

INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY

Sixth meeting of the Council

Abu Dhabi, 10 – 11 December 2013

**Note on comments received from Members
on the proposed Work Programme and Budget for 2014-2015**

1. Pursuant to the Assembly decision on ‘IRENA Programmatic and Budgetary Cycle’ (A/3/DC/12), the Director-General will “consult with Members to elicit their views on the IRENA programming to be taken into consideration in the development of the biennium work programme and budget, within the overall Medium-term Strategic framework”.
2. At its fifth meeting in June 2013, the Council asked the Secretariat to circulate the draft Work Programme and Budget for 2014-2015 by mid-October 2013. Members agreed to provide comments by the end of October 2013 to enable the Secretariat to circulate a revised version by mid-November 2013, in preparation for the sixth meeting of the Council scheduled for 10-11 December 2013 (C/5/SR/L.1).
3. Members’ comments on the proposed Work Programme and Budget for 2014-2015 (C/6/L.3) are set out in the present note. Feed-back has been received either during informal consultations of the Chair of the Programme and Strategy Committee with Members on 25 October 2013, or transmitted in writing to the Secretariat.
4. In their submissions, many Members expressed their appreciation to the Secretariat for having made available a first draft of the proposed Work Programme and Budget for 2014-2015 sixty, instead of the required thirty days in advance of the Council meeting, and welcomed the opportunity to comment and discuss the draft document. It was also recognized that Members’ feedback received previously had been incorporated in the draft.

I. Work Programme - scope and structure

5. Many Members commended the new structure of the proposed Work Programme, devised along six programme areas, which will help focus the work of the Agency on its overall objective of

becoming the global voice for renewable energy. The document was complimented for its action-orientated content and for providing clarity on the purpose and impact of the proposed activities.

6. One Member expressed its agreement with the choice of the six priority areas proposed by IRENA and noted that these areas represent a balanced approach to addressing the major issues surrounding the broad spectrum of the renewable energy field. Another Members stressed that the proposed biennial programme was relevant to the global deployment of renewable energy, that it addresses major challenges and focuses on areas of high added value. One Member recommended a greater emphasis of the Work Programme on developing the Agency's existing work and reducing the number of projects and deliverables, after reviewing their effectiveness.

7. Several Members commented on what they considered the highlights of the Agency's activities for the biennium: the expansion of the Global Atlas, IRENA's work on costing, on social acceptance of renewables, and the forthcoming institutional publication 'REthinking Energy'. Similarly, Members noted the importance they place on different issues in the Work Programme, including studies on power grids and storage, work on financing and the pricing of renewables, policy frameworks, enabling markets, infrastructure, transmission, and bioenergy. One Member noted the importance of transport, and requested that it be given greater emphasis in the implementation of the Work Programme, while another inquired about the absence of activities on biomass and marine energies in the proposal.

8. Many Members noted that the new presentation provides a higher level of clarity to the work of the Agency, including to the public. One Member noted that the breakdown by thematic areas is helpful as it provides a useful structure to review the work, and another stressed that this presentation would help avoid overlapping of tasks.

9. A number of Members called for a greater level of detail and the standardisation of activity descriptions and deliverables while one Member noted that occasionally 'outputs' are labelled as 'impacts'. Further, a Member recommended adding deliverables to activities of the Administration and Management Services division, the Strategic Management and Executive Direction division, and communications activities. Another Member requested identification of the lead division for components that involve cross-divisional work.

II. Work Programme – cooperation, partnerships and communications

10. A number of Members stressed the importance of enhanced **cooperation and partnerships** with other international institutions to create synergies and avoid duplication of work and requested that the Agency's partnership efforts be described in more detail. One Member recommended further systematising cooperation with other international bodies by including information on cooperation practices, details of the scope of work and the added value to enable Members to better understand IRENA's cooperation with other entities. One Member asked to differentiate the activities led by IRENA from those led by other partners. One Member stressed the importance of consultation and engagement with the private sector and encouraged the

development of a framework for cooperation. Members noted the importance of cooperation with key partners to integrate existing and ongoing analysis into its work.

11. Members stressed the importance of strengthening **communications**, including with IRENA's membership, in enabling the Agency to become the global voice of renewables. One requested more details on IRENA's communications strategy, including objectives and plans. Another Member stressed the importance of outreach to Members to keep them abreast of programmatic developments. One Member asked that the Agency's work on social acceptance be renamed and closely linked with the Agency's communications activities, while another underlined the importance of IRENA's participation in international conferences in order to promote the Agency's image and share its work with a broader audience.

III. Work Programme - the six thematic programme areas

Planning for the global energy transition

12. Members highlighted IRENA's role as the **Renewable Energy Hub** within the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative and proposed that IRENA strive to realise the potential of this role, including to further promote and develop IRENA's activities within the SE4ALL context, and to elevate sustainable energy within the post-Millennium Development Goals debate. One Member noted that the proposed 'white papers' should not be academic, but focus on concrete collaborative opportunities with activities identified by SE4ALL.

13. One Member emphasized the relevance of IRENA's work on **nexus** issues and encouraged active participation in the 'High-Impact Opportunity' activities in SE4ALL. Another Member encouraged the Agency to ensure that all stakeholders currently working on nexus issues are involved in this planned activity.

14. Members appreciated the expansion of **Renewables Readiness Assessments** in additional countries and requested more information regarding the criteria used to decide which countries are selected. One Member suggested that IRENA coordinate with other partners in the provision of targeted assistance.

Gateway to knowledge on renewable energy

15. Several Members recognized the importance of further developing knowledge components and the establishment of a global **Knowledge Gateway** for renewable energy as critical to building IRENA's reputation. For data collection and statistics, IRENA was encouraged to utilise synergies and collaborate with other international stakeholders.

