

NEWS: Energy talks raise challenges for making renewables reality in ACP states

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Brussels, 14 November 2011 (BizClim/ ACP Press): Today concluded the first series of workshops of the ACP renewable energy and climate change conference. The meeting, falling just weeks ahead of the [United Nations annual summit on climate change \(COP 17\)](#) ^[1] in Durban early December, is an attempt to strengthen national, regional and continental policy cohesion to boost investment and sustainable use of renewable energy in ACP countries.

Over one hundred people representing forty countries attended the gathering including representatives of public bodies, experts, researchers, beneficiaries, private investors already present in the ACP countries and prospecting financiers entering the potential market of the 79 ACP states.

Opened by H.E Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Secretary General of the Africa Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, the candid debates expanded into very concrete steps in the international conversation of climate change.



“Just breaking old [energy] habits evidently is hard”, said Dr Chambas. “But above all, we have to accept that the current sources of energy we are depending on have simply not met the demands. To this day, 1.6 billion people do not have access to electricity. Meanwhile, 2.5 billion use traditional biomass for cooking, which have certain health and environmental costs.”

([Read Dr Chambas' opening speech](#) ^[2])

Ms Sue Canney Davison, director of PIPAL a financing industry in Kenya said that she expected from Durban that the global community will appreciate the need to come to some concrete binding commitment. She stated:

“Technologies are available, projects are available. What is lacking is mechanisms to make the funds that have been pledged truly put to projects that can make a difference. At many fora, including at Copenhagen, a lot of commitments were made - most countries attending international conferences want to come out looking good and pledge an amount. But when they go back home, will this amount truly be available?”

There have been far too many pledges that haven't materialised, she added.

Speaking about investment, Monique Koning from the European Investment Bank said that:

“Political willingness is not entirely there yet, but on the financial side there are enormous challenges in the private sectors to come up with projects that are bankable. On the other hand, it is often hard to find ways to motivate local banks to start lending more to renewable energy and energy efficiency projects and actually change their approach.”



Meanwhile, private investors on the ground like South African ecopreneur Herrman Oelsner, Chair of the African Wind Energy Association, have come up with creative solutions to tackle the existing problems.

“We have already started to train people and have already opened a little school. But the problem we have is that we don't have the basic knowledge for people we take on - we lack qualified electricians, qualified mechanics. They help build plants before we call on engineers and consultants to take over,” said Mr Oelsner.



In 2010, global investment in renewable energy reached a record \$211 billion, with unprecedented levels of deals made in Africa. The momentum was sparked by a combination of stimulus package funds making their way into the market and the introduction of savvy policies like feed-in tariffs and target-setting which have reflected upon actual costs competitiveness in regards to conventional power sources.

Discussions are ongoing until Wednesday at the ACP House in Brussels. –END–

(Photos from top: ACP Secretary General Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas (second from left) calls for concrete actions to be made on climate change; UNIDO's Christophe Yvetot presents UN's visions on energy and climate change, pictured with PIPAL director Dr Sue Canney Davison; EIB's Monique Koning and participants at the conference; Delegates from Pacific Islands countries Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Samoa. Pacific Island countries are especially threatened by the impacts of climate change)

Links

Conference concept note and programme ([EN](#) ^[3] / [FR](#) ^[4])

Conference Outcome Document ([EN](#) ^[5] / [FR](#) ^[6])

[Powerpoint Presentations from Day 1](#) ^[7]

[Powerpoint Presentations from Day 2](#) ^[8]

[Climate change-related opportunities](#) ^[9]

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[1] <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

[2] <http://www.acp.int/content/speech-secretary-general-opening-acp-renewable-energy-workshop-and-acp-preparatory-sessions>

[3] http://www.acp.int/sites/acpsec.waw.be/files/20111114_EnergieWorkshop.jpg.pdf

[4] http://www.acp.int/sites/acpsec.waw.be/files/20111114_AtelierProgramme.pdf

[5] <http://www.acp.int/sites/acpsec.waw.be/files/Outcomes%20from%20the%20COP17%20Preparatory%20Meeting.pdf>

[6] <http://www.acp.int/sites/acpsec.waw.be/files/Réunion%20ACP17e%20COP%20nov11DBle.pdf>

[7] <http://www.acp.int/content/documents-acp-renewable-energy-workshop-and-preparation-unfccc-cop17-day-1>

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