

INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY

Tenth meeting of the Council

Abu Dhabi, 23 – 24 November 2015

Note of the Director-General

IRENA and renewable energy at COP21**I. Introduction**

1. This note is prepared to inform Members of IRENA activities at the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France. For the first time at a UN Climate Change Conference, there will be a powerful spotlight placed on renewable energy as a key climate solution. Through a series of events, renewable energy will be demonstrated to governments, media and the public at large, as reliable, mainstream, cost-effective in developing and industrialised countries alike, beneficial both environmentally and socially, and scalable in the short-term.

2. IRENA has led the global effort on climate action in renewables for the last couple of years. In 2014, IRENA led the efforts on renewable energy in the context of the Abu Dhabi Ascent in May and the United Nations Secretary-General's Climate Summit in September. Building on the Agency's programmatic work, and benefiting from the momentum and partnerships created in the course of the Summit work, three initiatives were announced at the 2014 Summit. These included the Africa Clean Energy Corridor, the Global Geothermal Alliance and the SIDS Lighthouses Initiative. Since that time, IRENA has continued to work with countries and partners to advance these initiatives to help unlock opportunities for accelerated renewables deployment and to demonstrate the opportunities renewable energy presents at COP21.

3. In 2015, the Government of France requested IRENA to take a leading role on renewable energy within the Lima Paris Action Agenda (LPAA). LPAA is a joint undertaking of the Peruvian and French COP presidencies, the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the UNFCCC Secretariat. It aims to strengthen climate action throughout 2015, in Paris in December and beyond through mobilizing robust global action towards low carbon and resilient societies; providing enhanced support to existing initiatives, including those launched during the New York UNSG Climate Summit in September 2014; and mobilizing new partners and providing a platform for the visibility of their actions, commitments and results in the run up to COP21.

4. Furthermore, IRENA joined forces with the European Commission (EC), REN21, the French Syndicate for Renewable Energy (SER), and the UAE to showcase renewable energy, raise awareness on its potential to decarbonize energy systems and demonstrate progress made in the deployment of renewables in different settings. Endorsed by the French Presidency, this coalition will demonstrate opportunities and benefits that renewable energy presents in the global effort on climate change in a series of events from 4-7 December.

5. This series of high profile events, which will take place from 4-7 December, is being promoted through a concerted communication campaign “Renewable Energy Track” (RE Track).

II. Lima Paris Action Agenda events

5 December 2015

6. Saturday 5 December will showcase high-level action across a range of sectors, including renewable energy, during the LPAA Day:

“The Action day will aim at sharing the objectives and achievements of impactful initiatives, giving inspiration to economic and political leaders. As a whole, the ‘Action Day’ would capture the magnitude of the mobilization, the credibility of corresponding commitments, and should play a positive role in the implementation of the new climate agreement beyond 2015.”

The Action day will showcase a number of renewable energy coalitions and announcements that are being selected by the LPAA leadership.

7 December 2015

7. Within the LPAA stream, 7 December will be the Energy Day at the COP. As one of the 12 action areas, its purpose will be to:

“Enable the stakeholders to present issues at stake and existing solutions’ pathways. [Action days] will be official events with expected high-level attendance that will create a visible sequence during the COP. Above all they will highlight the size of the sectorial commitments and individual engagements.”

8. The Energy Day, organized in cooperation with SE4ALL, comprises three segments: renewable energy, energy access and energy efficiency. To highlight the interlinked nature of these three elements, the opening and closing of the day will be a joint effort. The renewable energy segment will start with a segment on “Transformation: what will be the energy mix of the future?”. This will include a set of announcements and commitments on the progress of different renewable energy technologies, including on solar, biomass, and hydro technologies, followed by an in-focus dialogue on the global effort to accelerate the deployment of geothermal energy, constituting the launch the Global Geothermal Alliance. The segment will end with an in-focus dialogue with CEOs and grid operators who will speak on why they choose to run their grids with a high share of renewables and how modern technology has helped overcome challenges.

9. The renewable energy segment will close with the focus on fast-tracking the deployment of renewables. The Africa Clean Energy Corridor, announced at the Climate Summit, will show the progress made, and African leaders and development partners will highlight their commitment to an Africa-wide initiative on renewable energy. An in-focus dialogue on financing for renewables with speakers from both public and private sectors will transition to the launch of IRENA’s Sustainable Energy Marketplace, and an announcement on the Green Bond initiative for renewables.

10. The second segment will focus on mobilizing all actors and highlight those that are advancing towards 100% renewables. It will showcase the energy system transformation in Small Island Development States (SIDS) and will reflect on the Lighthouses Initiative and its goals to deploy 120MW of new renewable energy on SIDS, mobilise USD 500 million and ensure all participating SIDS develop renewable energy roadmaps by 2020. This will be followed by announcements by countries, cities and companies on their commitment to 100% renewables.

