

The 2nd Arab Forum for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

Enhancing the Role of Small and Medium Enterprises in Promoting RE & EE

18 - 19 June 2014, El Gouna Movenpick Hotel, Hurghada, Egypt.

INFORMATION NOTE

1. Background:

Securing energy supply from renewable and non-renewable resources is a strategic priority for all Arab countries and a key driver for achieving sustainable development. This is clearly reflected in the ‘The Arab Strategy for the Development of Renewable Energy, 2010-2030’, which was adopted by Arab countries during the third Arab Economic and Social Development Summit of January 2013 in Riyadh. Indeed the Summit Declaration calls for expanding the frontiers of renewable energy within the energy mix, not only as a viable solution for meeting rising demand for energy, but also as a strategic choice for eradicating poverty, improving access to water, food, health, education, and contributing to economic growth, with a focus on job creation, particularly for youth in RE and EE sectors.

In the first Arab Economic and Social Development Summit in Kuwait, in January 2009, the Arab countries launched an initiative to support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Arab countries called the special account for SMEs. The initiative represents an important avenue for job creation and encouraging entrepreneurial skills among young Arabs. In this regard, SMEs offer a unique opportunity to tap on the available resources and attract potential investments from the private sector to develop and enhance the RE and EE markets.

Moreover, the Energy Efficiency Guideline and the subsequent National Energy Efficiency Action Plans (NEEAP) and National Renewable Energy Action Plans (NREAP) measures adopted by certain countries of the region could represent a timely opportunity for SMEs to engage in the EE and RE fields and play an important role in the implementation mechanisms of these Action Plans. This potential is clearly reported in recent research and policy briefs on jobs in the RE and EE sectors and the role of SMEs in enhancing sustainable energy in the Arab region. Indeed these reports and studies indicate a potentially promising area that is economically lucrative (emerging sectors which could attract investments and create new jobs), environmentally sound (RE and EE applications are less harmful to the environment, and will contribute to reducing the carbon footprint) and socially equitable (improved access to modern sources of energy, particularly to marginalized groups, improved public health, and better prospects for reducing poverty and unemployment). As far as RE is concerned, an estimated 5.7 million people worldwide work directly or indirectly in the renewable energy sector based on a wide range of studies from the period 2009-2012 (IRENA, 2013).

On the other hand, the Arab region needs to create more than 50 million jobs by 2020, mostly for young educated people (Alolabor, 2013). However, the findings invite for a more thorough analysis to draw sound conclusions on the net gains from investments in RE and EE in employment generation and economic growth as well as the capacity of SMEs to be an effective and influential agent of transformation in this field.

In Light of the challenging discourse surrounding RE and EE job creations and the related role of SMEs, and building on the strategic directives of a number of events organized by the League of Arab States (LAS), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Regional Center for Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency (RCREEE) calling for strengthening the sustainability of the energy sector as a driver for sustainable development, LAS, the Ministry of Electricity and Renewable Energy (MOERE) in Egypt, ESCWA and RCREEE are jointly organizing the second (2nd) Arab Forum for RE & EE, on 18 and 19 June 2014, in cooperation with European Union's project "Mediterranean Energy Efficiency in the Construction Sector –MED-ENEC", to explore the role that SMEs can play in sustainable energy development in the Arab region as well as the technical, institutional, financial and legislative instruments that can encourage the engagement of SMEs in these fields⁽¹⁾.

This second Forum on RE and EE comes as a follow up for one of the outcomes of the first Forum held in Cairo in April 2012 on "Building Financial Partnerships" which recognized the importance of involving the private sector, including financial institutions, in implementing national RE and EE actions plans

The Forum on RE and EE intends to provide a platform for dialogue among various stakeholders including senior policy-makers, international and regional experts in the sustainable Energy field and green economy, SMEs professional associations, RE and EE technology suppliers, financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

2. Objectives

The 2nd Arab Forum will address the role that SMEs can play in advancing the RE and EE fields in the Arab region and address the financial, legal and institutional mechanisms needed to instigate /reinforce this role.

The Forum will initiate a regional dialogue between relevant stakeholders to discuss the current status and future prospects of SMEs working in the EE & RE fields in the Arab region and the necessary means for strengthening their involvement in accomplishing the "Sustainable Energy for All" (SE4All) agenda, and the development of RE & EE in the region, particularly in rural and remote areas.

The organizers are expected to conclude with a joint policy statement, providing a common vision for energy transition to achieve socio-economic development and environmental sustainability and open a venue for job creation, particularly for youth. The statement will highlight policy recommendations addressing institutional, legislative, financial instruments and capacity building programs for strengthening SMEs development in the RE and EE fields in the Arab region, and identify means for translating the above policy options into concrete action plans.

⁽¹⁾ The 2nd Arab Forum on RE & EE website: www.arfree.net

3. Structure of the Forum

The Forum will comprise 5 sessions: (i) a Ministerial session where selected energy Ministers will stage and provide their long term vision on energy transition mechanisms at national level, (ii) three plenary sessions addressing role of SMEs in developing RE&EE, challenges and solutions, based on

lessons learned, and SMEs enabling environment, and (iii) an open debate session concerning large scale RE projects versus small scale RE projects.

For plenary sessions, it is planned to devote a keynote speaker for each session who will present a position paper introducing the theme and key issues for the related sessions followed by a panel discussion. The panelists are expected to be senior policy-makers, practitioners and international and regional experts in the field.

The Forum should provide exposure to a wide range of views and would introduce interesting debate and interactions among all participants.

4. Topics of the Forum

The proposed topics of the Forum are as follows:

- The role of SMEs in the energy transition in the Arab region through national activities and regional cooperation, taking into consideration Energy Services Companies (ESCOs), as well as promoting RE and EE technologies appropriate to rural development in the region.
- Challenges facing SMEs in playing a key role in RE and EE activities in the Arab region particularly in rural areas, including job creation prospects and R&D contributions to developing appropriate green technologies, and propose practical solutions to address these challenges, based on the lessons learned from similar experiences in developing countries.
- Policies to create an enabling environment to activate the role of SMEs in spreading RE and EE for sustainable development in the Arab region, in terms of relevant legislations, institutional frameworks and financing schemes.
- A dialogue about the cost of investment in large scale RE projects for electricity generation versus small scale projects, taking into account generation cost of conventional energy compared to RE, as well as the viability of small scale RE and EE applications in light of the potential of SMEs.

5. Expected participants

Participation is upon formal invitations, targeting the following public and private institutions:

- Concerned Ministries (electricity, environmental, social, economic, industry...) and public utilities.
- Industry and technology providers, companies working in the RE and EE fields, including ESCOs.

- Investors and project developers in RE&EE.
- Chambers of Commerce and Industry.
- Regional and International development institutions, working in RE & EE fields.
- Private and public financing institutions and funds addressing RE & EE and SMEs (The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank-WB, etc.).

(i) Organizers

Secretariat of LAS in cooperation with MOERE in Egypt, ESCWA, RCREEE, and the European Commission Delegation to Cairo through MED-ENEC project

(ii) Date and Venue:

The Arab Forum for RE & EE will be held on 18 & 19 June 2014, at El Gouna Movenpick Hotel, Hurghada, Egypt. Registration will start on 17 June evening and 18 June at 09:00 am and the opening ceremony will be at 10:00 am of the first day.

(iii) Forum Languages

Arabic is the main language of the Forum. Simultaneous Arabic/English interpretation will be provided.

(iv) Correspondences

All correspondences related to the event are to be sent to any of the following addresses:

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