

Energy: Now Kenya Looks to Solar, Wind

By. Peter Munaita

The Kenya government is looking to renewable energy sources to help it meet its pledge to reduce the cost of electricity by 50 per cent in order to promote industrial growth and create 500,000 jobs a year. Energy minister Ochillo Ayacko told participants at a regional workshop on "Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership" (REEEP) held in Nairobi last week that the government was developing a wind resource map that would inform the establishment of wind-generated electric energy systems. "The government would like to boost electricity generation through geothermal, hydroelectric and other renewable sources of electricity such as wind power," Mr. Ayacko told the delegates from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mauritius, and Ethiopia. He said Kenya was also setting the stage for the establishment of small hydroelectric power stations with a potential for generating 3,000 megawatts, reaching agreements with sugar companies for the utilisation of another one million tones of bagasse that are wasted annually, and add 300 megawatts of geothermal energy to the national grid by 2015. Energy Permanent Secretary Patrick Nyoike said renewable energy offered cheaper alternatives to independent power producers (IPPs) and thermal generation systems. "IPPs are expensive;

it costs them \$3,000 to produce a kilowatt of energy compared with \$2,400 per kilowatt in the case of geothermal energy," he said. Kenya has the potential to generate 3,000 of the 7,000 megawatts of geothermal energy that are estimated to be available between Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Mauritius, the five countries participating in the conference organized by the African Energy Policy Research Network (AFREPREN) The REEEP initiative, which is funded by the UK, aims at providing an open and flexible framework within which partners can take joint actions to promote the uptake of sustainable energy. AFREPREN is REEEP's representative in East Africa. AFREPREN director Stephen Karekezi said the REEEP initiative would promote the uptake of renewable energy by stressing its economic benefits such as job creation and lower energy and importation costs. Participants called on governments to reduce taxes on technologies for renewable energy generation such as solar water heaters. Barriers to renewable energy generation in the region include lack of standardised technologies and lack of guaranteed market for renewable energy produced on a small scale. The high level of investment required for establishing renewable energy generation system is also a restriction.

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