

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY NEWS on EMAIL (SENSE) number 29

Welcome! SENSE is a service of the Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Project (SECCP) a project of Earthlife Africa Johannesburg.

SENSE is a monthly publication, edited by Claire Taylor. We welcome any feedback and submissions. Also let us know if you wish to be removed from this list, know someone else who should be receiving SENSE, or if you'd like to receive our separate Climate Change email newsletter, CCEN.

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1. SECCP News

Note from SENSE Editor

Welcome to the final edition of SENSE for 2004. This is a shortened version to report back primarily on SECCP's involvement in two international conferences: Energetic Solutions – Making renewable energy a reality and Energy for Development (E4D); and to give an update on SA sustainable energy progress.

While there's a lot to write about on the conferences (see General Sustainable Energy News heading) particularly the Energetic Solutions conference that took place in Nigeria, there's really nothing substantial to report back on SA's sustainable energy progress. We are still waiting for the RE Strategy to be made public – this was promised for September, but has been delayed until next year. Similarly, we were

promised that Integrated Energy Planning would begin this year – though nothing has been made public. And, although placed under SA’s sustainable energy progress, the news that government will support the introduction of RE onto the power market with once-off subsidies amounting to a paltry R14.2m over 4 years (compared to the further R500m just given to the PBMR) certainly undermines any belief that our government is committed to sustainable energy.

Nevertheless, there are a number of interesting articles – particularly in section 4 – general sustainable energy news. I hope you find SENSE an informative read. Remember that we’re always looking for news and views on energy issues to include in SENSE. So, if you have anything you want to share please send it to me at: Claire@earthlife.org.za Please also feel free to circulate SENSE to your networks.

Wishing you a happy holiday season, and an inspiring new year.

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2. SA’s sustainable energy progress

Assessment of commercially exploitable biomass resources: bagasse, wood and sawmill waste and pulp

Claire Taylor

The Department of Minerals and Energy hosted a workshop in late November to report back on an assessment undertaken into commercially exploitable biomass resources. According to the report released at the workshop, commercial biomass in SA is mainly produced by the sugar, forestry, saw milling and pulp and paper industries.

| Biomass source | Total biomass waste (million tons) | Energy content (Twh) | Potential electricity that can be generated (Gwh) | Industry requirement vs. Export to Grid (Gwh) |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sugarcane | 11.47m | 22.33 | 6 200 | 700 needed, leaving 5 500 available for export to the grid |
| Timber | 3.13 | 10.89 | 2 722 | No info provided |
| Chips, sawdust and bark | 2.95 | 8.49 | 2 122 | Needed in house |
| Pulp and paper | 5.78 | 10.17 | 2 542 | Needed in house |

As shown in the table above, of these industries, biomass from the sugar industry is the most commercially viable, at least under current conditions. With green harvesting (no burning) the total sugarcane biomass waste can be as high as 11.47 million tones, with an energy content of 22.33 Twh. The potential electricity that can be generated from this biomass is about 5 500 Gwh – this is in excess of the industry’s requirements of about 700 Gwh.

In contrast to the commercial viability of sugarcane, the report concluded that biomass from forestry, sawmilling and the pulp and paper industry were not commercially viable.

Government's support of RE

At the biomass workshop, Kevin Nassiep, the Chief Director of energy Planning at the Department of Minerals and energy confirmed that government will support the introduction of renewable energy onto the power market through once off capital subsidies – at least in the short term. According to Nassiep, R14.2m will be made available over the next 4 years. **Editor: considering how minuscule this amount is, we considered moving this snippet under the unsustainable energy heading below – but it already has so much information!**

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3. Unsustainable Energy

South Africa

Private producers invited to expand SA's power grid

Khulu Phasiwe Business Day 9 December 2004 and BuaNews, 8 December 2004 in AfME Power & Water, Volume 1 Edition 8 December 15th 2004

Plans to allow independent power producers to provide SA's new power capacity took a concrete step forward when the minerals and energy department invited parties to express interest in building two new power stations for R6bn. The plants, which are required to start operating in 2008, are expected to significantly reduce the power cuts bedevilling the economy.

