

PRESS RELEASE

OPPORTUNISTIC TIME FOR AFRICA'S RENEWABLE ENERGY MARKET

In a quest to secure an adequate supply of energy for the emerging economy and growing population, the focus in Africa has been largely centered on developing and restoring the continent's power generators. Yet in this day and age of climate talks, there is the need for the continent to also make use of its vast potential of clean alternatives such as renewable biomass, wind or solar technology – a largely underdeveloped market that could hold the key to Africa's supply challenges and participation towards a sustainable future.

"While the focus on energy supply and accessibility increase in Africa is important and much needed, there are some important questions to be considered and lessons to be learnt from leaders in clean energy such as Europe," says Sebastian von Wolff, a keynote speaker of the ENERGY INDABA 2010 that takes place at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg on February 24-26, 2010.

On a governmental level, this involves a move away from large scale government owned power projects and a clear call for a private sector driven and decentralised power supply for effective and efficient demand management. "Europe took decades to cross that bridge from slow moving state-owned utilities to dynamic energy sector driven by the private sector." He also indicates to the opportunity for Africa to tap into the potential of Renewable Energy (RE) should be an integral part of a new power policy.

"Africa now has the opportunity of a double leap, from undersupply straight to a thriving private energy sector with a strong RE component, and thus jump over a phase of national utilities trying to meet the heavily increasing demand with concepts from an unsustainable fossil fuel age."

An expert in CDM and Carbon Finance in sub-Saharan Africa, von Wolff is presently the MD of Orbeo South Africa in Johannesburg, a joint-venture between French chemical company, Rhodia and French investment bank, Société Générale. As a trained engineer and an expert in renewable energy and energy efficiency technology, his experience extends to the German Energy Agency, a governmental initiative where he was the head of the department of international efficiency and renewable energy projects. Von Wolff has also been a consultant to a number of multinationals on their international energy and sustainability strategies.

At the ENERGY INDABA conference, Von Wolff will explore the subject of carbon finance, with a focus on supporting renewable energy finance. He will share his experience from different places and markets that he has worked in all over the world. "Particularly for CDM and Carbon Finance, I want to give the audience a realistic picture of what it can offer and what it can't," he says.

According to von Wolff, there is a great opportunity for eligible Carbon Finance in renewable power projects. “CDM in general has long been focusing on power generation or efficiency projects in the industrial sector. Now, that private developers and investors are lining up to form an entirely new sector of IPP (Independent Power Producers), they need to understand and take advantage of the opportunities Carbon finance can give them,” he says.

However, for the IPP sector to be thriving there needs to be a clear energy strategy developed between private and state owned stakeholders. “The positive message now is that some governments are moving and more projects are slowly coming to light,” says von Wolff.

“Having experienced the high quality and great atmosphere at the ENERGY INDABA last year, I have high expectations of the next event this February,” says von Wolff. “I expect - and am looking forward – to meeting high level players and developers in the energy sector throughout the continent. I am also excited to meet the movers and innovative entrepreneurs in this market of the future.”

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ENERGY INDABA 2010: A Time of Change

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

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