

SA takes valuable steps to develop renewable energy sector

The joint commitment in 2014 by China and the US to curb carbon emissions, is a turning point in global climate change history.



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This is according to Arthur Chien, vice president of Talesun Energy. "The China-US pact is sending the message to the rest of the world that they are serious about clean energy investments and this pact, over time, will influence and encourage other countries such as South Africa to take on similar pledges to reduce carbon emissions," he says.

Chien says that following on from these international role models, South Africa too is taking valuable steps to get its renewable energy sector off the ground with the assistance of the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement (REIPPP) programmes.

"South Africa currently benefits from various renewable energy projects which have developed over the last few years. Since the inception of the REIPPP in 2009, South Africa has shown tremendous growth within the renewable energy sector and 2014 especially has proved to be a giant leap in the 'green' direction because we can finally see the finished results of projects commissioned in round one. With the advancement of the REIPPP programmes, South Africa can be optimistic that a sustainable power solution is on the horizon," he says.

Projects signed off

Chien points to the REIPPP Success Factors and Lessons report released in 2014, which indicates that after round three of the bidding process in 2013, 19 more projects have been signed off, bringing the total to 64 projects which will generate 3,922 megawatt (MW) of renewable power in South Africa.

"These projects include the completion of two solar energy projects, Herbert and Greefspan, from round one of the REIPPP in 2011, which can most definitely be hailed as a victory for renewable energy in South Africa. These projects alone generate around 33MW of clean, sustainable energy and according to Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership regional technical co-ordinator, Jason Schäffler, this power will be sold to Eskom and contribute to the national power grid as the power is generated," Chien says.

He refers to research conducted by the South African Photovoltaic Industry Association (SAPVIA) which shows that between September 2013 and October 2014, PV power generated from REIPPP projects increased from about 60MW per hour to about 673MW per hour, which equates to an estimated increase of over 1,000% over a one year period.

Smart module

"One of the latest developments in PV solar technology includes the smart module and the zero potential induced degradation (PID) module. Compared to conventional modules, smart and PID modules will offer users a more efficient and safer way of effectively utilising the power of the sun, thereby improving the overall efficiency of solar energy in South Africa," Chien explains.

"With a stronger global focus on the environment and the implementation of sustainable methods for producing electricity, we can realise that the replacement of coal with renewable energy will profoundly assist a country with its long-term economic, environmental and climate goals," he concludes.

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