

SADC partnership could solve energy shortage by 2016

Southern Africa

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In the next seven years Southern African countries should have enough energy to capacitate the projected demand required to sustain the region's businesses and homes, according to Professor Mosad Elmissiry, energy expert for the NEPAD Secretariat and a steering committee member of the ENERGY INDABA 2010.

The current estimated availability of energy in Southern Africa is 46,449MW, short of the 1272MW needed to fulfill the region's maximum demand with 10.2 percent safety reserve.

This concern was central to the discussions at an 18-month planned Energy Investors Round Table Conference held in Livingstone, Zambia on 15-17 July 2009 and organised by the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP), SADC and the Region Regulations Agency RERA, where Energy Ministers, utilities CEO's, banks, investors, donors and other energy stakeholders in the Southern Africa Region attended.

Twelve energy generation and transmission projects from the SAPP member countries were also presented at the conference to help address the energy deficit and to meet the expected energy demand growth in the region.

"Assuming that these projects are implemented according to schedule, we will have sufficient energy by 2016 to supply the current and expected increase in energy consumption levels," assured Prof Elmissiry.

However, he adds that this estimation does not include new rural electrification projects as it is measured upon the current consumption patterns with a modest GDP rate.

Among the twelve generation and transmission projects presented, there were eight power generation projects. The power generation projects selected by the committee came from Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe and they are a combination of hydro and thermal driven initiatives, all already in advanced stages of planning.

Some of the projects include the Benga and the Moatize thermal power stations in the Tete Province of Mozambique as well as the Mphanda Nkuwa hydro power station, on the Zambezi river also in the Tete Province of Mozambique, whose output will service the Mozambican demand and top up on the neighbouring South African energy needs.

Another project is the Itezhi Tezhi hydro power station to be built on an existing dam in the Kafu River, Zambia and the Kariba North Bank Extension also on the existing dam on the Zambian side.

The other noticeable projects mentioned, include the Zimbabwe power generation projects have been on cards for some time and there is a need to update their feasibility studies that were previously carried out in the past. The first project is to extend the Hwange thermal power station by adding two new units, the extension of the Kariba South hydro plant which will add 300MW to the network, while the country will also be embarking on a new thermal project, Gokwe North, which is forecasted to generate 1400MW to support the country as well as the SADC countries.

While it is anticipated that these projects will come to a financial close by the end of this year so that implementation starts thereafter, Prof Elmissiry said there are ways to help tackle the perceived shortage of power in the interim. He refers to demand side management, energy conservation and full utilisation of renewable energy resources that are abundant in the region.

“Africa is blessed with enormous solar energy resources and these resources need to be exploited. In fact, solar irradiation in Africa is among the highest in the world, yet solar energy usage in Africa is the lowest,” Prof Elmissiry states.

“The European Union is aiming for 20 percent of its power to be sourced from renewable energy by 2020. Unfortunately in Africa there is no well-defined continental renewable energy policy to follow or targets to achieve. The investment allocated by our national governments to utilise renewable energy resources is very minimal - if none at all - resulting in many having to rely on foreign funds for such projects. African countries need to allocate a specific percentage of its GDP for promoting and usage of environmentally energy sources,” he added.

Prof Elmissiry is a steering committee member of the ENERGY INDABA 2010 - A Time of Change - to be held at the Sandton in Johannesburg, South Africa, from the 24 - 26 February 2010. As well as consulting to many international organisations and regional energy industries, Prof Elmissiry was director of The Energy Technology Institute, Industrial Research and Development Centre in Zimbabwe. He continues to play a leading role in identifying regional energy projects and facilitating their implementation through the NEPAD network.

By staff writer

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