

Press release

“Women should be at the forefront of the energy revolution”

13 African Nations at ‘Power Kick for Africa’ Conference in Abuja

Abuja, 1 July 2011. **Access to cleaner, more affordable energy for their people is a current priority for many African nations. 70 participants from 13 African Nations – policy makers as well as representatives from business and civil society – discussed the topic of renewable energy at an international conference from 30 June to 1 July in the Nigerian capital of Abuja. In sessions on policy, technology, project development, finance and African leapfrogging participants exchanged experiences in best practices as well as best policies. The conference was arranged by the African Renewable Energy Alliance (AREA).**

The ‘Power Kick for Africa 2011’ conference cast a spotlight on the linkage between energy and gender. Hon. Ms. Elizabeth Thabethe, Deputy Minister, Department of Trade and Industry, Republic of South Africa, said: “A change in energy production paradigm is necessary, and women should be at the forefront of the energy revolution. Women of the continent should be champions of this new energy production paradigm that promotes the utilization of clean energy sources.”

Few African women have access to electricity. In Nigeria approximately 70 per cent of households in both semi-urban and urban areas are using firewood as a primary cooking fuel. Cooking with firewood currently causes about two million deaths around the globe each year, approximately 400,000 of which are in Africa. Gender as a main determinant of access, ways of utilization, opportunities and control over all energy resources was also a highlight at a ‘Solar Powered Screening’ of the Women’s Football World Cup match between Germany and Nigeria on 30 June, organized by the World Future Council together with Bosch Solar Energy and the Heinrich Böll Foundation Nigeria.

The intention of the ‘Power Kick for Africa 2011’ conference is to fill the gap between policy and best practice. “What exactly is needed in order to foster renewable energies in Africa? We want to identify concrete implementation possibilities for the participants,” said Ansgar Kiene, Director Africa Liaison Office of the World Future Council and conference organizer. Inspiring policies that accelerate the uptake of renewable energies motivate countries that still lag behind. Representatives from Uganda and Kenya, such as AREA member Joseph Nganga, Renewable Energy Venture Kenya, showed how locally designed Feed-in Tariff legislation can push the uptake of renewable energies. Feed-in Tariffs are perceived as one of the best policies for grid-connected areas. African countries can build the right framework to guarantee energy producers have access to the grid. “We don’t need megatalk. We need Megawatt,” said Chidi Izuwah from the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission of Nigeria. The country set an ambitious target to achieve 20 per cent renewable energy in the long term.

The financial incentive legislation from Cape Verde provided a good example of how renewable energy can make electricity affordable for more people. One kilowatt hour of electricity from the conventional system in the country currently costs 25 euro cents, whereas wind energy produces it for only 12 cents.

Conference participants also clearly stated that Africa does not only need sustainable policies and future just legislations. Action and implementation on the ground is needed – to trigger a paradigm shift of the consumer and to push policy makers to scale up best practices to a best policy. By presenting community based examples, the conference raised awareness for applicable and people-

oriented policies. Yahaya Ahmed from the Developmental Association for Renewable Energies Nigerias shared his experiences with the Save 80 project, a highly efficient cooking stove, with 80 per cent savings on fuel wood compared to traditional stoves. The Save 80 Project is the first SSC-CDM project activity in Nigeria and the first – applying the methodology AMS II G – registered worldwide.

“The energy landscape for millions of Nigerian women looks like this: no access at all, besides her own physical power and the battery inside her torch. They have a low carbon footprint and a low life expectancy,” said Christine K., Director, Heinrich Böll Foundation Nigeria. Better health, education, quality of life – African women can disproportionately benefit from electrification. Access to energy can improve women’s social, economic and political status, reducing the time and effort involved in household chores, providing better health and educational conditions, expanding income-generating opportunities, and easing their participation in public affairs.

Quotes from the Conference

“We must learn from the experience of one another. The AREA network does exactly this: It brings people together from different nations and with different backgrounds.”

Anthony Ighodaro, Chair AREA Steering Committee; Founder and CEO, Solarsolve Nigeria

“Like the discovery of steam power or of the printing press, photovoltaics has the potential to change peoples’ lives forever. Now we need a mindset change. That is a lifetime quest.”

Andreas Wagner, Head Sales & Distribution, Bosch Solar Energy AG, South Africa

“It is not about a contest between men and women. It is not about competition. There are different gender needs and this is what we have to target.”

Dr. Rose Mwebaza, Regional Expert on Gender and Climate Change Adaptation, UNDP/African Adaptation Programme, Uganda

“People here in Nigeria already produce their electricity in a decentralized manner. Decentralized energy production is already reality. Now people need to turn to renewable energy. In the question of access to energy Africa now has a huge opportunity to leapfrog the fossil fuel based economy.”

Ansgar Kiene, Director World Future Council Africa; Coordinator, African Renewable Energy Alliance (AREA), South Africa.

“Energy is like a miracle. It is either there or it isn’t.”

Man on the street in Abuja

“It starts with policy: the government has to take action. But we also have to sensitize people. People must understand how they can profit from renewable energy.”

Eze Onyekpere, Director of the Centre for Social Justice, Nigeria

“Let’s plan together. We must scale up small activities and think of it as a whole. The future is bright!”

Hervé Azemtsa, Environmentalist and Business Consultant, S² Services SARL, Cameroon

“We need people that are involved passionately in renewable energy. Don’t only rely on government policies; start yourself with whatever means you have. Make use of the various offers available internationally. Build capacity and sensitize people to availability, accessibility and affordability of renewable energy.”

Yahaya Ahmed, Development Association for Renewable Energies, Nigeria

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The African Renewable Energy Alliance (AREA) is a platform for policy makers, representatives from business and civil society to exchange information and consult about policies, technologies and financial mechanisms for the deployment of renewable energies in Africa. AREA will play a catalytic role in promoting knowledge transfer and international cooperation.

www.area-net.org | www.area-network.ning.com

The World Future Council brings the interests of future generations to the centre of policy making. We inform policy makers about future just policies and advise them on how to implement these. The World Future Council is a registered charitable foundation in Hamburg, Germany.

www.worldfuturecouncil.org

Journalists can find more information, texts and royalty free photos on the Power Kick project on

www.worldfuturecouncil.posterous.com

The Heinrich Böll Foundation is part of the Green political movement that has developed worldwide as a response to the traditional politics of socialism, liberalism, and conservatism. Our main tenets are ecology and sustainability, democracy and human rights, self-determination and justice. We place particular emphasis on gender democracy, meaning social emancipation and equal rights for women and men. www.boell.de

Heinrich Böll Foundation Nigeria: www.ng.boell.org