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## DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

### INTERVIEW WITH COMMISSIONER: INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY ON ENERGY SUPPLY, SECURITY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

The African Union Commission's Department of Infrastructure and Energy co-hosted a highly successful meeting of stakeholders in the energy sector in Cape Town, South Africa, from 9-10 May 2012. The meeting was co-hosted with the European Commission, South Africa's Department of Energy, the Austrian Development Cooperation, the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities of Mauritius and the German Federal Ministry of Cooperation and Development.

Taking part within the context of the Africa-European Union Partnership, the meeting, titled "First Stakeholder Forum of the Africa- EU Partnership (AEEP)", attracted over 250 high level participants in the fields of energy access, energy security and renewable energy to be achieved by 2020. The 2020 targets were set by a Ministerial High Level Meeting held on 14 September 2010 in Vienna, Austria.



Dr. Ibrahim addressing the First Stakeholder Forum of the Africa- EU Partnership

Besides the AEEP framework, the Department of Infrastructure and Energy is also engaged in strategy, planning, resource mobilisation and advocacy for the much larger Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), a continental framework adopted by African Heads of State and government in January 2012. Within PIDA are 15 energy projects, mainly for energy generation and transmission amounting to US\$40 billion (out of 68 billion for all PIDA sectors) to be achieved by 2020.

Dr. Elham Ibrahim, Commissioner of Infrastructure and Energy gave a few insights into the Commission's work in ensuring energy supply and security; PIDA as well as the question of integration.

**What is the AEEP and what is its significance to the energy situation in Africa?**

**Dr. Ibrahim:** The AEEP is one of the eight partnerships that Africa has with the European Union. The two parties agreed, in 2010, on political targets to be achieved by 2020. The AEEP 2020 targets on renewable energy and energy efficiency are: Building 10000MW of new hydro power facilities; Building at least 5 000MW wind power capacity; Tripling the capacity of other renewables such as geo thermal and modern biomass; Improving energy efficiency in Africa in all sectors, starting with the electricity sector, in support of Africa's continental, regional and sectoral targets as well as doubling exports of gas to Europe. It is important to state that Africa is looking for a win-win relationship with the EU in this project. In the implementation of the project, we agreed to have regular forums to monitor progress. As such, this forum is the first, where we aimed to attract all stakeholders, such as the private sector, civil society, and research institutions to play their role in implementation of the agreed targets.

**Are you convinced you managed to attract the right level and numbers of participation at the forum?**

**Dr. Ibrahim:** The turnout has been very good (over 250 high level delegates attended). There was representation from all the stakeholder groups that we targeted. We looked forward to their concrete proposals on how to implement the projects in the AEEP 2020 strategy. The African Union is looking to moving from diagnosis of problems to solutions and action.

**This forum is the first that is targeting different stakeholders. Why the focus on other stakeholders? Why can governments not provide infrastructure for the people using their own resources?**

**Dr. Ibrahim:** Public sector finance will not be enough. Besides, private sector participation in development is now a worldwide trend. But the private sector needs some encouragement. There are many examples of successful public- private sector partnerships.

There is also some risk associated with large investments so, this forum will help us to understand the issues from the stakeholders themselves. We also want governments to know the kind of regulation that will stimulate the required amount of investment.

And also, do not forget that even though the private sector may provide the resources, they will still need to rely on public networks for the distribution of their products. Power purchase agreements, for example, need to be drawn up so that the producers are sure there is a market for their product.

Researchers are also crucial in that they can help to make sure the new technologies are well suited and adapted for the users.

**How will the outcomes of this forum impact energy supply, security and renewable energy in Africa?**

**Dr. Ibrahim:** Within this project, we are working for reliable, affordable, efficient and environmentally friendly energy for Africa. The outcomes will be relevant to our work in that they will guide us on how to implement the generation and transmission projects so that we can inter connect Africa. Each region has a power pool (Southern African Power

Pool; West African Power Pool: Central African Power Pool and the East African Power Pool). If we strengthen the power pools then we end up with a continental network. In this way, we will also be contributing to the integration of the continent.

**What is the relationship between PIDA and the AEEP?**

**Dr Ibrahim:** In AEEP, there are specific targets as I have mentioned above. In PIDA, on the other hand, we have 15 priority projects for 2020. 13 of them are in renewable energy and inter connection, while two are in the gas and oil sectors. PIDA is also looking at many other infrastructural developments outside of energy. So PIDA is a bigger programme that has been approved by African head of state after consultation at all levels. If we work together with the EU to achieve the political targets outlined in the AEEP 2020 strategy, we will, at the same time, be implementing some of the projects under PIDA.

**What is the role of the African Union in PIDA?**

**Dr Ibrahim:** Our target is to make sure partners are working in the same direction. PIDA, by being a continental framework, has integrated all of Africa's major infrastructure developments. So, partners can no longer come with different projects- in other words:-no more shopping lists. We only have the agreed activities under PIDA. Under PIDA, we insist that partners work in accordance with AU priorities. I wish to highlight that I was in Washington recently and the World Bank informed me that they are putting all their efforts to implement the PIDA projects.

**Any other comments?**

**Dr Ibrahim:** Stability on the continent is important for development to take place. I also believe that it is crucial for the different organizations working in Africa to work together for the common good. We need to work together.

**Interview conducted by Wynne Musabayana / DIC**