
INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY

Seventh meeting of the Council

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Note of the Director-General for Policy Discussion on
Climate Change and the Role of IRENA

Introduction

1. With the 21st Conference of Parties (COP 21) in Paris fast approaching, climate change is at the forefront of global international discourse. A recent IPCC report expressed the need for the world to act quickly and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) to avert the catastrophic effects of climate change. IPCC has identified energy efficiency and tripling - or even quadrupling - the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix by 2050 as key mobilizing factors to reduce emissions.

2. The past decade has shown increasing renewable technology cost competitiveness, substantial performance improvements, and that a growing number of renewable energy technologies have achieved a level of maturity capable of enabling renewable deployment at a significant scale. In 2012 alone, renewable energy accounted for over half of the new electricity-generating capacity added globally, led by growth in wind, hydro and solar power.

3. It is in this context that governments around the world have taken concerted, decisive action to develop policy and legislative frameworks to promote the advanced deployment of renewables. Renewable energy deployment is not only a viable option, it is increasingly the most economic choice for new grid supply, and cheaper than alternatives in virtually any power system reliant on liquid fuels (e.g. off-grid, on islands and in some countries).

4. Renewable energy has emerged as a key component of an ambitious international effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; however, more decisive action is required if the IPCC targets are to be met. IRENA's roadmap for doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix by 2030 – REmap 2030 – demonstrates that we already have the systems and technology to double the world's share of renewable energy by 2030, and that we can do so in a way – when accounting for external costs – that is cheaper than the alternatives. REmap 2030 also shows how, when coupled with greater energy efficiency, doubling the share of renewable

energy by 2030 can keep CO₂ concentrations below 450 ppm, the level beyond which catastrophic climate change will occur.

IRENA and Global Efforts on Climate

5. While the central premise of IRENA's work programme is that the renewable energy business case today makes renewable energy an attractive pathway to changing the global energy mix, notwithstanding its contribution to decarbonisation, IRENA has recently been actively participating in the global effort to promote renewable energy as the means to stabilizing the climate system. IRENA is leading the effort on renewable energy within the United Nations Secretary General's Climate Summit, which will take place September 2014 in New York. In this context, IRENA is advancing its programmatic work on the Africa Clean Energy Corridor and SIDS to catalyze action through the political momentum the Summit is creating.

6. Within the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) has established two work streams. WP2 is focused on identifying and exploring options for a range of actions to close the ambition gap pre-2020, and ensure the highest possible mitigation efforts by all Parties. The ADP showcases renewables as a priority sector where action is already taking place on the ground and is seeking further engagement with IRENA as a leading organization in this field.

7. The UNFCCC also had several mechanisms in place with particular focus placed on financial and technological development. Special funds, technology mechanisms and development mechanisms have been established to aid and promote GHG emission reduction.

8. The Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) - developed to finance projects relating to the adaptation; technology transfer and capacity building; energy, transport, industry, agriculture, forestry and waste management; and economic diversification – prioritises programmatic approaches for renewables. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), established at COP 16, supports projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing country Parties. Other UNFCCC financial mechanisms include the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Adaptation Fund (AF).

9. Technology mechanisms are also placing renewables at the forefront of mitigation mechanisms. The Technology Executive Committee (TEC) – a committee to provide high-level advice for policy-makers on technology-transfer and other technology related issues – has shown interest in RE standards, IPR, RD&D issues, technology briefs for policy makers and negotiators are also looking into further collaboration with IRENA in the aforementioned aspects. UNFCCC is also actively engaging the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) in renewable activities. The CTCN is mandated to build or strengthen capacity by identifying technology needs and facilitating the preparation and implementation of technology projects and strategies that support action on mitigation and adaptation, and preliminary discussions for IRENA's involvement in CTCN are underway.

10. Finally, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) - a mechanism aimed at offsetting emissions in developed countries by implementing clean projects in developing countries - and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) - a set of policies and actions that countries undertake as part of a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions - each play an important role in reducing global emissions with the aid of renewable deployment. IRENA has developed a handbook on NAMAs to support countries in this effort.

Each of these initiatives can potentially be an avenue for IRENA to further promote the role of renewable energy technologies and accelerate their deployment. The Council is invited to discuss IRENA's engagement in the global climate change effort, and to provide guidance for IRENA's activities toward Paris 2015.

Countries are invited to comment on the matter and proposed prioritization of activities.

Topics for Discussion:

- Should IRENA take a more visible role within the global climate change effort despite risks, and what is the most effective strategy it can follow?
- How should IRENA position itself with regard to the IPCC recommendation for a tripling or quadrupling of renewable energy deployment globally?
- How can the existing technology mechanisms under the convention enable a rapid and effective deployment of renewable energy technologies globally?
- How can synergies between constituencies in the UNFCCC process, the Secretary-General's Climate Summit and IRENA be streamlined towards common goals?