The much-delayed introduction of independent power producers is aimed at bringing competition to power utility Eskom, which produces 95% of SA's electricity. More competition is also expected to further reduce the cost of SA's electricity, which is generally regarded as among the world's cheapest. **Editor: The reason SA's electricity is so cheap is because all the costs associated with generating and distributing electricity are not taken into account. Levelling the playing field so that renewable energy can be introduced onto the power market requires that full cost-accounting is undertaken, not that over-all electricity prices are further reduced!**

Government said recently that Eskom would provide 70% of anticipated new capacity and independent power producers the remainder. Eskom would spend R84bn in the next five years to build new capacity, while the private sector was expected to invest R23bn.

Minerals and Energy Deputy Minister Lulu Xingwana said SA's growing demand for electricity had prompted government to seek new capacity to avert widespread power cuts in the future. SA's excess peaking capacity is expected to run out in 2006 and become fall short of demand by 2010. To avert this, the department said 5000MW would be required in the next five years.

Present requirements state that the government is looking for oil-fired open cycle gas turbines (OCGTs) to be operating as peak demand plants. The two plants should at least have a combined power generating capacity of 1000MW, with an expected investment requirement of R6 billion (US\$980 million).

The minerals and energy deputy director-general responsible for electricity and nuclear energy, Nelisiwe Magubane, said the independent power producers must have black

economic empowerment equity to qualify for the lucrative tender. She said a number of international power producers had already inquired about the project. These included Alstom, CDC Globelec, Tata Power Company and Siemens.

Power price rise lower than expected

Summary of article by Khulu Phasiwe Business Day 14 December 2004

In an unprecedented move, the National Electricity Regulator (NER) has scaled back its own recommended price increases for Eskom, saying the power utility must reward consumers for the huge returns it earned last year. The regulator approved an average price increase of 4.1% for the next year – lower than the initial 6.4% it approved in October this year. The increase is effective from 1 January.

The revised tariff could affect Eskom's ability to raise the R84bn it needs to build new capacity. It could also put pressure on government and the regulator to effect sharp increases in the future to enable Eskom to fulfill its mandate to provide 70% of planned new capacity.

The lower price increase will, however, be a welcome relief to consumers whose disposable incomes were threatened by the above-inflation increase earlier approved by the regulator.

NER spokesman Nhlanhla Cebekhulu said that one of the key detriments of the approved tariff increases was the fact that Eskom would be required to repay customers for the huge returns it had earned last year mainly because Eskom sold more electricity than expected when price increases for 2003 were approved. Last year Eskom received an 8.4% tariff increase. As a result it posted a net profit of R3.5bn on the back of revenue of R32.8bn.

Eskom said that it accepted the regulator's decision.

Editor: For our suggestions for making electricity affordable for the poor, without also benefiting customers that have no need or justification for subsidisation, please request a copy of our sustainable Energy Briefing No. 2

Electricity connections and disconnections

Speaking at the Energy for Development Conference (**see report under 'General Sustainable energy News: The rest of the world' below**), Lulu Xingwana, the Deputy Minerals and Energy Minister reported that 4 109 611 households, clinics and schools have been connected to the electricity grid since 1994 – an average of 400 000 a year. The current electricity access rate is 70%, with government's target being universal access by 2008.

The *Business Day* (25 November 2004) reports that the increase in the electrification of housing has meant an increase in residential demand for electricity. Consequently, Eskom was experiencing higher than expected demand for energy – even in summer according to Christo van Niekerk, manager of Matimba Power Station.

While residential electrification was being undertaken, Eskom had disconnected 454 122 accounts between 2001 and November this year because of non-payment, Public Enterprises Minister Alec Erwin said in a written reply to a question posed in Parliament (*Business Day*, 7 December 2004).

Nuclear update

Summary of article by Sven Lünsche, FM Focus, December 2004, p14

'Consumers will source electricity from a fleet of 24 PBMRs within 10 years' according to Jaco Kriek, the PBMR company's new CEO. Kriek, a former Industrial Development Corp (IDC) executive is confident that PBMR's 'unique SA nuclear technology' will find lucrative local and export markets by the time it's commercially launched in 2013. Eskom will be its largest consumer.

PBMR plans to raise R10bn to develop the reactors commercially. Over the past 10 years government has spent R2bn on the project – the latest a R500m allocation in its November mini-budget.

