

INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY

Sixth meeting of the Council

Abu Dhabi, 10 – 11 December 2013

REthinking Energy

1. The IRENA annual publication has been identified as an important instrument to fulfil IRENA's strategic goal to provide an authoritative global voice for renewable energy. The overall goal of the publication is to inform high-level policy-making on the key issues and trends facing renewable energy.
2. While high-level policy-makers are seen as the primary audience, IRENA's annual publication should also be relevant to industry, investors and civil society. It should be forward-looking, conveying a long-term vision for the transition from the existing energy system and infrastructure to ones based on renewable energy sources.

Progress to date

3. In January 2013, the Secretariat presented a "prototype" of the publication to the 3rd IRENA Assembly and, on the sidelines of the World Future Energy Summit, IRENA discussed the positioning of the publication with a dozen leading thinkers and experts from around the world.
4. The Secretariat presented the main topics and the outline of the first edition of the publication during the fifth meeting of the Council in June 2013. It explained that the publication will build on several IRENA activities and countries' related input.
5. The 2014 publication, currently in the working draft stage, looks at the transformative implications of rapid economic shifts, population growth and the relative income growth of developing countries expected over the next few decades, and the implications in terms of energy demand. It highlights the value, and the necessity, of a broad array of renewable energy solutions to address these challenges.
6. The publication offers a compelling narrative on the critical importance of renewable energy, building on the existing literature (from the World Bank, United Nations agencies, the International Energy Agency, REN21, among others.) and IRENA programmatic activities (socio-economic benefits, costing, REMAP 2030, islands, energy access, among others.), also identifying potential topics of interest for the 2014-2015 programmatic cycle.

7. The publication suggests that the decreasing costs of renewable energy and the arrival of affordable distributed renewable energy solutions provide an unprecedented opportunity to change our thinking about energy.
8. The effects of these trends on the structure and functioning of energy markets are profound. Municipalities, small businesses and individuals have entered the energy market alongside traditional large energy producers. As energy production has become more decentralised, the traditional methods of distributing energy are facing new challenges. In order to lay the foundation for a new and, ideally, cleaner energy era that is upon us, new ways of looking at the sector are required.
9. These powerful global trends also entail change for energy consumers, who are becoming empowered by an array of new choices. In many markets, consumer choices of an energy provider are already based on personal criteria or consumers generate their own energy, without having to rely on conventional fuel supply chains. For remote regions and regions lacking energy access, new technologies offer an alternative to costly diesel generation.
10. Financing and business models have also evolved, supporting wider participation and opportunity. This has allowed people to finance a particular project or to develop their own business models for decentralised energy production. Leasing schemes, crowd funding, micro-finance and other innovative solutions have democratised energy production and consumption in unprecedented ways. The global energy system is therefore witnessing a shift in paradigm.
11. The publication also provides deeper look on renewable energy costs and benefits, renewable energy in communities, and changes in energy infrastructure.
12. At its fifth meeting in June 2013, Council members welcomed the Director-General's invitation to IRENA Members to consult on the development of the first annual publication, to be launched at the fourth session of the Assembly in January 2014. Thirty-six Members each nominated a technical contact point to provide comments to the publication. Additionally, an informal meeting with the contacts present in Abu Dhabi for the sixth Council was held on 9 December 2013. Written comments of the contact points are expected by 19 December 2013.

Next Steps

13. Based on the comments during the review of the draft of the publication, the Secretariat is preparing to shape the main messages of the final version of the publication.
14. The publication is expected to be launched during the 4th IRENA Assembly in January 2014.

For Council discussion

15. As the first edition takes shape, Members are invited to provide comments for the articulation of key messages of the publication.