

Workshop on Renewable Energy: “Moving from policy to implementation”

*Opening remarks by Mr. Leonidas Tezapsidis
First Counsellor at the European Commission Delegation in South Africa*

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

As you are aware, co-operation between the European Community and the Republic of South Africa extends over a broad range of activities. Under the European Programme for Reconstruction and Development in South Africa (EPRD) we are currently committed, through our Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2000-2002, to supporting activities in the following four areas:

1. Poverty reduction through improved social service delivery and the stimulation of local economic development. This support is mainly focused on the sectors of education, health, water & sanitation, social housing and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods
2. Private sector development, in particular the development of SMMEs
3. Consolidation of the rule of law and promotion of human rights
4. Support to regional co-operation

Within the total package of projects supported by the European Community under the EPRD, one project is particularly targeting the use of Renewable Energy: the Non-grid electrification of rural schools in the Eastern Cape and the Northern Province.

Although the development and implementation of Renewable Energy programmes, the subject of this workshop, does not fit very well within the current range of EPRD activities, it is an important developmental issue.

Not only because of the current renewed Climate Change warnings and the desire for diversified and clean energy supplies it is important to develop Renewable Energy for a wide variety of other reasons.

Environmental aspects linked to national greenhouse gas reduction targets together with energy supply security, are the main motivation for governments to promote Renewable Energy. Other important factors include job creation and improvement of the quality of life of the population through the supply of electricity.

The member states of the European Union are committed to developing their Renewable Energy resources and to helping developing countries to do likewise. Following the Kyoto conference, they have committed themselves to reducing the emission of greenhouse gases by 8 % during the period 2008-2012 compared to their levels in 1990.

At present only 6 percent of total energy demand is covered by renewables. The EU aims to increase this to 10 % by 2010. This implies an ambitious increase in renewable *electricity* production from 15 to 22 %.

The EU, together with the other major economies in the world, is clearly promoting the development of Renewable Energy. Vast amounts of money have been spent for the development of various renewable energy technologies. As a result of this, renewables are

now competitive with conventional power sources. Other countries, particularly developing ones, should take advantage of this investment as it can help them leapfrog the development process.

Some of the technologies that have been developed in the various member states of the EU are now mature enough to be considered as commercially viable.

For example, **wind energy** is already widely exploited in the EU. Even though some might argue that it is not fully competitive with other commercial energy sources, it is when environmental costs are taken into consideration.

South Africa has vast wind resources waiting to be exploited for both grid and off-grid applications. More specifically, the south-west coast has a large potential for future development.

Wave energy is another area to explore. Just before Christmas, a unique development took place in Scotland, where the first half-megawatt commercial plant was commissioned. This is a landmark for wave energy. The wave regime along specific parts of the South African coast offers great opportunities for this technology.

Biomass is already widely exploited by the sugar industry of South Africa. However, new technologies including gasification and pyrolysis will be important for applications utilising forest and agricultural waste. There may even be a case for specialised energy crops.

Photovoltaic energy, currently the backbone of off-grid electrification programmes, is very attractive for local applications, especially where it is not possible to extend the existing electricity grid. European companies, some of them here today, are currently developing the technology to make this process even more competitive.

South Africa is actively searching for ways to support the implementation of renewable energy. The White Paper on Energy Policy indicates clearly that in the past South Africa had neglected the development of renewable energy applications and that new ways have to be found in order to promote the use of renewable energy.

To address this problem, the South African Government is active in formulating a strategy document, called "*Implementation Strategy for Renewable Energy in South Africa*" in order to provide a framework for the development of renewable energy. This strategy document is the first step for integrating the available Renewable Energy resources into the mainstream energy economy and development system of the country.

This is where the interest of the European Community and its Member States in renewable energy matches developments in South Africa. This Workshop, a good example of EU's close relationship with South Africa, will contribute to European-South African co-operation and will hopefully increase investment in renewable energy technologies in South Africa.

During this workshop the preliminary results of the Synergy team's research will be discussed and complemented with input from the participants.

It is my hope that the recommendations will result in many more partnerships between actors from within the EU member states and South Africa to support mutually beneficial activities

in this field; that they will help to remove, in the near future, those barriers which prevent the implementation of renewable energy projects.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is our common aim at this workshop.

I hope that during this two-day workshop you will find common ground for the application of technologies and the implementation of policy measures to create a fertile soil for the increased application of renewable energy in South Africa.

Thank you