Over the past 2 weeks PBMR has signed 10 contracts to design and test components of the reactor, including a US\$12m with Mitsubishi (Japan) for the core barrel assembly and R134m with JSE listed engineering group IST for a helium test facility at Pelindaba. These contracts have been on hold for years as PBMR struggled to stay afloat. Formed in 2000 by Eskom, the IDC, British Nuclear Fuels (BNF) and US utility Exelon, PBMR battled to get funding as first Exelon pulled out and then IDC stopped funding in 2002.

Eskom has been carrying the can but wants to be a client rather than an investor – wanting to reduce its stake from 55% to 10%.

The IDC's shareholder ministry the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has taken over from Eskom, and is now driving the project. It secured R500m from government, appointed its director general Alistair Ruiters as Chairman and was instrumental in getting Kriek appointed. The IDC holds 20% of PBMR, BNF holds 10%. Kriek says a new shareholder agreement will be signed early next year. He also said that early next year PBMR would "embark on an aggressive capitalising programme" locally and internationally. Three local consortia have already expressed interest. Discussions are also being held with overseas nuclear companies like General Electric of the US and Areva in France.

PBMR is looking for R6bn over the next 10 years, with the rest coming from government, Eskom and IDC. In the medium to long term the public sector would retain 51% shares in PBMR and private investors would hold the remainder. The funds are needed to launch the more costly components of the reactor, including a fuel manufacturing facility at Pelindaba and a 110 MW demonstration reactor at Koeberg. The demo plant is expected to cost R4bn, and will produce energy on a commercial basis.

While the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has approved the demo reactor, Earthlife Africa Cape Town appeared in the Cape high court in late November to appeal against the decision. The court's decision has not yet been finalised.

The rest of the world:

World's Power Firms 'Failing over Clean Energy Plans'

Amanda Brown, 'Scotsman', 1 December 2004

Report at: www.panda.org/downloads/climate/rankingpowerreportbranded.pdf

Power companies are failing to tackle the crisis of climate change, according to a report out today. The document, *Ranking Power*, by WWF, reveals that the world's leading power companies are not investing enough in renewable and efficient energy in order to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The report gives two thirds of the world's leading power companies a score of less than one out of 10 for their response to global warming and more than 90% rank less than three.

US companies came out worst and European companies hardly did much better in the analysis, which assessed 72 power companies in terms of their use, sale and investment in renewable energy and highly efficient natural gas.

The report was released to mark the launch of WWF's new international climate change campaign, PowerSwitch. The campaign will target the power sector to make the switch from coal to clean energy. Campaigns will be taking place in more than 20 countries, sending a clear signal that the power sector must change.

Nicola Saltman, Climate Change programme leader for WWF-UK, said: "The power sector is the biggest single polluter of greenhouse gases, responsible for 37% of carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels. However, the companies we analysed are completely unprepared for fundamental change in the way they invest in clean and efficient energy."

Nearly 65% of the European companies surveyed have shares of renewable energy in their fuel mix below 1%. Only one fifth of European companies surveyed had shares of renewable energy in their fuel mix greater than 2%.

Of the 22 companies assessed, Iberdrola in Spain scored the highest with a ranking of 4.3. Among American firms 24% scored 0 and 76% scored below one. In Japan and Australia the use of renewable fuel is extremely limited as the fuel mix is often dominated by lignite coal, one of the dirtiest and most carbon rich fuels of all.

According to WWF the power sector's contribution to climate change threatens the very development that electricity promotes.

Mathew Davis, Climate Change Campaign leader for WWF UK said: "Time is running out and unless power companies and governments take action now, it will put millions of people at risk from rising sea levels, loss of fresh water, extreme weather and disease.

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1. General Sustainable Energy News

South Africa

Deputy Minister makes keynote address

Claire Taylor

Deputy Minister Xingwana represented South Africa at the Energy for Development Conference (**see report under 'General Sustainable energy News: The rest of the world' below**). Her keynote address was generally criticised for being very lengthy. In it she:

- Explored the policies that shape the energy sector in South Africa, noting that SA has an Integrated Energy Plan – though she failed to mention that this was adopted from Eskom and as such has been soundly criticised.
- Spoke about the success of Integrated Energy Centres, which are being established as partnerships with oil companies, local municipalities and the government.
- Noted the importance of energy security, which entails developing renewable energy including biofuels – with SA wanting to learn more from Brazil, using coal more efficiently, and developing the pebble bed modular reactor.

