

INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY

Eighth meeting of the Council

Abu Dhabi, 3 – 4 November 2014

Note of the Director-General

Follow up on the Climate Summit – strategy for engagement

1. At the seventh session of the Council, Members requested that IRENA continue to seek avenues to actively contribute to the global climate change effort. This note is submitted to provide an update on the recent Climate Summit and possible strategy for IRENA's engagement in climate change related activities until the end of 2015.

I. 2014 Climate Summit

2. On 23 September 2014, the UN Secretary-General hosted the Climate Summit, attended by world leaders, including 124 Heads of State and Government and more than 800 leaders from business, finance and civil society. The purpose of the 2014 Climate Summit was to raise political momentum for a meaningful universal climate agreement in Paris in 2015 and to galvanize action by all stakeholders to reduce emissions and build resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change. An important milestone to the Climate Summit was the Abu Dhabi Ascent that took place in May 2014, where some 1,000 participants used the opportunity to discuss possible strategies and create partnerships around impactful initiatives in preparation for the Summit.

3. At the Summit, leaders from government, business, finance and civil society announced their plans and actions to advance climate action on five fronts: cutting emissions; mobilising money and markets; pricing carbon; strengthening resilience; and mobilising new coalitions. Many countries reaffirmed their commitment to make their post-2020 emissions-reduction offers by the first quarter of 2015, a critical milestone in securing a global climate agreement by the end of 2015. Importantly, a number of developed nations made pledges to the nascent Green Climate Fund.

4. Of note was a widespread public action to increase the accountability and ambition of world leaders in taking action on climate change. 700,000 people around the world participated in climate marches ahead of the Summit, with some 400,000 in New York alone, sending a clear message of public support to the Climate Summit and beyond.

5. The 2014 Climate Summit witnessed announcements of important new partnerships and financial pledges and commitments by leaders set the foundation for greater ambition for climate action at all levels of society. The political momentum created by the Climate Summit is significant for the upcoming COP20 in Peru and COP21 in Paris. Importantly, the Summit demonstrated a nuanced and action oriented approach in dealing with the climate change at a global level. While reaffirming the

necessity of the new climate agreement within the COP process, it also highlighted the collective ability to make concrete and impactful contributions and commitments for the reduction of greenhouse emissions.

II. IRENA at the Climate Summit

6. In preparation for the Climate Summit, IRENA spearheaded the efforts in the area of renewable energy by mobilising action in two of its programmatic activities, namely the Africa Clean Energy Corridor (ACEC) and the new small island developing states (SIDS) focused initiative, the Lighthouses. Both initiatives gained a significant momentum, culminating at the Climate Summit where Heads of State and Government, CEOs and financing institutions voiced their strong support and commitment to realising the ambition of the ACEC and the Lighthouses.

7. Additional 31 partner State and non-State actors joined the 19 governments already part of the ACEC since its ministerial endorsement in January 2014, and ACEC was widely perceived as one of the transformational initiatives that could be replicated in other regions. The Lighthouses was joined by 27 SIDS and 14 additional State and non-State partners, who committed to working on the transformation of island energy systems. Lighthouses, introduced at the Abu Dhabi Ascent in May 2014, has an ambitious agenda of mobilising USD 500 million over the next five years that would include 100 MW of new solar PV, 20 MW of wind, and significant additional capacity in other renewable energy technologies. To enable a swift operationalisation of the initiative, Germany and Norway pledged voluntary resources of USD 3 million, respectively. These resources will play a critical role as they will enable the Agency to respond to a number of concrete requests for assistance already received from SIDS.

8. While IRENA's work within the Climate Summit was concentrated on two major initiatives, it is evident that the Summit created a new impetus for the role of renewable energy as one of the critical means to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.¹ A wide number of countries, the private sector, and civil society groups voiced support for a clear, long-term goal to shift from fossil to clean energy. For example, a coalition of 160 institutions and local governments, and more than 500 individuals committed to divesting \$50 billion from fossil fuels in the next three to five years and reinvest in new energy sources. IKEA and a dozen other private companies launched the *RE 100* initiative. They made an ambitious pledge to source 100 percent of their power from renewable energy, with the plan to recruit a total of 100 companies to make similar commitments by 2020. IRENA has partnered with *RE:100*, and preliminary discussions were held as to how this partnership can be operationalized.

III. Strategy for engagement

9. These developments provide an opportune moment for IRENA to reflect on the possible ways of using this momentum to align its programmatic activities to advance IRENA's objectives within the

¹ Please find here links to the Joint Statements and Action Agendas of those initiatives that were spearheaded or supported by IRENA:

African Clean Energy Corridor:

<https://www.irena.org/cms/DocStreaming/Preview.aspx?FileName=10920141220379522774.pdf>

Lighthouses: <https://www.irena.org/cms/DocStreaming/Preview.aspx?FileName=10920141221028426811.pdf>

Global Geothermal Alliance:

<https://www.irena.org/cms/DocStreaming/Preview.aspx?FileName=10920141220507313238.pdf>

climate change agenda. There is a number of upcoming milestones of significance where IRENA may consider active engagement.

a. COP 20, Lima, Peru.

