

Oman: Renewable energy gets a kinetic thrust

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MUSCAT -- Oman will chalk out policies and develop policy instruments needed to support and sustain implementation of renewable energy projects across the Sultanate on a large-scale, thereby contributing to the vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, said Mohammed bin Nasser Al Khusaibi, secretary-general of the Ministry of National Economy, here yesterday.

He was speaking as the guest of honour at a seminar on Renewable Energy hosted by **Authority for Electricity Regulation (AER)**. The two-day seminar will focus on the potential use of renewable energy to generate electricity.

"The Sultanate has implemented far reaching structural reforms in the electricity and related water sector. These reforms provide an excellent basis on which to start introducing renewable energy into the electricity system," he added.

The seminar, held in response to the directives of His Majesty the Sultan issued on the occasion of the opening of the 2008 annual session of the Oman Council, could contribute to the economic development of the Sultanate as specialists in the subject, developers, policy advisers and financiers interested in promoting renewable energy participated and presented papers on the occasion.

Al Khusaibi said one of the objectives of the seminar is to accelerate the implementation of renewable energy projects in Oman.

"I am confident that sharing ideas and experiences during the course of the seminar will help meet this objective," he added.

He said that in 2008 the AER published a study confirming the Sultanate's significant renewable energy potential. "The study found the level of solar energy density in Oman to be among the highest in the world with significant scope for developing projects in all areas of Oman. The country's solar energy potential is sufficient to meet all of our domestic electricity requirements and provide electricity for export," he said.

Wind energy: The study also identified significant wind energy potential in coastal areas in the south of Oman and in the mountains north of Salalah.

"The study also acknowledged the potential of biogas, geothermal and wave energy, but recommend that Oman focus on utilising its abundant solar and wind energy resources," he said.

Other projects: The AER recommendations include the immediate implementation of pilot projects in rural areas to test the performance and efficiency of renewable technologies in local conditions and provide Omani companies with experience in operating and maintaining renewable plants.

"The authority is currently reviewing proposals for six renewable energy pilot projects, including a wind project and solar projects that incorporate thin film and silicon based technologies," he added.

The **Public Authority for Electricity and Water (PAEW)** is in the process of recruiting international advisers to conduct a feasibility study for a large solar plant in Oman.

"If the feasibility of a large solar plant is confirmed, and I am confident it will be, **PAEW's** advisers will prepare tender documentation for the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company to initiate in 2010 a fair and transparent competition to build, own and operate Oman's first large scale solar plant.

"This would be a significant development not only for Oman but also for the region," he said.

In his inaugural address, Dr Saleh Al Alawi, chairman of the Authority for Electricity Regulation, Oman said: "The AER initiatives confirm the electricity and related water sector's committed response to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's directive to study ways in which alternative energy could contribute to the economic development and growth of the Sultanate.

We hope the seminar will help Oman realise the full potential of its renewable energy resources by providing competent authorities, international specialists and local companies and citizens an opportunity to network and share ideas and experience of renewable energy projects."

Among key speakers, Bob Whitelaw, advisor to the chairman, **PAEW**, spoke about the feasibility study for a large CSP plant in Oman. He said that the overall objective of the project is to establish a framework for future solar power projects, establish a framework for all renewable energy projects, develop local capabilities, local

manufacturing industry, local operating and maintenance capabilities training and development opportunities for Omani nationals.

Dr Michael Geyer, director of International Business Development, Abengoa Solar, SA spoke on his experiences with CSP (concentrating solar power).

Dr Ole Odgaard, senior policy adviser, Danish Energy Agency, Danish Ministry of Climate and Energy, spoke on policies and initiatives.

(Zawya)