In particular, she was criticised for attributing the failure of the solar home system project to the fact that it didn't meet women's cooking expectations!

She did, however, briefly speak about the development of ethanol gel fuel as an alternative to paraffin – being less poisonous and flammable. NGOs and women's organisations are currently being consulted about this initiative, which is particularly interesting for government due to its job creation potential, as the gel can be made locally from sugar cane.

In addition, resounding applause followed her input on the last day of the Conference, where she urged the world to demand that America sign the Kyoto Protocol, considering that it's the biggest polluter in the world.

Executive short-course: Sustainable energy planning for cities

Sustainable Energy Africa

The Sustainability Institute (University of Stellenbosch) and Sustainable Energy Africa (SEA) are offering an intensive 6-day executive short course, accredited by Stellenbosch University on Sustainable Energy Planning For Cities.

When? 14 - 19 March 2005.

Who should attend? Local government officials, politicians and policy makers and project implementers from South and Southern Africa working on energy, planning and environmental issues as well as representatives of organisations working with cities on energy and related issues such as sustainable development.

Cost? R 6 250

To print Registration form - go to:

http://www.sustainable.org.za/downloads/SEC_Course/Registration_Accommodation_BookingForm.pdf

Or call Eve on (021) 881 3196 to have a form faxed to you.

For more information, please see the course website

at: **www.sustainable.org.za/sustcourse.htm**

Or Contact - Sustainable Energy Africa: (021) 702 3622, **info@sustainable.org.za**

Africa

Energetic Solutions – Making renewable energy a reality

Claire Taylor

I was very lucky to participate in the Energetic Solutions conference (organised by One Sky, and sponsored by a number of organisations) that took place in Nigeria from 21 to 26 November. Along with 65 participants from Nigeria, Canada and other African countries including Cameroon, Niger, Sierra Leone and The Gambia I was able to build

my own capacity on energy related issues, and also contribute to developing a Declaration.

The Calabar Declaration – A Declaration on Sustainable Renewable Energy was drafted by all participants. It first sets targets for renewable energy for Nigeria:

- 25% of all new on-grid energy projects from RE by 2010 – increasing incrementally – 35% by 2020, 50% by 2030 and 100% by 2050
- 20% of all off-grid energy projects from RE by 2010.

The Declaration then identifies actions to be taken in order to meet these targets: To develop capacity, the Declaration called for the establishment of a renewable energy network of Nigerian stakeholders to promote renewable energy projects and policy advocacy. This was realised on the final day of the conference when the Council for Renewable Energy of Nigeria (CREN) was formed. CREN comprises representatives from NGOs, the private sector, government as well as academics and students. A Chairperson of the Network and regional co-ordinators were nominated.

In order to finance the transition to RE, the Declaration identifies actions to be taken by various actors. For example, the federal government is called upon to remove or reduce import and export duties on renewable energy technologies (RETs) – from 40% to between 0 to 5%. Oil, gas and other fossil fuel industries are called upon to pay a percentage of their profit to compensate for the social and environmental damage caused by their activities in order to compensate impacted communities. Financial institutions are called upon to phase out all fossil fuel investments/loans/projects. Similarly donor agencies are called upon to stop all funding for large-scale dams and nuclear projects and to divert funds into RE.

To monitor progress towards RE, the Declaration recommends that the Energy Commission of Nigeria include a participatory monitoring and evaluation committee that includes representatives from the NGO community, energy research centres, academia, youth, women, the RETs private sector, financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

To see a full copy of the Calabar Declaration, as well as other reports made during the Conference visit <http://www.onesky.ca/energetics.html>

In addition to developing a Declaration, and creating CREN, other highlights of the Conference included:

- Inputs from powerful speakers especially Isaac Osouka from Environmental Rights Action, who described how Nigeria's oil wealth has made the country "rotten" – with Nigeria's people and land being the casualties of this decay. "It's ironical and contradictory," said Osouka, "that while Nigeria is the 6th largest exporter of crude oil, its people don't have access to petrol or electricity. While land is a source of livelihood for Nigeria's people, people are losing their land through the land-use decree, which makes all mineral resources the property of the state. The Nigerian government shows a complete disregard for the land and its people placing no checks or controls on oil companies. Consequently, Nigeria has the largest number of oil spills in the world, and gas flaring continues unchecked, leading to acid rain, climate change, noise and light pollution.

