

Energy is a goal and an instrument to SDGs

– *Chair Global Renewables Congress*

By Mohamed Kabba

The chair of the Global Renewables Congress who is also acting Commissioner for the Energy Reform in Africa, Barbel Hohn, said energy is not only a goal but an instrument towards ensuring no one is left behind in terms of access, affordability and political will, in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The former Member of Parliament of the German Bundestag was addressing the high-level, multi-stakeholder renewable energy and clean cooking conference for members of the Mano River Union (MRU) countries on



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From front page

the theme, "Growing the sub-regional energy market," at the Radisson Blu Mammy Yoko Hotel in Freetown, yesterday Monday 18 November 2019.

Across ECOWAS, and in the MRU sub-region of Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, energy sector leaders are prioritizing deployment of decentralized renewable energy resources, standalone systems and appliances for households and small businesses and clean energy mini-grids for stimulating production.

The chair of the Global Renewables Congress said energy in Africa needs to be taken seriously because 600 million people have no access to electricity of which, 90% are living in remote areas with schools, hospitals, health centres, households with no electricity. She said the demand for electricity in Africa since 2014 to date has increased to approximately 80% as a result of an increased in the continent's population stating that energy is necessary for economic growth. Barbel said energy is very important for all the development needed in the world. She said access to electricity will mean overcoming poverty, hunger, more income, more jobs and development requires energy, which according to her is not only a SDG goal but an instrument that form two-third of the SDG.

The chair for the Global Renewables Congress said governments need to engage locals on alternatives to the use of wood and clean cooking noting that even with political will without the right policy electricity will have no values. She revealed that Germany had invested more than 8 billion Euros in the energy sector in the world between 2014-2017; this according to her made them the biggest donor to energy with more than 20 million people benefiting from their projects.

President Julius Maada Bio said addressing energy poverty is imperative to all government across the sub-region and Sierra Leone in particular. He said the region is starving for energy in the mist of million of tons of biomass, rivers and water catchments, and sunlight. There is no reason to be energy poor. He said small-scale manufacturing and the production of goods and services are all possible with the availability of energy because it supports innovation and ICT related activities and services. He said affordable, efficient and sustainable energy supply is a critical driver of human capital development and economic progress.

President Bio said the Government target is to increase access to energy from 17 to 80% by 2030 and energy distribution from 25-60% by 2023. He said

within 18 months the government has ensured the country is now mini-grids leader in the continent with 145 targeted mini-grids to be operational by 2022. He said the lack of energy in the sub-region continues to affect development growth which according to him could be use to save \$120 million yearly if the WAEP is fully implemented.

The Secretary General for Mano River Union (MRU) Medina A. Wessoh, said considering the key role played by energy to the formation and accomplishment of daily activities of the society, which according to her is at the heart and center of economic activities as well as the social wellbeing of individuals.

The Secretary General said MRU member countries are struggling with achieving the core potential of electricity need despite the huge water, natural gas, wind, solar and other forms of thermal so endowed in the sub-region. She said they remain optimistic they are now beginning to see more energy coming from the power poles.

Wessoh said they are expecting regional integration, more energy, better policy formation, access to clean cooking energy and urban centers concentration of renewable energy along with bankable project in the sector.

The Coordinator for Power Africa, Andrew Hershowitz, said since the launch of the Power Africa project by former President Obama in 2013 to date

they had over 120,000 power projects with the establishment of 15 million new electricity projects but none of them were in Sierra Leone. Andrew said the issue of energy transcends politics stressing that for any country to succeed in achieving SDG 7, there must be a political will and the investment climate that will predict the rules of the game even before the coming of investors.

The Coordinator for Power Africa said power the Africa Power trade project can save West Africa \$23 billion stating that there is every need for women to be involve in the continent Power Program. He revealed that the West African Energy Program (WAEP) which aims at producing 800,000 megawatt power generation, will be establish to supply 3.5 million new electrical connections to the region.

He said they are presently working on a smaller project for young women in renewable energy so he urged West Africa to involve more women in the sector to achieve the very achievable goals.

The Founder and Chair of The Energy Nexus Network (TENN) Kandeh Kulleh Yumkella said in terms of energy they put politics aside and put the interest of the country first stating, "unless we have big integrated energy market members of the sub-region cannot survive achieving goal 7 of the SDG."

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