III. ‘Renewable Energy: Energising the Future’ events

4 December 2015

11. The RE track will start on Friday 4 December with a series of workshops on solutions offered by renewables in a range of sectors. Workshops are planned on: societal benefits of renewables; renewable energy solutions for cities; renewables and agriculture; renewable energy solutions for industry; renewables and transport; renewable energy and energy efficiency; and renewable energy in the MENA region, to name a few. The interest for participation in the RE track has grown exponentially in the past few weeks, so additional events and workshops are being brought under the RE track umbrella to broaden the partnerships and strengthen the voice of renewables during COP 21. A common branding and calendar is used and show-cased at www.re-energise.org

6 December 2015

12. The workshops on 4 December and the LPAA Action Day will be held in the “blue zone” meaning that access will be limited to those accredited with the UN. To reach a wider audience, a high-profile event will be held on Sunday, 6 December in the heart of Paris. An inspirational, media-friendly conference, called “Renewable Energy: Energizing the Future” will feature a series of high-level participants who will share their visions for a future powered by renewable energy: CEOs will describe what it took to get their companies to go for 100% renewable energy in their operations; government leaders will describe their ambitious plans for scaling up renewable energy investments; renewable energy industry leaders will describe innovations and breakthroughs which resulted in faster and greater deployment than analysts had anticipated. Speakers will also identify obstacles and challenges, and the means to overcome them.

13. The conference will be attended by leaders from the private sector, governments (national, regional, local), NGOs, and others. One outcome will be a renewable energy declaration where signatories commit to speeding up the transition to a renewable energy future. In partnership with the European Commission, REN21, Syndicat des Énergies Renouvelables (SER) and the Government of the United Arab Emirates, IRENA is working on ensuring that this event will reach a wide audience and that the declaration is shared with many actors who can help its dissemination.

IV. Show-casing progress in IRENA-facilitated initiatives

14. In addition to the above-mentioned events prepared in collaboration with partners, IRENA will hold four additional events for its four flagship initiatives: the African Clean Energy Corridor (ACEC), SIDS Lighthouses Initiative, the Global Geothermal Alliance (GGA) and the Sustainable Energy Marketplace. Each of these events will provide an opportunity for showing the progress in more detail and gaining further support and commitment beyond Paris.

1 December 2015 - High-Level Event on the Global Geothermal Alliance

15. The Global Geothermal Alliance (GGA) will be launched during the Lima-Paris Action Agenda Energy Day on 7 December to show-case joint global action by all geothermal stakeholders towards an accelerated deployment of geothermal energy. Ahead of the formal launch, this high-level event will lay the groundwork to demonstrate the important role of geothermal energy as one of the tangible clean energy solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation while promoting the joint global action of leading geothermal countries and partners through the Alliance. Introduced by a Joint

Communique of the Alliance by founding members and partners, the event will showcase a number of concrete actions that have been initiated under the umbrella of the Alliance.

2 December 2015 - SIDS Lighthouses event

16. In collaboration with the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) of Germany, this event aims to reinforce the commitment of partners to the SIDS Lighthouses initiative to continue accelerating the renewable energy transition on islands beyond COP 21/CMP 11. The event will take place as a high-level panel discussion to ignite dialogue on the role and impact of national, regional, and international partnerships in achieving progress in transforming islands' power sectors to sustainable energy. In particular, opportunities and challenges in advancing renewable energy deployment on islands through partnerships will be discussed.

9 December 2015 - Sustainable Energy Marketplace in the Caribbean and Latin America launch

17. In partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank, the Sustainable Energy Marketplace has been expanded beyond Africa to the Caribbean and to Latin America. The Marketplace is a tool to connect project developers, governments, financiers, and service/technology providers using an online platform and active project facilitation. The event will mark the launch of the Marketplace to this region and highlight the growing interest and capacity to invest in and develop renewable energy projects in the region.

9 December 2015 - ACEC/Marketplace event

18. In partnership with the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the Africa Development Bank, the meeting will take place as part of the Africa Energy Day at the Africa pavilion. The event will offer an opportunity to discuss progress on the Africa Clean Energy Corridor initiative facilitated by IRENA to advance regional collaborative action on renewables and the Sustainable Energy Marketplace that serves as a platform to accelerate investments in renewable energy projects. The meeting will give ACEC members an opportunity to highlight their ownership and commitment for the implementation of the ACEC in Eastern and Southern Africa, and, as the initiative is being expanded, also in the West Africa region. A number of examples will be presented to highlight the achievements of ACEC since its announcement at the UN climate summit 2014 with zoning results translating into bankable projects or RRA recommendations implemented to strengthen enabling frameworks for investments. Project developers and investors will showcase commitment on advancing on a pipeline of investment mature projects in Africa.

V. Next steps

19. Preparations for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) are underpinned by a strong communication campaign. In the leading period, the Director-General is releasing and co-authoring a series of op-eds to raise the profile of renewable energy. IRENA is benefiting from the Coalition for Action to amplify the voice of renewables in the private sector and civil society. This is complemented by a strong social media presence and close collaboration with major media outlets.

20. COP21 presents an unprecedented opportunity to showcase the business case of renewables and demonstrate its role in the global climate effort. Building on the work undertaken in preparation for Paris, IRENA will carry the message of continuous climate action on to the sixth Assembly session in January 2016, the first global meeting following COP21.