According to Osouka, the drilling of oil and gas demands a certain type of social organisation – centralised and authoritarian – to grab land from people and give it to oil companies. This type of social structure breeds corruption with Nigeria being the most corrupt country in the world.

Osouka went on to describe Nigeria as a “colony to oil.” Other governments depend on their citizens for income, and so provide services such as education, health and transport for their benefit. In Nigeria, Nigerians are irrelevant. Oil is where the government gets its money from, and so it panders to the oil companies while completely disregarding Nigerians – whose land and livelihoods are being destroyed.

In conclusion, Osouka emphasised the importance of developing decentralised and locally owned renewable energy in Nigeria. In his words, “we don’t want Shell oil replaced with shell solar.”

- A visit to the Rumuekpe community in Emuwa Local Government Area in River State. After a warm welcome by the community, which included sharing palm wine and kola nuts in a traditional welcoming ceremony, we were shown a Shell run gas flare. It is huge, hot and noisy – completely dominating the landscape. In startling contrast to the technology used to extract oil, separate the gas and burn it, is the utter poverty of the community living next to the pipeline – dirt roads, shack houses, and no water, sanitation or electricity. An absolute disgrace! And the Rumuekpe community is just one community that I happened to visit.

Germany supports wind-generated energy plant in Morocco

MAP, December 4 in AfME Power & Water, Volume 1 Edition 8 December 15th 2004

Germany will contribute 50 million Euros to the construction of one of two wind generated energy plants in Essaouira (south Atlantic city).

The German public development bank “FKW” (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau) will extend the Moroccan electricity office 50 million Euros. Half of the amount is a 40-year loan carrying an annual interest rate of 0.75% with a 10-year grace period and the other half is a financial loan. The plant will produce an annual average of 200 GWH and service the Moroccan electric grid.

Kenya launches new energy plan

East African Standard, Dec 8 in AfME Power & Water, Volume 1 Edition 8 December 15th 2004

The Kenyan government has launched an energy reform initiative that will cost US\$240 million. Kenyan Minister of Energy Simeon Nyachae indicated that the project will focus on necessary improvements of the energy services infrastructure.

As stated by all Kenyan newspapers the last years, power outages and the high cost of electricity have been a major issue that has slowed down the recovery of the Kenyan economy. Energy Permanent Secretary Patrick Nyoike has said that the project has a life span of 4 years, and is targeting to connect an additional 400,000 more Kenyans to the grid. He said the Government, through Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) would also reduce system losses from 18.7% and reduce power outages, which now average 11,000 per month.

The rest of the world

Energy for Development Conference

Claire Taylor

The ministerial Energy for Development (E4D) conference hosted by the Dutch government (12-14 December 2004) did exactly what it set out to do – it contributed to discussions on energy – no more and no less. The organisers envisage that these discussions will be fed into the Millennium Review Summit (2005), CSD 14 (2006) and CSD 15 (2007).

Participants included ministers from around the world, representatives from development agencies including the United Nations, funding agencies including the World Bank and African Development Bank, and NGOs.

While almost everyone identified the same problem – the 2 billion people without access to safe and affordable energy, and the ill-health and drudgery experienced particularly by women to cook for their families – the solutions varied significantly. Central to them all was ‘where’s the money going to come from?’ Recommendations included that:

- Subsidies for energy projects are targeted, transparent and time bound or temporary. Thus, in the long run, the cost of meeting energy demand is borne by energy users through cost-recovery tariffs.
- The private sector will only invest in projects if they can make money from them. Consequently, it is not possible to rely only on private investments alone to meet energy for development needs, as some markets are perceived as being unprofitable. To encourage private investment in such markets, ODA and multilateral assistance such as the World Bank facilities can be used as risk guarantees.

