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## BEG director: West Texas is global example of sustainable energy development

By [Mella McEwen](#), MRT.com/Midland Reporter-Telegram

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Scott Tinker, director of the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas at Austin.

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With climate action a focus of world leaders at the United Nations' General Assembly this week, one expert says that focus should be on West Texas.

"West Texas can lead the world by setting a truly sustainable energy development example," Scott Tinker, director of the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas at Austin, said as he opened the West Texas Geological Society's annual fall symposium, which was Tuesday through Thursday at the Horseshoe Pavilion.

Tinker, speaking Wednesday, cited not only the region's oil and gas production but

industry efforts to address environmental impacts such as water use and seismic events, as well as the presence of renewable energy such as wind and solar farms and geothermal energy.

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Tinker said helping the environment should include helping clean the air, land and water. Focusing on one area – such as reducing or eliminating greenhouse gas emissions – carbon dioxide and methane, for example – impacts the others, he said.

His focus was on global poverty and energy's role in eliminating poverty. Tinker said energy cannot end poverty, but poverty cannot be ended without energy.

"Energy underpins a healthy economy, which allows for investment in the environment," he said.

Reducing energy poverty can help improve access to clothing, shelter, clean water, clean cooking, education, health care, medical care, improved fertility rates, rights and empowerment of women and immigration and migration.

Tinker cited a statistic that 85 percent of global energy comes from fossil fuels.

"You say you want to help the impoverished by protecting the planet, but you can't do

that if you take away 85 percent of their energy source," he said.

He said that as 2015, global coal use was four times higher than in 1965, dominated by its increasing use in Asian nations. Affiliated CO2 emissions have also risen, he said.

"Don't blame Asia – they're making things for us," Tinker said.

Of the call to use only renewable energy, Tinker showed a slide of an electric vehicle charging station that was powered by a diesel generator. Mining is required for the elements used in manufacturing wind turbines and solar panels and storage batteries, he said. The actual manufacturing process can generate emissions, and land is required for those farms.

"Only wind and solar are renewable; solar panels, batteries and wind turbines are not," he said.

He said to address climate change, "it's vital we understand what can actually be done about it."

Converting to natural gas use from coal and capturing, sequestering and using the carbon emissions from natural gas and coal plants is a start, he said. Nuclear energy has zero emissions, and areas with a lot of water could turn to hydroelectricity. Wind farms could be centralized, and electric vehicles could be helpful in dense urban areas.

"Improve energy efficiency and use less," he said.

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