

Solar energy body responds to Mantashe's budget speech

There is no need to go back to the drawing board. Players in the renewables sector are ready to implement new generation capacity and get bid window 5 of the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPP) underway, says the South African Photovoltaic Industry Association (Sapvia).



Niveshen Govender, chief operating officer, Sapvia.

The association was responding to the Budget Vote Speech of the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, saying that while it applauds the determination put forward by the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Gwede Mantashe to mobilise the private sector to address the threats to energy security it cautions that there is no more time to waste. "The private sector stands ready and able to act with pace to meet the rise in demand with a secure, sustainable energy supply," it says.



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"Stakeholders from across the renewables sector, and specifically solar PV, need only to be given the green light on bid window 5 and they will invest and drive the infrastructure development we so desperately need," says Niveshen Govender, chief operating officer, Sapvia.

"Solar PV represents the least costly and fastest to commercial operation of all energy sources and will address the minister's concerns that there is 'insufficient time to bring in grid scale generation options due to long lead times.'"

Utility-scale solar PV projects of 75MW for example take between 18-24 months from signing the PPA to commercial operation date (COD). This could even be achieved in 12 months given an enabling environment. On the other hand, small-scale energy generation projects (10MW) take 12 months on average and could be reduced to six to eight months given an enabling environment.

Stepping into the gap

"Sapvia welcomes the proposed amendments to the New Generation Capacity Regulations and would urge that the

clarification for requirements from municipalities when they apply for Section 34 Determinations from the department come sooner rather than later.

"As a priority the minister must increase the current exemption from licencing from 1MW to 10MW for energy generation installations. We believe this is an arbitrary limit set as a policy decision and has no technical basis, and by raising it private sector operators will be able to step into the gap and deliver much-needed supply quickly and with minimal upgrades to a large number of substations, or nodes on the distribution network," he says.

"There really is no time to waste if we are to address the threats to energy security and while Sapvia understands the minister's calls for a coordinated and integrated approach to energy planning and coherent policy making, we firmly believe that we have already laid the foundations with IRP 2019."

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