

Conference to re-energise Africa

PRETORIA: The upcoming International Renewable Energy Conference (IREC) is expected to re-energise Africa by finding solutions to accelerate the global scale-up of renewable energy.



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Energy Minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson said by South Africa hosting the IREC, it will give Africa a unique opportunity to showcase its nascent renewable energy industry and gain experience from those in the forefront in the sector.

The event will bring together government ministers, high-level decision makers, experts, specialists and thought leaders, as well as private sector players to discuss and exchange their vision, experiences, and solutions on renewable energy.

South Africa in partnership with the South African SA National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI) and Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21) will be the sixth country, and the first in Africa to host the conference.

The conference is scheduled for the 4-7 October, in Cape Town.

Under the theme "RE-energising Africa," the conference will demonstrate why Africa is the business destination for the renewables energy sector by building on previous IREC conferences held in Abu Dhabi (2013), Delhi (2010), Washington D.C (2008), Beijing (2005) and Bonn (2004).

Benefits of renewable energy

Encouraging South Africans and the continent to take full advantage of the summit on African soil, the minister said it is high time countries realised the benefits of renewable energy.

"The renewable energy value chain offers solutions for increasing energy access, security of supply, emissions reduction and sustainable development," Minister Joemat-Pettersson told a media briefing on Monday, 31 August.

The continent of Africa is shockingly short of electricity with nearly 600 million people without electricity altogether.

Analysts have been of the view that despite modest economic growth, countries in Africa could develop far faster and better with the help of electricity, so too could individual households.

They have pointed that while the challenge may seem insurmountable, there's plenty of hope to power up African countries, particularly through renewable energy.

Renewable energy is regarded as the quickest way to build additional capacity.

For South Africa, the Minister said government's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Programme continues to make notable progress with projects now located in Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Cape, Free State and North West.

"Global interest in investing in renewable energy has increased, placing South Africa at number nine of the Top Ten Clean Energy investment countries," she said, adding that this is a significant growth in the sector in a very short space of time.

Flagship partnership between government and the private sector had reached about R193bn.

In June, the department also announced the names of 13 additional preferred bidders in the renewable energy independent power producer procurement programme's Bid Window 4 would supply an additional 1084MW of electricity to the national grid.

The Department of Energy has so far approved 92 renewable energy projects which has resulted in an extra 6,327MW of capacity being contributed to the national electricity grid since 2011.

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