

**INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY**

Fourth meeting of the Council

Abu Dhabi, 12 – 13 November 2012

**Concept Note of the Director-General  
on IRENA’s Institutional Publication**

**I. Background**

1. The need for an annual IRENA publication has been identified as an important instrument to fulfill IRENA’s advocacy role as the global voice for renewable energy and to disseminate accurate and unbiased knowledge, data and analysis on renewable energy. The publication will capitalize on IRENA’s comparative advantage of near universal membership, convening power and exclusive mandate to advise governments on renewable energy policy. Strong support for such a publication has been voiced by IRENA Members, and internal consultations have taken place in recent months to articulate the concept for such a publication.
2. The overall goal of IRENA’s annual publication is to inform high-level policy-making on the key issues and trends facing renewable energy. It is hoped that the publication will grow over the years to become a flagship report of IRENA’s work. While the “flagship” quality of the report can only be granted by the readership, proper attention must be given to develop a pertinent, high-quality, accessible, and visually attractive product with content that differs significantly from already existing flagship publications from other institutions . In line with IRENA’s mandate, the primary audience for the report is policymakers, but the publication should also be relevant to industry, investors and civil society.

3. The publication should be forward-looking and convey the long-term vision to transition from the existing energy system and infrastructure to one based on renewable energy sources. At the same time, the publication should lay out a short- to medium-term pathway for what is achievable in the next 5 to 10 years, identifying, among other issues, major investment opportunities and the scope for more efficient and effective policy intervention. The findings should go beyond the merely descriptive, be practical, stimulate normative debate, and catalyze government action rather than making broad policy recommendations.
4. As the overarching publication of IRENA, the I report would be an opportunity to showcase and articulate IRENA's work. The selection of topics should be closely linked to the work programme as well as to IRENA's strategic direction. In addition to the production of a high-quality report, messaging, communication and dissemination of its key findings will be crucial for the success of the report. A thorough outreach and media strategy should be built into the publication design and timeline with adequate resources.
5. It is important that IRENA maintains ownership of the publication, without precluding potential collaboration with relevant institutions on specific topics. The peer-review process is will be essential to ensure buy-in, accuracy and to add value.

### II. Structure

6. The publication should have a clearly defined structure that is stable over time, yet allows for flexibility to bring in new topics to every edition. Given its newness, the report should start with a modest size and build up over time. Shorter and simpler early editions also give the opportunity to display growth, quantitative and qualitative. The publication will serve to unify and articulate the Agency's strategic messages and to disseminate accurate and unbiased knowledge, data and analysis on emerging trends and issues in the field of renewable energy.
7. To meet all these requirements, it is proposed that the publication contain a "fixed" section on indicators, which will grow over time but will be repeated every year, and a "variable" section where specific topics are addressed in depth. The proposed structure could be as follows:
  - a. **Introduction:** The introduction would focus on major developments in renewable energy for the year, in the context of the longer-term transition to a renewable energy based society. The introduction would highlight the major trends identified by the indicators and build the narrative for the "in focus" and "radar" topics. It would also

provide an opportunity to underscore IRENA's role and achievements in bringing about the year's events.

- b. **Data and Analysis:** Renewable energy data and indicators with global coverage, which are currently non-existent, would be valuable, among others: to measure the current status of renewable energy (comparing current year to a chosen baseline year); as a tool to identify trends, barriers and opportunities; to help answer questions relevant to our constituency; and to provide additional credibility to the focus of our work. Because the value of data derives at least as much from their robustness (data quality and methodologies) and time series as from the numeric value they convey, it is proposed that a staggered approach is followed, building up such information over time in a consistent way. The first year would cover basic yet meaningful data and analysis on renewable energy deployment, identifying data gaps and setting the basis for improved data collection efforts in subsequent years. It is proposed that each subsequent year (or even the first year if possible) new indicators be developed and rolled out, based on IRENA's work and related to the "in focus" topics. This would establish the foundation for sustained growth within IRENA's statistical work programme.
- c. **"In Focus":** This flexible section constitutes the "variable" part of the publication, providing the flexibility needed for the report to keep abreast of developments in such a rapidly changing sector as renewable energy. "In focus" would provide an in-depth analysis of a particular topic or set of topics that are of particular relevance for the next 5 to 10 years. These topics can include, for example, regional/country-grouping analysis (e.g. Islands, Latin America, Oil Producing Countries) and/or could focus on policies and enabling environment, markets, finance, technology and innovation, or the target to double the global share of renewable energy by 2030.
- d. **"Radar":** This section, smaller than the rest, would feature a select number of emerging issues that have the potential to become game changers in the coming years, to put them on the "radar" of our audience. The topics could be varied, ranging, for example, from new technologies to new business models and investment opportunities, to innovative policy approaches or financing. "Radar", while not immediately actionable, would allow IRENA to claim early ownership on issues and to position itself as a leading, forward-looking organization.
- e. **Statistical Appendix:** Statistics supporting the report should be published in an Appendix (not necessarily physically printed but rather published online) to enhance

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the publication by providing transparency, becoming a source for other publications, and overall adding to the credibility of our analytical products. Furthermore, providing detailed data can create positive momentum and encourage feedback that helps improve quality and consensus.