

Future Energy Summit: Abu Dhabi Pledges \$15 Billion for Renewables

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates, January 22, 2008 (ENS) - At the opening ceremony of the World Future Energy Summit here Monday, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi announced an initial investment of US\$15 billion in projects targeting solar, wind and hydrogen power; carbon reduction and management; sustainable development; education; manufacturing; and research and development.

Crown Prince General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan told more than 4,000 participants at the summit that the investment will be channelled through the Masdar Initiative, a company that aims to explore, develop and commercialize future energy sources.

"We hope that our Masdar projects will inspire others to seek alternative sources of energy," said Sheikh Mohammed.

Masdar will leverage the Abu Dhabi government's initial US\$15 billion investment with joint ventures and other investment partners to create a portfolio many times larger, comprised of projects in Abu Dhabi, the MENA region and globally.

The crown prince also announced today the establishment of the Zayed Future Energy Prize, awarding \$US2.2 million annually to honour individuals and organizations for their excellence in the innovation, development and implementation of sustainable energy solutions.

The Zayed Future Energy Prize will be awarded to three individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions in the global response to the future of energy.

The award is named after UAE founding father Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan who fostered the UAE's commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility.

The winner of the prize will receive \$1.5 million; two additional finalists will be awarded \$350,000 to take their ideas and ambitions forward.

Finalists and winners will be chosen by a jury composed of the world's leading experts in future energy and the mitigation of climate change. The jury will be chaired by Dr. R.K. Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for raising public awareness about climate change while establishing measures to counter that change.

The three day World Future Energy Summit is hosted by the Masdar Initiative, which is also building a sustainable, carbon neutral city powered entirely by renewable energy. Groundbreaking is scheduled for February.



Crown Prince General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan announces US\$15 billion investment in clean energy. (Photo courtesy UAE Interact)

"Masdar City, the world's only zero-carbon, zero-waste city, will also be car free," said Khaled Awad, director of Masdar's Property Development Unit.

"Personal Rapid Transport vehicles, powered using renewable energy, will move residents and visitors around the city with frequent convenient stops. Clean transportation is a key element in Masdar's broader vision for a truly sustainable city and is one of several industry sectors invited to inhabit the city. One day, all cities will be built like this."

Visitors to the World Future Energy Summit can see models of Masdar City throughout the conference center.

Electricity from solar power stations located in desert areas and biofuels produced from algae could play key roles in reducing the climate impact of cars, ships, trains and planes, says Professor Dr. Nasir El Bassam, an expert in clean transportation and one of the speakers at the summit.

Director of the International Research Centre for Renewable Energy, Professor El Bassam said that recent studies published by the German government have shown that solar power generated in just one to two percent of the world's desert areas could eventually provide all the electricity the world needs.



At the World Future Energy Summit, Britain's Prince Andrew, the Duke of York, shares a smile with UAE Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed (Photo courtesy UAE Interact)

This would include the electricity required for clean, zero-carbon transportation as improvements in electric vehicle technology encourage people to switch from gasoline and diesel.

With the number of vehicles in the world projected to rise from 700 million today to over two billion by 2050, efforts are intensifying to find ways to meet this fast-growing demand while at the same time minimizing the sector's greenhouse gas emissions.

The international Bali climate change talks in December suggested that carbon dioxide emissions should be reduced by half by 2050, said Professor El Bassam.

The world's fourth largest oil exporter, the United Arab Emirates now is positioning itself to prosper in a warming world.

Last November at a meeting of the heads of states of the 12 members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, OPEC, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan stressed the importance of developing alternatives for cleaner and safer sources of energy amid the global worries about climate change.

Although the statement seems "contrary to OPEC interests," Sheikh Khalifa said, "a cleaner, safer and reasonably priced alternative source of energy would lift the burden off the shoulders of oil producing countries."

He assured the international community that OPEC does not intend to exploit the industrial world's needs for energy but instead "wants to work in cooperation with it to stabilize the energy market."

One of Masdar's primary objectives is to build upon Abu Dhabi's energy leadership and develop a new domestic economic sector built on energy innovation and intellectual property, thereby establishing the emirate as the regional and global center of future energy solutions.

"For nearly half a century, the emirate of Abu Dhabi has used its natural resources to contribute to growth, development and security - our own as well as that of other countries," said Masdar CEO Dr. Sultan Al Jaber.

"Today, as global demand for energy continues to expand and as climate change becomes a real and growing concern, the time has come to look to the future," he said. "Our ability to adapt and respond to these realities will ensure that Abu Dhabi's global energy leadership as well as our own growth and development continues."

WWF, the global conservation organization, welcomed the \$15 billion investment in the Masdar project.

WWF International One Planet Living initiative director, Jean-Paul Jeanrenaud, said at the conference that "G8 country and business representatives at this week's World Economic Forum meeting in Davos should pay heed to Abu Dhabi's lead in working towards benchmarking economic development against ecological footprint

"The G8 accounts for just 14 percent of the world's population, but almost 40 percent of humanity's total ecological footprint. If we all lived like an average European, we would need three planets to live on. If we all lived like North Americans, we would need five planets."

Abu Dhabi has signed a two year agreement with WWF to monitor the country's ecological footprint and develop strategies to reduce the country's eco-footprint to a sustainable level.

WWF and the Abu Dhabi government are working together to create Masdar City. The six square kilometer green community is being developed in accordance with WWF and BioRegional's One Planet Living sustainability principles.