

**INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY**

Fourth meeting of the Council

Abu Dhabi, 12 – 13 November 2012

**Note of the Director-General on  
an IRENA Presence in New York**

1. Within the context of the Work Programme and Budget for 2013, the Director-General proposed the establishment of an IRENA presence in New York. This note is submitted in response to the interest expressed by a number of Members in obtaining additional information and clarification on the proposal.

**I. Background and rationale**

2. As the only universal intergovernmental framework dedicated to renewable energy, IRENA has a unique opportunity and responsibility to contribute to the global dialogue on renewable energy. This dialogue is multifold, as it includes communication not only in the energy-related context but also, as stipulated in its Statute, in the broader context of sustainable development and the stabilization of the climate system.
3. It was in recognition of this role that, on 9 December 2011, IRENA was granted the status of Permanent Observer to the United Nations General Assembly. Thus far in 2012, the Year of Sustainable Energy for All, important global developments in renewable energy have taken place, resulting in concrete actions and strategies that will remain high on the international agenda in the coming years and that will be significant to IRENA's work. These include the follow-up to the Rio+20 Conference, international work to devise the post-MDG agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the operationalisation of the Secretary-General's SE4ALL initiative.
4. To date, IRENA has played an active and visible role in SE4ALL, both in political and technical areas. Many IRENA Member countries are also involved in this initiative, and the consistent message from them has been that IRENA should assume the leading role in pursuing the goal of doubling the share of renewables in the energy mix by 2030, and that it should do so in close cooperation with other involved entities, including UN entities, the World Bank, and the IEA, among others, to ensure synergies and prudent use of resources.

5. IRENA was never intended to be a large ubiquitous entity, but there was recognition from the outset that IRENA's physical presence would be required in certain locations that have a concentration of renewable energy organisations. This understanding was also reflected in the decision to have a liaison office in Vienna, funded by Austria, to facilitate regular contact with relevant UN agencies. This decision is yet to be implemented. In view of the understanding that the SE4ALL programmatic and operational offices would be hosted in Vienna, the Director-General has resumed discussions with the Austrian Government to determine the way forward.
6. With this background in mind, along with the anticipated continuing role for the Agency as a meaningful voice in the global renewable energy debate, the Director-General has proposed to establish a presence for IRENA in New York.

### **II. This presence would have multiple benefits for the Agency:**

#### **A. Increased collaboration with international organisations and entities in New York**

7. IRENA's presence in New York would enable the Agency to keep abreast of renewable energy developments, to participate in relevant discussions, and to take full advantage of its Permanent Observer status at the UN. It will also enable IRENA to engage in numerous intergovernmental processes, to contribute to systemic coherence, and to avoid duplication of work and possible overlap with IRENA mandates. There is a unique concentration of organisations that have headquarters, significant representation, or country representatives in New York, which would allow for even a small IRENA presence there to have multiple impacts on its capacity for continuous and increased involvement in renewable energy practice and policy discussions.
8. In the coming years, the SE4ALL Secretariat and associated entities are expected to become important partners for IRENA, and the collaborative work stemming from this initiative will be valuable to the Agency and its membership. To date, a substantial portion of SE4ALL activities have taken place in New York and it is likely that this will continue to be the case. In addition, certain key partners (the UN, the World Bank, and the UNDP) are based in New York and Washington, D.C. IRENA's presence in New York will ensure that there is meaningful, timely, and informed participation in this initiative and others in the US. This participation is becoming more pertinent as SE4ALL continues to evolve and as IRENA's role as a renewable energy hub crystalizes.

#### **B. Potential for more interaction with IRENA membership in New York**

9. IRENA currently has 102 Members and 57 signatories/applicants, with the expectation and ambition that all 193 UN member states would become IRENA Members. At present, 112 UN member states have an embassy and/or a consulate in the host country of the IRENA Headquarters, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of the remaining 80 UN member states without representation in the UAE, however, do have Permanent Missions to the UN or some kind of representation in New York. An active IRENA presence in New York would therefore facilitate interaction with these countries

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<sup>1</sup> For the 80 member states with no representation in the UAE, see the Table.

and, through them, their capitals, enabling a collaboration which may otherwise be difficult or unmanageable because of geographic distance or time zone differences.

**C. Increased awareness of IRENA's activities and interest in membership**

10. IRENA's presence in New York would help stimulate interest in renewable energy and engagement in activities that would facilitate the creation of a favorable environment for increased uptake of renewable energy. More countries would have the opportunity to learn about IRENA's programme of work, activities, and the benefits of membership. In addition, the Agency would benefit from a broader overview of the global context in which it operates, enabling IRENA to adjust its activities to maximize their impact.

**D. Increased collaboration with US entities and other entities based in the United States, and proximity to other regions**

11. IRENA's presence in New York would increase access to US institutions, organisations, and other players in the renewable energy field, such as Bloomberg New Energy Finance and the World Resources Institute, among others. While this cooperation is already ongoing and regular, proximity will make it both simpler and more cost-effective for the Agency to maintain these relationships. A New York presence would also facilitate constructive relationships in other parts of the western hemisphere.

**III. Staffing and premises**

12. Based on the assessment of current needs, it is proposed that the presence in New York consist of one professional staff member at the P5 level, with intern support.
13. In order to use resources efficiently, IRENA would share office space with other intergovernmental organisations that have Permanent Observer status at the UN and a small presence in New York. In this way, many of the common facilities would be shared, thus ensuring lower cost to the Agency.
14. Administratively, a New York presence would be supported centrally by AMS at Headquarters in Abu Dhabi. IRENA already possesses technology, systems, and processes for the provision of long-distance support.

**Table: UN member states with no representation in the UAE (80 Total)**

	IRENA Members	Signatories/applicants for membership	Non IRENA States
1.	Antigua and Barbuda	Barbados	Andorra
2.	Cameroon	Belize	Bahamas
3.	Cape Verde	Burkina Faso	Bhutan
4.	Croatia	Cambodia	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
5.	Cuba	Central African Republic	Botswana
6.	Estonia	Congo	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
7.	Georgia	Costa Rica	Dominica
8.	Grenada	Côte D'Ivoire	El Salvador
9.	Iceland	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Equatorial Guinea
10.	Israel	Gabon	Guyana
11.	Latvia	Ghana	Haiti
12.	Lesotho	Guatemala	Jamaica
13.	Liechtenstein	Guinea-Bissau	Lao People's Democratic Republic
14.	Lithuania	Honduras	Malawi
15.	Mali	Kiribati	Micronesia (Federated States of)
16.	Marshall Islands	Liberia	Myanmar
17.	Mauritius	Madagascar	Namibia
18.	Moldova (Republic of)	Papua New Guinea	Paraguay
19.	Monaco	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Saint Kitts and Nevis
20.	Mongolia	Sao Tome and Principe	San Marino
21.	Nauru	Solomon Islands	South Sudan
22.	Nicaragua	Timor-Leste	Suriname
23.	Palau	Tuvalu	Trinidad and Tobago
24.	Rwanda		
25.	Saint Lucia		
26.	Samoa		
27.	Serbia		
28.	Slovenia		
29.	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia		
30.	Togo		
31.	Tonga		
32.	Vanuatu		
33.	Zambia		
34.	Zimbabwe		
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>