The role of NGOs at E4D Conference

In preparation for the E4D Conference, two Dutch based organisations – Hivos and Stichting Mileu Natuur hosted a two-day workshop for 30 NGOs from around the world. NGOs representing environmental and developmental points of view met to develop a Declaration to feed into the Conference.

Developing the Declaration necessitated balancing developmental needs with environmental needs, which involved lengthy discussions. If a poor community has an opportunity to get a diesel run engine that will drastically improve their lives, how can environmental NGOs oppose this because it pollutes the environment? To ensure that NGOs spoke in one voice, compromises were reached, such as recognising that fossil fuel supplies are declining and that the poor should have priority in accessing them, so developed countries need to start reducing their energy footprint by investing in renewable energy. At the same time, developing countries, while they have preferential access to fossil fuels, need to also invest in alternatives, as fossil fuel supplies decline.

The NGO’s Declaration – ***Real Energy for Real Development*** noted that the failure of previous conferences to “meet specific targets and timelines with indicators is an obscenity in light of the needs of the world’s poor and...environmental sustainability.” To ensure concrete action, NGOs recommended that:

- There be a human rights indicator on access to energy services as a basic need. Therefore during the MDG review in 2005 there must be MDG targets agreed for energy services for poverty reduction. For example “reduce deaths from indoor air pollution caused by burning of biomass by 50% by 2015.”
- Governments finalise long term integrated energy policies and strategies by CSD 14/15 (2005/7) that outline an intergenerational timeline for the phase out of finite fossil fuels, nuclear and large scale unsustainable energy by 2050
- Governments of developed countries must comply with commitments to increase ODA to 0.7% of GNP by 2010 – part of this should be allocated for clean energy for the poor.

- The World Bank complies with the recommendations made in the Extractive Industries Review to increase its investment portfolio for renewables from the existing 6% to 100% by 2010.
- Provide time-bound, legally binding measures that stop all public funding for nuclear power, uranium mining and large hydro power projects that don't meet the WCD guidelines.

At the E4D Conference a team of NGO representatives worked together to strengthen discussions and focus them on meeting the energy needs of the poor. Sheila Oparaocha from ENERGIA made an input on behalf of the NGO delegation. She opened her presentation by contrasting the technological advances made that have allowed Mars to be explored – so showing the extent that energy has lit up parts of planet earth – with the two million women and children who die annually from inhaling the fumes created from cooking, fumes arising because they don't have access modern energy technology. She then called on participants to honour existing commitments regarding energy and development, including:

- Promises by developed countries to allocate a percentage of GDP for ODA
- Implementation of the Extractive Industries Review recommendations
- For large scale Hydro projects that don't meet the criteria of the World Commission on Dams to not get funding

Finally, she called for the development of Millennium Development Goals on energy to be developed at the MDG review in 2005.

Overall, NGO's played an important role – contributing language around recognising:

- That “access to basic energy services is a human need”
- The importance of public participation, especially by women in planning energy programmes
- The importance of good governance based on transparency, accountability and participation

However, despite repeated calls by NGOs to commit to real commitments and timelines, the Dutch government stated from the outset that this was not the purpose of the conference. Instead, the recommendations made should be taken into account as government's develop “sound energy policies.”

Large scale hydro

As at Bonn renewables, large scale hydro was hotly debated at the E4D Conference. Afghanistan's Minister of Finance, Ashraf Ghani, was particularly vocal in his support – describing the World Commission on Dams guidelines are nothing more than the demands of northern based NGOs which no country could ever comply with. Syda Bumba, the Ugandan minister for Energy echoed Ghani's statements, claiming that Northern based NGO's, through the WCD, have an agenda to stop the development of Africa. Others who also supported large scale hydro – no matter how big as long as they are well run included Klaus Topfer the Executive Director of UNEP and Jamal Saghir the Energy and Water Director of the World Bank. Sheila Oparaocha intervened on behalf of NGOs, pointing out that the WCD guidelines are supported by southern NGOs too, and that as SA chaired the Commission, it is hardly the result of northern based NGOs intent on blocking development.

Birds not being killed by wind farms – ecologist

Reuters, 25 November 2004

Two major offshore wind farms in Denmark are giving the lie to fears that birds are being killed by flying into the huge vanes of such installations, a conference heard.

