

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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14th Session of the International Renewable Energy Agency Assembly: Commissioner Abou-Zeid on Quest to Unlock the Potential of Renewables in Africa



The 14th Session of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Assembly, held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, has concluded after three days of thought-provoking discussions between global leaders and energy decision-makers to chart a strategic way forward across countries and regions. Held under the theme: “Outcome of COP28: Infrastructure, Policies and Skills for Tripling Renewables and Accelerating the Energy Transition”, the Assembly provided opportunities for insights among actors that are vital to the collective ambition in achieving a just and inclusive future, based on renewables.

H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy and Digitalisation, actively participated in the 14th session of the Assembly through several Ministerial and High-level sessions convened as part of the Assembly session.

Speaking at the High-Level Session: “Integration of Continental Master Plan as an Enabler to Support Project Preparation and Mobilizing Financing for Renewable Energy Projects”, Commissioner Abou-Zeid stressed on the central and pivotal role Africa plays in the global energy transition discourse, affirming that “*now more than ever, the world needs Africa. There can never be energy transition in the world without Africa*”.



Commissioner Abou-Zeid also emphasised the urgent need for massive investments in energy infrastructure in Africa, saying that *“the deployment of programs and projects at scale and the successful implementation of two of the most important AU energy initiatives – the Africa Single Energy Market (AfSEM) and the Continental Power Systems Master Plan (CMP) - will largely depend on the ability to mobilise much-needed financing and attracting substantial investment”*.



In the High-Level Session: “Tripling of Renewables”, Commissioner Abou-Zeid praised Africa for leading the world in renewable energy and discussed the Continent’s renewable targets, which are much more ambitious than the global call for tripling renewable energy capacity. Speaking alongside EU Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson, Azerbaijan’s Minister of Energy Parviz Shahbazov, Undersecretary for Energy &

Petroleum Affairs of UAE Sharif Al Olama, Cabinet Secretary in charge of Energy and Petroleum of Kenya Davis Chirchir and Minister of Energy and Business of Barbados Lisa Cummins, Commissioner Abou-Zeid said *“during the Africa Climate Summit, our countries committed to increase Africa’s renewable energy generation capacity from 56 Giga Watts (GW) in 2022 to at least 300 GW by 2030, both to address energy poverty and bolster the supply of cost-effective clean energy for industry. She also evoked the infamous energy paradox in Africa: “despite being a world leader in renewables, Africa still suffers from serious energy poverty and called for “more action to achieve universal access to electricity”*.

The need to harness renewable energy as a catalyst for socio-economic development and local value creation was also highlighted by the Commissioner further insisting *“this should be done through business models, instruments, and industrial policies, including developing and implementing local content enhancement throughout the renewable energy value chain. Such policies should also include regional trade cooperation, investment in the Single African Energy Market, skills and educational policies to create the workforce of the future”*.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid also urged global energy leaders to focus on implementation: *“Considering the huge ambitions to accelerate efforts towards the energy transition, international cooperation and partnerships need to be strengthened, streamlined, and focused to move away from strategies, action plans and pledges and concentrate on implementation of projects and programmes”*.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid was also invited to deliver remarks in the ministerial panel: “Accelerated Renewables Deployment in Africa” alongside Ethiopian Minister of Water and Energy Habtamu Itfa Geleta, Rwandan Minister of Infrastructure Jimmy Gasore, Zimbabwean Deputy Minister of Energy and Power Development Edgar Moyo, Namibian Deputy Minister of Mines and Energy Kornelis Shilunga and Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Energy and Petroleum Davis Chirchir.

In her remarks, Commissioner Abou-Zeid noted that opportunities for renewables in Africa are huge but not fully exploited and praised the role that initiatives such as the Accelerated Partnerships for Renewables in Africa (APRA) can play in accelerating the transformation of the African energy system.

She also highlighted the importance of international partnerships and stressed on the need *“to focus on the contexts and the realities within Africa to successfully deliver key outcomes in renewable energy deployment”*.



Commissioner Abou-Zeid also emphasised the requirement from international partnerships to provide innovative and cost-effective solutions to the energy access and transition agenda in Africa, explaining that *“smart technologies and digitalization in the energy sector can accelerate the uptake of renewables in the continent, allowing to maximise and optimise the productivity and applications of intermittent energy sources such as wind and solar.”*

Commissioner Abou-Zeid also took this opportunity to interact and exchange with an inspiring group of young leaders, listened to their aspirations and discussed with them the current and future opportunities and challenges of the global energy landscape.

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