16. One Member underlined the importance of **IRELP** and the need to consolidate its activities, and asked that particular attention be given to the issue of languages.

17. Members welcomed the initiative of publishing an annual **institutional publication**. Some Members requested more information on how the publication would be different from existing publications in the field. One Member requested that it contain detailed, objective and original analyses to be used as a reference for renewable energy policy making and data. It also noted that the publication would be a useful tool for IRENA's communication and outreach efforts. Further, a Member advised to moderate the current high expectations around the publication, given the time it usually takes to establish recognition and a reputation.

18. **Costing** was widely recognised as one of IRENA's most significant activities. In support of this, a Member suggested prioritising the costing work among the Agency's data gathering activities and underlined that the costing work should demonstrate the business case for renewable energy and feature prominently in IRENA's messaging. It also requested additional costing work in the context of energy access, with the focus on off-grid solutions.

Enabling investment and growth

19. One Member noted the importance of partnership with key institutions on the work on **finance** and the importance of IRENA's contribution to concrete activities in this respect. It also highlighted the importance of **environmental assessments** and offered its expertise on the subject.

20. One Member asked that IRENA examine regulatory and administrative aspects in the context of regional market analysis.

21. One Member requested that the results of the first **IRENA/ADFD Project Facility** funding cycle be examined to strengthen its outreach and to ensure the Facility's objective of geographical balance is achieved.

22. One Member considered the development of a **patents platform** a longer-term, rather than near-term, objective compared to other data-gathering activities.

Renewable energy access for sustainable livelihoods

23. Members welcomed the focus of the Work Programme on **supporting developing countries** by providing tools for decision-makers (such as the Global Atlas, the Project Navigator, among others) as well as by planning activities around off-grid, mini-grid and access to energy as a means to promote the uptake of renewables. It was suggested that this work should be closely linked to the SE4ALL initiative.

24. Two Members inquired about the potentials for the Agency's work, within its mandate, on the questions of refugees. One Member underlined the importance it attached to these activities. Another Member inquired about the work on food drying.

Islands: Lighthouses for renewable energy

25. Members welcomed the development of the Agency's work on renewable energy on islands. Some Members advised not to thematically overload GREIN in order to enable the good functioning of the network. One Member offered assistance to the programme area through sharing expertise and knowledge, proposed Indian Ocean islands as potential sites for energy audits, and proposed this work as an IRENA contribution to the upcoming Indian Ocean ministerial. Another Member offered its expertise in desalination, marine technology, assessment of potentials and mini-grids in the context of islands.

Regional action agenda

26. Members expressed support for IRENA's **regional approach**, especially as it was felt that it will enable the Agency to better integrate its activities into existing partnerships, networks, and programmes. One Member requested that the focus on Asia be strengthened while another noted the importance of IRENA raising its global profile, including in eastern and southern Europe. Another Member underlined the importance of the Agency's partnerships with regional organisations in Africa. Another Member encouraged communication with relevant regional stakeholders so that projects have impact at the local level and enhance IRENA's reputation. One Member highlighted the importance of peer-to-peer learning and bilateral cooperation at the country and regional levels in developing renewable energy initiatives.

27. One Member inquired about additional details regarding the Agency's long-term strategy towards its **training** work and the implications this would have for programming and budgeting.

28. One Member requested that IRENA's regional activities should be defined more clearly in terms of how its activities can be integrated into the ongoing programmes of other institutions. It also requested more specificity with respect to the work on Emerging Regional Clean Energy Corridors. Further one Member requested that communications and outreach activities as well as additional resources be allocated to the Clean Energy Corridor initiatives so that they gain and maintain the necessary momentum and suggested that IRENA organize an investor/donor conference.

IV. Work Programme - proposed budget

29. Many Members recognised the Agency's ambition expressed through the Work Programme it proposed for the 2014-2015 biennium and the reality that as a young organisation, it requires support to meet the increasing demands for its assistance and to accomplish its mission.

30. A number of Members acknowledged the growing global relevance and recognition of renewable energy that results in a more important role for the Agency.

31. Some Members noted that, in light of the current global economic situation and a zero nominal growth policy applied by a number of governments, the proposed annual increase of USD 6 million will be difficult to accept without greater clarity on the intended allocation of these additional resources. Many Members underlined that, in order to be able to accept a budget increase and justify it internally, they would require additional information. Some Members noted the usefulness of having projects costed against the current and the proposed budget scenarios. They asked for a more detailed and descriptive breakdown of costs associated with programmatic activities an explanation of which activities have led to the budgetary increase, and what the increase would allow IRENA to do that is not possible within the current budget.

32. One Member proposed that the 2013 core budget level of USD 18 million be a starting point for discussions, while another suggested to leave the budget at that level. Another Member considered the proposal for 2014-2015 as a good starting point. Some Members said that they had taken note of the proposed increase and would work towards meeting these requirements. One Member emphasized its commitment to ensure that IRENA remains an effective organisation and noted that, if additional information with a compelling case would be provided, it will be given full consideration. It was also noted that the recent change of the UN factor resulted in an even higher assessed contribution to IRENA for some Members.

33. Some Members suggested to prioritize proposed activities and align them with the Medium-term Strategy 2013-2017, in order to adapt the programme to the available resources and to help create a schedule of activities, as well as to plan time and resource allocation more effectively.

34. One Member requested clarity on the proposed budget for the New York liaison office as well as a more explicit presentation of voluntary contributions in the proposed budget. It further asked for the implementation rate for 2013 so far, and projections for the remainder of the year 2013. A few Members requested a demonstration of cost cutting measures of general operating expenses and other items and requested the optimal use of resources available.