In fact, not only were birds not dying, the Danish farms had actually benefited the local environment, ecologist Charlotte Boesen of Denmark's Energi E2 energy trading and generation firm told the conference on wind energy. Birds were simply flying over or around the huge packs of turbines, and the seabed foundations had created an artificial reef that was attracting new species to colonize and providing a haven for fish as trawling there was banned.

"So far the observed effects have been positive," she said.

The potential impact on local wildlife is a key objection to wind farms, along with their intrusive appearance.

But their supporters disagree. "The wind farm debate is heating up and becoming more polarized. We want to challenge the myths -- that they kill birds ... and deter tourists," Alison Hill of the British Wind Energy Association (BWEA) told the meeting. With the Kyoto treaty on cutting carbon dioxide emissions about to come into force, making governments -- except for the United States -- search for clean and renewable sources of energy, the wind turbine's star is in the ascendant.

Spain to become Europe's second largest solar generator

Stephan Singer, WWF ssinger@wwfepo.org

Revised regulations due to come into force in Spain next year will require constructors to install thermal or photovoltaic solar panels on all new and renovated buildings. If installation expands as expected it will make Spain Europe's second largest solar generator after Germany, according to Spanish photovoltaic industry association Asif.

According to industry ministry estimates half a million dwellings per year will be affected, with an average annual reduction in heating bills of €80 per household. The measure aims to boost the total surface area of solar collectors to 4.5m square metres by 2010, an increase of almost 1000%.

In a related development the International energy agency and a coalition of solar thermal trade associations have claimed that worldwide solar thermal capacity has been greatly underestimated.

Based on a first conversion from collector area to energy capacity, the groups put the total for solar thermal at 69,000 megawatts (thermal). This is over twice as big as global wind power capacity (put at 23,000 MW), and vastly more than the 1,100 MW of photovoltaic solar capacity, the groups note.

25% RE vision for Europe

Gunnar Boye Olesen, INFORSE-Europe coordinator, ove@inforse.org

The International Network for Sustainable Energy – Europe (INFORSE-Europe), a network of 63 citizen-based organisations throughout Europe has launched its Vision 2050 for a transition to sustainable energy for the 15 "old" EU countries.

The vision foresees a phase out of nuclear and fossil energy. In the vision, a 45-year transition period is foreseen until 2050 with gradually increasing energy efficiency and use of renewable energy.

To realise the vision, INFORSE-Europe recommends that:

- The EU-target of 12% renewable energy is realised by 2010. While some countries are well on their way, increased efforts are needed in most countries

- The EU should aim at an increase of renewable energy to cover 25% of energy consumption in 2020.
- The two EU energy efficiency directives currently being discussed are passed as soon as possible and the proposed target of 1%/year energy efficiency be adopted and gradually increased to 2%/year or more until 2010.

Read more about the vision for a transition to sustainable energy at <http://www.inforse.org/europe/Vision2050.htm>

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5. SA Energy Policy

RE supported by subsidies

Kevin Nassiep, the Chief Director of energy Planning at the Department of Minerals and energy confirmed that government will support the introduction of renewable energy onto the power market through once off capital subsidies – at least in the short term. According to Nassiep, R14.2m will be made available over the next 4 years.

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6. Events

South Africa

21-23 Feb Poverty Reduction Through Better Regulation

Conference to explore how better regulation can improve water and electricity access
Rosebank, Johannesburg, South Africa

Deadline for nominations to attend 14 January 2004

For more information about the nominations process to attend, contact Bryan Ashe, Earthlife Africa-eThekweni: bryan@earthlife.org.za

Africa

23-25 Feb African Development Bank FINESSE Africa program regional consultative workshop

Tunisia, Tunis

Contact: Alois Mhlanga

Tel. (216) 71 10 3729

Email: a.mhlanga@afdb.org

Website: www.afdb.org

Rest of the World

19-21 Jan First International Fuel Cell Expo

Tokyo, Japan

Contact: Tokyo Big Sight,

Tel: +81-3-3349-8502.

Fax: +81-3-3349-4900.

E-mail: fcexpo2@xmr3.com.

Website: www.fcexpo.jp/english

26-27 Jan 'Clean Energy Power® 2005'

Berlin, Germany

Contact: Miriam Hegner,

Tel: +49 (0) 7121 3016 0

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