

IRENA ASSEMBLY PAVES THE WAY FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY FUTURE

Yesterday, ministers and senior officials from 150 countries met in Abu Dhabi for the third session of the Assembly of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). The two-day Assembly marks the start of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, a global gathering of policy makers, business leaders and civil society that will also host the 2013 World Future Energy Summit, Abu Dhabi International Renewable Energy Conference and International Water Summit.



Martin Lidegaard, President of the IRENA third Assembly and Denmark's Climate, Energy and Building Minister

The event was opened by outgoing President of the Assembly, Salvador Namburete, Minister of Energy for Mozambique, who passed the gavel to Martin Lidegaard, Denmark's Climate, Energy and Building Minister, and elected president of the third Assembly.

Opening remarks were given by Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, UAE Special Envoy for Energy and Climate Change and CEO of Masdar, Abu Dhabi's pioneering renewable energy initiative. He highlighted some of IRENA's recent achievements saying: "IRENA's research and communications are demonstrating that renewable energy is already the natural and cost effective choice for many parts of the world." Dr Al Jaber also announced the formal ratification of its headquarters agreement with IRENA, which represents the final step in the Agency's legal establishment and formally accords IRENA all the rights, privileges and protections of an international organisation.

IRENA Director-General Adnan Z. Amin presented the Annual Report of the Director-General for 2012 and said the year had brought both opportunities and challenges for renewable energy. He emphasised IRENA's key involvement in the UN Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative, saying that some of IRENA's flagship activities, including the Renewables Readiness Assessments and the Global Renewable Energy Atlas were now an integral part of the SE4ALL agenda. He revealed IRENA's plan to chart the way forward to double the world's share of renewable energy by 2030 with the Global Renewable Energy Roadmap (REMAP 2030) pathway. Mr Amin also stressed the pivotal role of outreach and engagement in IRENA's work and said that the Agency had worked to widen its reach to both countries and a diverse range of stakeholders.

The report was met with support and congratulations from delegates, seemingly impressed by how IRENA has grown and matured in the last year.

The morning session closed with thematic presentations on some of IRENA's key areas of work: Africa's renewable future, Renewables Readiness Assessments and the Global Atlas.

In the afternoon, Ministers met for a roundtable on the financing of renewables. Those in attendance heard the Ministerial panellists agree that renewable energy, when governments create the right enabling environment, can be the integral instrument for facilitating transitions to green economies. Nevertheless, one Minister reminded the delegates that many developing countries still lack the infrastructure required to attract financially viable investments in the sector. It was suggested that IRENA, therefore, could play an important role in helping these countries reduce perceptions of risk and attract more competitive sources finance for renewable energy projects.



Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, UAE Special Envoy for Energy and Climate Change and CEO of Masdar

MORE INFORMATION

The full speeches given by Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber and Director-General Adnan Z. Amin can be found on www.irena.org.

STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE GLOBAL ATLAS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY POTENTIALS AT THE 2013 IRENA ASSEMBLY

The opening day of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Third Assembly saw the launch of the world's first open-access mapping tool for renewable energy resources, known as the Global Atlas. This new collaborative initiative will involve the creation of an internet-based Geographic Information System for renewable resources which aims to help both governments and business assess national renewable energy potential, especially in areas where existing information is insufficient to enable informed decision making.



IRENA has played a leading role in the creation of the Atlas, working with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and a number of leading technical institutes and companies within the sector to collate data on renewables. The ambitious project currently charts solar and wind resources across the globe. However, plans are already in place to expand its focus over the coming years to include information on all sources of renewable energy, including bioenergy, geothermal energy, and hydropower, as well as having a longer term ambition to include data on marine energy.

Ahead of the launch, 13 countries representing 6 continents had already signed up to support the Global Atlas, including economic heavyweights such as the US, Brazil, Japan and Germany. At the IRENA assembly, a further 24 new signatories were confirmed from countries as diverse as Mali to Mongolia and Saudi Arabia to Switzerland, bringing the total number of participating countries to 37. This included a number of nations, such as Israel, Nicaragua, Gambia and the Seychelles, whose Ministers present at the Assembly spontaneously decided to sign up to the initiative, seemingly agreeing with the assertion of Martin Lidegaard, Denmark's Climate, Energy and Building Minister and President of the Assembly, that "the Global Solar and Wind Atlas will help us make the right decisions" on renewable energy.

More Information

IRENA Global Atlas webpage: www.irena.org/globalatlas

Global Atlas video: www.res-atlas.org

AFRICA'S RENEWABLE FUTURE: THE PATH TO SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Africa is undergoing a sustained period of economic growth and transformation. Its population is growing rapidly, as is its middle class. It is expected that by 2050 there could be as many as 2 billion people in Africa – twice as many as today – and its energy needs will grow even faster. In order to continue on this trajectory, this growth will need to be fuelled by massive investment in energy.



Second from right: Adnan Amin, Director-General of IRENA with delegates

Against this backdrop, yesterday the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) presented its report 'Africa's Renewable Future – the Path to Sustainable Growth' at its third Assembly, currently being held in Abu Dhabi.

The report, which is the result of a substantial amount of work with African countries over the last two years, contends that the continent has the potential and the ability to utilise its renewable resources to meet the majority of its future energy needs and sustain high economic growth. To demonstrate the difference that renewables are already making, the report showcases 18 African-led examples with potential for replication.

Speaking at the thematic presentation on Africa's renewables future, the Director-General of IRENA, Adnan Z. Amin, said that "the moment is right for the rapid up scaling of renewable energy in Africa." Renewable resources are plentiful, demand is growing, technology costs are falling and the political will has never been stronger. And with world-class solar

and hydropower resources, complemented in some regions by bioenergy, wind, geothermal and marine resources, Africa had the potential to supply both concentrated, high-load urban centres and remote, dispersed rural areas.

At the same session, the former IRENA Assembly President and Minister of Energy for Mozambique, Salvador Namburete, said that in Africa, despite this potential, oil, gas and coal were still more exploited than renewables for a number of reasons, including a lack of local access to finance, technology and knowledge. He highlighted the need to support international initiatives such as IRENA's country-led Renewables Readiness Assessments in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and catalyse action at the country level, and advocated for the establishment of "progressive approaches to provide the capacity to cross barriers and move from darkness to light in a sustainable manner."



Salvador Namburete, former IRENA Assembly President and Minister of Energy for Mozambique

Mr Amin also acknowledged the barriers to a renewable future, and said it was "IRENA's job... to help Africa overcome these obstacles" by designing policies which encourage investment in renewable energy, developing the financial models and identifying the technologies needed to make renewables a reality.

More Information

The full report is available here: www.irena.org/Publications

ABOUT

Outreach is the longest continually produced stakeholder magazine in the sustainable development arena. Published as a daily edition, Outreach provides a vehicle for critical analysis on key thematic topics in the sustainability and climate change arenas, giving a voice to individuals and organisations from all stakeholder groups. www.stakeholderforum.org/sf/outreach/

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