected last month, which contributed to annual inflation declining between months for the first time since January, Bloomberg News reported. Previewing the Brazilian central bank's rate-setting meeting, which is scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday of next week, financial market experts now predict that bank governors are three times more likely to leave rates unchanged than they are to raise rates even further, Reuters reported. Central bankers last month raised the core Selic interest rate by 50 basis points to 14.75 percent, which marked the sixth consecutive rate hike and brought top-line borrowing costs in Latin America's largest economy to their highest level since 2006. Annual inflation in Brazil still sits above the upper end of the central bank's target of 1.5 percent to 4.5 percent, Bloomberg News reported. Despite rosier-than-anticipated inflation data for May, some analysts still expect that persistent underlying price pressures will drive Brazil's central bank to increase the Selic rate to 15 percent at next week's governors' meeting, Reuters reported. In any event, the central bank's monetary easing is not expected to begin until early 2026, at the earliest, according to the wire service. "Brazil's current aggressive monetary policy contrasts with the policy rates followed or projected by the United States, eurozone and a vast majority of emerging economies," Joel Korn, president of WKI Brasil and senior international partner at UPITE Consulting Services, told the daily Latin America Advisor in a Q&A published on Feb. 24.

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A **Gustavo De Vivero, energy and climate policy expert at New-Climates Institute:** “Most of the renewables projects currently stalled in Colombia are concentrated in La Guajira, a region with some of the best solar irradiation and wind speeds in the world, but which also has high levels of energy poverty and deep social inequalities. While Colombia has 96 percent energy access, only 76 percent of people in La Guajira have access to electricity. This number drops to just 20 percent for the Wayuu population, the Indigenous majority in la Guajira. The installation of renewables projects requires prior consultation (Consultas Previas), a dialogue that guarantees the informed consent of Indigenous communities before developments affecting their territories are implemented. Prior consultations are a key instrument to guarantee that the energy transition is done in a just manner, respecting the principles of inclusion, participation and due process. In La Guajira, this means engaging with hundreds of Wayuu clans individually—they are organized in decentralized authorities. Delays and costs overruns in renewables projects have occurred because these processes are often under-resourced, poorly coordinated or initiated too late, leading to mistrust, resistance and legal uncertainty. Minister Palma’s proposal to exempt some renewable energy projects from licensing is short-sighted and misdiagnoses the underlying problem: Delays stem from weak engagement with communities, not from the licensing itself. Removing permits may accelerate installations in the next one to two years, but it will undermine the legitimacy of the energy transition in the long term, exacerbating social inequity, deepening social resistance and increasing investment risks, ultimately slowing progress. A just energy transition in Colombia cannot treat consultation and permitting as barriers. Instead, these processes should be strengthened with better institutional capacity, tailored approaches, improving access to information and early engagement with communities.”

A **Ana Carolina González-Espinosa, senior director for programs at the Natural Resource Governance Institute:** “The fact that the government is conducting an analysis of environmental licensing requirements and other possible barriers affecting renewable energy (RE) development is mostly good news. We know that in light of growing energy demand, low level of gas reserves and energy transition ambitions in Colombia, RE deployment needs to scale up. And in general, there seems to be agreement around that ambition since 2014, regardless of differences in approaches to other mining and energy policies. Unfortunately, there are also persistent questions that have not been addressed, namely how to manage socio-environmental impacts and define clear benefit-sharing configurations for RE projects. Understanding legal and political barriers to RE deployment is key, and renewables projects have different realities from mining or hydrocarbons projects; adapting regulation consequently could have a positive impact. However, this analysis needs to consider permits within the broader framework of ensuring that socio-environmental impacts of the projects are duly managed and that benefits are shared more equitably among all citizens, especially including the communities that live near these projects. Exempting projects from environmental licenses, as a single solution, can actually lead to increased social conflict. Projects’ responsibilities to communities and the environment don’t disappear by weakening licensing and consultations. Instead, relevant public institutions should provide further clarity and increase the pertinence of these instruments, including on access to information, participation and justice, as mandated by the Escazu agreement. And other complementary instruments, like leveraging the potential of auctions for requesting meaningful community engagement and benefit-sharing, should also be considered. In general, more justice, equity and participation can act as an enabler of the energy transition.”

LATIN AMERICA ENERGY ADVISOR
is published weekly by the
Inter-American Dialogue ISSN 2163-7962

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