



energy
Department:
Energy
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



CLOSING REMARKS AT THE SOUTH AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY CONFERENCE ON 6TH OCTOBER 2015

Programme Director

All the Ministers and the Deputy Ministers present

All the MECs and Mayors

All Heads of Delegation

The leadership of REN21 and SANEDI

Government representatives

Captains of Industry

Representatives of Non-government organisations

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon

We, as South Africans, have been the proud hosts of the International Renewable Energy Conference for 2015. We have come to the end of our gathering and in particular the pondering of a very important topic on renewable energy by 82 countries that are represented at this SAIREC. Let me take this opportunity to highlight on the myriad challenges I referred to in the opening about the African continent, that range from high levels of poverty and inequality, a lack infrastructure, poor governance, relatively low levels of skills and productivity at a time



where energy is a necessity to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable economic growth in the continent.

Many of these factors contribute to a business environment in which it is often judged difficult and costly to operate. In sub-Saharan Africa, the epicentre of the global challenge is to overcome energy poverty. However I must say the challenges are surmountable and the benefits are immense. Energy contributes to a better quality of life. To those that have it, modern energy unlocks access to improved healthcare, improved education, improved economic opportunities and, even longer life. To those that don't, it is a major constraint on their social and economic development. Africa's energy sector is vital to its development.

I am happy that in these three days we have looked at the whole renewable energy value chain, focusing on Africa Continental Interconnectivity, regulatory framework, Technology Innovation, Financing mechanism and the Road to COP 21 in an effort to unlock all the barriers and to tap and maximise the opportunities that come with harnessing the natural resources that the world and in particular Africa is endowed with. The effective development of Africa's energy resources could unlock huge gains across the economy. But key questions remain on how quickly can modern energy be brought to the huge population now deprived of it? How can the existing and emerging rich countries maximise the value of their resources? What actions in the energy sector can unleash stronger economic and social development in the African continent?

Distinguished Guests, to meet the greenhouse gas reduction objectives and mitigate global warming, as governments we need to actively



pursue low-carbon policies. On our respective journeys to lower carbon pathways, renewable energy has a major role to play in the energy mix.

Programme Director, we are following up in the footsteps of Germany, China, USA, India and the United Arab Emirates. We are proud to be counted among those who have hosted the largest conference on renewable energy in the world. This has been a significant event – being the first of its kind on African soil and at a crucial time: a time where energy is a necessity to alleviate poverty and fast track sustainable development in a climate resilient manner. In South Africa, energy is a basic need.

We are committed to providing a long term solution to energy security across the continent, a continent where energy supply is limited. The renewable energy sector provides an opportunity to stimulate new local industries, new opportunities and the empowerment of people through direct and shared ownership with communities, when the renewable energy sector is developed from a local perspective.

South Africa is committed to greening its economy, shifting away from a heavy reliance on fossil fuels and heavy reliance on a resource extraction economy. Renewable energy offers a major opportunity to further develop our country into the lower carbon and climate resilient vision we have set out in our National Development Plan. It has the potential to stimulate job creation, skills development and a broader local economy as well as positively contributing to our national energy mix.



As a country, we are working hard to change our development pathway to a more sustainable one, and renewable energy is significant in the country's transition to a lower carbon economy and society. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research has estimated the contribution of our grid tied renewables' net benefit to the economy to be R800 million. In the first half of 2015 renewables were estimated to generate R4 billion in financial benefits.

Other renewable energy sources that we also need to take advantage of are:

- **Landfill gas:** South Africa has become a leader in this sector and is currently looking into scaling up effort in this area.
- **Anaerobic digestion** to produce **biogas**, which is a young sector, with a lot of interest as it plays a role in reducing organic waste disposed to the landfill and reducing methane emissions from water treatment facilities.

We will certainly step up our efforts in entrenching the renewable energy paradigm. And the vestiges thereof are in having announced the establishment of the 1500 MegaWatt Solar Park in the Northern Cape. Our work which is evidenced in the Renewable Energy Status Report bears an emphatic account of the interventions made in respect of our policy trajectory, existing renewable energy landscape and the future we aspire for. In trekking into the future, we shall be unwavering in our support towards Namibia in its hosting of the Southern African Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency.



We are happy that the SAIREC Declaration has been adopted and I challenge all of you here to ensure that this declaration should not become part of a talk show. Rather it should be embedded into your countries' commitments so that when we meet at the next IREC we can reflect on progress in the next two years instead of just adopting another declaration. I wish you a safe journey back to your destinations, and success in the deployment and scale of the renewable energy journey in your respective countries.

In particular I thank the German government, the Austrian government, and all the sponsors for their support to South Africa in hosting SAIREC 2015. Special thanks to the Local Organising Committee for ensuring that this conference is the success that it is.

I thank you