

Press Release

Contact: Leigh-Anne Sa Joe
Phone: +27 11 463 9184

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AFRICA NOT ALONE IN THE DARK

With news that Britain could face electricity blackouts by 2016 while the US government continues to plough millions of dollars into energy efficiency, it's becoming increasingly obvious that energy supply remains a critical issue worldwide.

"We therefore need to realise that the energy situation in South Africa – and Africa as a whole – is not unique in the world," states Barry Bredenkamp, acting operations manager of the National Energy Efficiency Agency in SA, and steering committee member of the ENERGY INDABA 2010.

"In the South African context, 90 per cent of electricity is produced from coal, resulting in 'dirty' electricity. The major challenge is to reduce our carbon footprint and electricity demand without stifling economic growth." He adds: "Scenarios where businesses decide to save energy by limiting production and retrenching staff are not ideal. Economic development and energy efficiency can be achieved simultaneously."

Addressing this begins with managing energy usage effectively whilst pursuing alternative sources of energy. "African countries have this perception that renewable energy, such as solar energy, is inferior to electricity generated at coal-fired power stations. And, when compared to cheap electricity that we've become so used to, renewable energy technology is perceived as being too expensive. However 'green energy' is becoming a trend worldwide. South Africa needs to take the lead by not relying solely on coal – the supply of which will eventually come to an end – and seek alternatives," says Bredenkamp.

"In addition to contributing to a cleaner environment, these sources of energy create more opportunities in Africa for training, upgrading facilities and encourages more local manufacturing and job creation," says Bredenkamp. Through local manufacturing, many can also purchase these renewable energy technologies at a lower cost, avoiding the costs and duties incurred by imports.

But for the continent to be greener there is still a strong need for governments in Africa to develop policies around renewable energy sources. Explaining this, Bredenkamp cites Botswana as an example where there are strict requirements for all government-owned buildings to operate on a certain percentage of solar energy. "This is a good start as it reflects the notion of *'government leading by example'*. We need that kind of basic legislation to create an enabling environment for significant market transformation in the field of energy. We also need a combined funding stream – whether from banks or government – to make these sources of energy possible." At the same time, there is also a strong need for skills training to help with repairing and installing these technologies. "If we are able to

manufacture these locally, we can start reducing our importation of such technologies that are so heavily priced, create sustainable jobs and 'manage' levels of quality."

The ENERGY INDABA 2010 will be bring together government, experts and influencers in the energy sector to discuss energy in Africa and how these critical issues can be addressed. "We hope that this conference brings to light the many innovative projects on the continent. It's time that we all share our ideas and learn from each other to develop solutions for Africa," says Bredenkamp.

Note to Editors:

ENERGY INDABA 2010: A Time of Change

ENERGY INDABA 2010 – A Time for Innovation, Solutions and Alternatives is the event theme chosen by the Steering Programme Advisory Committee for ENERGY INDABA 2010.

The flagship African energy event is an annual event on the Africa business calendar with a specific focus on exploring solutions for a new energy future for Africa. With the recent ever increasing world-wide attention to Energy, ENERGY INDABA 2010 provides an ideal platform to encourage debate as well as creating the stage for a networking climate conducive for companies and individuals to interact.

The event forms part of the African business calendar, which will promote sustainable development initiatives across the African continent.

DATES: 24 – 26 February 2010
WEBSITE: www.energyafricaexpo.com
ENQUIRIES: info@siyenza.za.com

RELEASE PREPARED BY:

Siyenza Management: Leigh-Anne Sa Joe
Tel: +27 11 463 9184
Email: leighanne@siyenza.za.com