

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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Remarks
by

Mr. Adnan Z. Amin
Director-General
International Renewable Energy Agency

to the

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are meeting at a critical time as Governments, particularly in the South, are facing investment and infrastructure decisions in the context of growing economies that will be at a scale to define a generation.

These decisions have to take into account that our planet will be home to more than 8 billion people by 2030, and more than 9 billion by 2050. Most of this growth will take place in the south. The population of Africa is expected to double by 2050, from 1 to 2 billion. Asia will grow by another billion.

Despite the current global economic situation, Southern economies continue to grow rapidly. For example, China is growing at more than 8% a year. India is growing at 6%; sub-Saharan Africa by almost 6%. We observe similar rates in Latin America and the Caribbean region. But maintaining this growth will depend on building an infrastructure and particularly a power sector that can meet the rapidly growing energy demand and can support growth and development.

Over the next generation, we need to undertake a massive investment in energy in Southern countries, in ways appropriate for its specific challenges. This means unleashing Southern creativity, fostering Southern cooperation, and supporting Southern business.

As we do so, we need to consider four overriding issues. First, our decisions need to be financially viable. Second, we need to act in a way that provides the most people possible with access to energy. Third, we need to assure their energy is secure – with reliability of access, and resilience to market volatility, which has taken so much from southern growth in the past.

And we need to make the best choice for the sustainability of the Earth.

I am convinced that renewable energy answers all four of these imperatives.

I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for launching the SE4ALL initiative, during this Year of Sustainable Energy for All and for appointing Mr Kandeh K. Yumkella as the Chief-Executive of the Initiative. We at IRENA particularly welcome the prominence that SE4ALL has given to our core business. Last week, our Council reconfirmed IRENA's commitment to lead the quest to a renewable energy future, including under the umbrella of SE4ALL.

A profound change is already underway. In emerging economies, we see remarkable growth in renewable energy – both on the grid, and for decentralized power generation.

Brazil, where power demand will grow by almost 3% per year over the next 5 years, renewables will continue to account for the lion's share – including large hydro, wind, biomass, and, over time, solar.

In China, where demand is growing by almost 6% a year, renewable electricity capacity is expected to grow at more than 11% per year from 2011-2017, the largest increment in the world - led by hydropower, onshore wind, solar and bioenergy.

In India, where demand is growing at 7%, we see growing creativity in using renewables for decentralized power.

In Africa innovative and dynamic initiatives are being launched as renewable energy achieves economic viability, with a new focus on sustainable hydro, and off-grid solar capacity.

Overall, renewable electricity generation outside the OECD is projected to grow at 7 per cent a year from 2011 to in 2017. The fastest growing renewables markets of the future are going to be predominantly in the emerging economies of the South.

And it is in this context that the South-South cooperation is also growing, naturally.

Take the case of Husk Power Systems, which successfully developed and installed 90 rice-rusk-based gasification power plants in rural India. It is now exporting this technology to Uganda and Nepal, where it is being adapted to meet local needs; and we are looking at this being replicated in many other places.

Brazil is offering African countries free transfer of its biofuels technology - to help them achieve energy independence. Cooperation accords on biofuels production already exist with ten countries, and we have also been discussing with Brazil, to use their hydro-mapping capacity, too.

A Chinese solar manufacturer – Jinko Solar – is working with South African mines to reduce diesel dependency over the next 30 years.

And Morocco's national electric utility, ONE, is helping Senegal supply about 20,000 households with electricity, including with solar power, during the next three years. In these, and many other cases, renewables increasingly provide the answer for Southern challenges.

The question is why? First, the cost of renewable energy has fallen dramatically; in fact, IRENA studies show that, for many areas, they are now the least cost-competitive alternative, both on- and off the grid.

Renewable energy has become the best way to get electricity to people in areas not serviced by the grid – as highlighted by the first International Off-grid Renewable Energy Conference, in Accra this month.

Renewable energy offers security against price volatility, and the ability for communities to power themselves.

And it is a proven route towards improving the environment, by decreasing local pollution and reducing additional CO₂ emissions.

A major challenge is that people don't have access to all the facts. IRENA will address this with world-class information products, such the new Global Atlas for Solar and Wind Energy, which will be launched in a month, mapping these resources across the globe.

We are also fostering cooperation between countries of the South; such as through our global network of islands, GREIN, that was launched in our Malta Summit almost two months ago,

with the participation of all island-states We are helping countries put in place the right policies and regulations to attract investment, by assisting them in Renewable Readiness Assessments, a policy instrument for assessment.

We are working with African countries to create a continent-wide renewable energy corridor - powered by geothermal, hydro and wind - connecting southern, eastern and western regional grids to unleash massive economies of scale, across the continent.

Last week African Energy Ministers meeting in Addis identified this as crucial to achieving their electricity targets. An IRENA conference in 2013 will work with partners to explore the steps that can be taken to finance and build it and work closely with Kandeh Yumkella and the SE4ALL Initiative.

Perhaps most importantly, we are working with the key players to chart a viable route towards the SE4ALL target of doubling the proportion of renewables through a process known as REMAP 2030 – which identifies pathways, fosters international cooperation, and looks for innovative end-use solutions.

The political commitment is there. In 2011, IRENA was established to be the global voice for renewable energy, a source of advice for countries and the global hub for RE. Today, we have more than 160 Members and signatories and many more coming to the table every year.

A renewable future for the global south is possible, it is desirable, and it makes good business sense. But the years ahead will be critical, and the window of opportunity is short.

It is your vision and commitment that will make this happen; IRENA stands ready to help you in that journey.

Thank you very much.