COP20 in Lima is the foremost, principal opportunity for governments to negotiate and shape the contribution they will give to reduce their carbon emissions, before a definitive commitment in Paris. It is likely that the momentum generated by the Climate Summit will be maintained and that the stakeholders will try to build upon the progress made. In this context, IRENA would be well positioned to profile its initiatives and the renewable energy agenda during this meeting. The Government of Peru expressed its support to IRENA in this respect, and the Agency would welcome partnerships with other Members who wish to profile renewable energy.

b. Intended nationally determined contributions (INDC).

At the COP19 in Warsaw, Parties agreed to, “*initiate or intensify preparation of their intended nationally determined contributions*” INDCs put forward by countries will form a key input to the preparation processes of negotiations leading towards the 2015 Paris climate agreement, and they are due to be submitted by the end of March 2015, forming a key input to the negotiations leading towards the COP21 in Paris. Together, the INDCs will provide an indication of the proposed effort of the international community to address climate change. Development of INDCs are guided by national priorities and it is likely that they will be diverse in nature. Based on the experience in the UNFCCC processes to date, it is also likely that renewable energy will be prominent in INDCs. IRENA could analyse the INDC submissions to both identify possible contributions it could make in supporting country initiatives and in preparations for the COP21 in Paris. This information could also assist in the identification of programmatic priorities for the next biennium.

c. COP21, Paris, France.

In preparation for this decisive meeting, the Government of France placed special emphasis on a ‘positive agenda’ to contribute to the success of the Conference and showcase practical action that can be taken to address the challenge of climate change. In this context, the Government requested the French Syndicate of Renewable Energy (SER) to organise an event dedicated to renewable energy and climate. During the recent visit of the Director-General to France, IRENA was requested to partner with SER to collaborate on the organisation of this one-day event. In the coming months, IRENA will work with SER to further develop the concept and strategy towards COP21. IRENA will also seek other opportunities to contribute to the ‘positive agenda’ in the year to come.

10. A range of IRENA’s programmatic activities lend themselves to a greater linkage to the global climate change efforts, and IRENA has sought the optimal way for its engagement in the global climate change effort, while remaining focused on its primary mandate.

d. Women and renewable energy conference.

A significant success of the Climate Summit was its ability to catalyse action and engagement from different constituencies. IRENA’s Work Programme envisages a conference on renewable energy and women, however, this activity is presently on hold since it requires additional voluntary contributions for it to be realised. As a contribution to the Paris positive agenda, IRENA will seek additional contributions to organise this conference prior to the meeting in Paris to engage women from different sectors and regions to demonstrate the vital role of renewable energy for this constituency. This could be a powerful voice of support of accelerated deployment of renewable energy in Paris and beyond.

e. Climate finance and the Global Climate Fund (GCF).

Many of IRENA's programmatic activities are aimed at assisting countries in the development of sound renewable energy projects. This assistance ranges from initiatives such as ACEC to providing practical tools such as Project Navigator to support the development of bankable projects. Many activities, such as the Renewables Readiness Assessments and the Renewable Energy Entrepreneurship Support Facility are aimed at supporting countries to be ready to access international sources of funding. In support of the GCF and other climate finance initiatives, IRENA will focus on developing a pipeline of projects from different regions and enabling countries to use public climate finance to mobilize large-scale private investments for implementation of their strategies to transform energy systems at the national or regional scale.

f. Informing UNFCCC Workstream 2.

Members have asked that IRENA engage in UNFCCC mechanisms with particular focus on financial and technological development. IRENA continues to contribute to Workstream 2 (WS2), an expert process that engages Party and non-Party experts in a technical assessment of policies and good practices in high emitting economic sectors with the aim to explore options for action that can close the ambition gap. WS2 has renewable energy as one of the priority areas. The UNFCCC is presently considering continuation of work under WS2 and possible activities in 2015. It is likely that a decision at COP20 in Lima will expand and institutionalise the WS2 technical process.

IRENA has already contributed to WS2 at the technical expert meeting (TEM) on renewable energy in the March 2014 session, following which requests for IRENA's participation increased. IRENA could consider how to further use WS2 to support countries in advancing renewable energy deployment. For example, the time allocated to TEMs at formal sessions of the UNFCCC will always be quite limited. As such, it may be difficult to delve into specific barriers or regional circumstances, as well as to attract diverse stakeholders. IRENA could consider organising and hosting technical workshops and policy dialogues in the margins of different events aimed at illustrating the role enhancing renewable energy can play in advancing climate action. The results of these meetings could be submitted formally to the UNFCCC as IRENA contribution to WS2 to inform the development of policy recommendations under this workstream. Considering a prominent role of SIDS in WS2, the first side TEM could be held in the context of the Lighthouses (e.g. regulators meeting) in the course of 2015.

IV. Questions for discussion:

- Are current plans for IRENA engagement in the Climate debate sufficient or are there additional opportunities for engagement in the coming year that IRENA should consider to further promote renewable energy within the global climate change efforts?
- There is a strong shift to engaging non-state actors, but there is also a need for follow-up action to turn announcements into firm commitments and action. What are the possible avenues to advancing this progress?
- Considering recent developments, how should IRENA position its work related to climate change in the context of the upcoming preparations of the Work Programme and Budget for 2016-2017?