

RES4Africa: a project for a new Africa

Relations between Kenya and Italy have deep roots, traditionally marked by friendship and cooperation in various fields. In confirmation of this reality, the Minister of Energy of Kenya, Mr. Charles Keter, will arrive soon in Italy for a number of strategic meetings. The Chairman of KPLC (Kenya Power Lighting Company), Mr. Kenneth Marende, will meet RES4Africa (Renewables Energy Solutions for Africa) and various national stakeholders to share strategies on renewable, innovation, smart grid, training and capacity building.

RES4Africa organized the first regional event “A step change in the Deployment of Renewable Energy in Eastern Africa” in Nairobi on 26th and 27th October 2016, dedicated to the promotion of renewable energy in East Africa. The RES4Africa Project follows the successful experience of solid relationships built by RES4MED in the Middle East and North Africa.

“What makes the Country great is people, not the infrastructures”: with these words the Strathmore University Deputy Vice-Chancellor in Nairobi, Prof Izael Da Silva, inaugurated the Conference. The new initiative aimed to generate a better understanding of local energy needs, and to begin collaborative activities with the main local and international stakeholder. About 400 participants joined the RES4Africa event including government, media, academic and business representatives. Conference proceedings available on website www.res4africa.org.

RES4Africa President and Enel Green Power CEO, Francesco Venturini **said in his speech**: “There are many countries we would like to access with this initiative including Kenya. Kenya is the country where we want to focus our initial activities because the business climate, the opportunities and because the regulatory policy in the matter is probably the most advanced in the continent. Why are we here as Res4Africa? The aim of this association is to ensure that the public and the private sector can work together, sharing objectives and laying out a common approach. We do not want to come to Africa to build a power plant. This is not the reason why we are here. We aim to offer an integrated approach, including the building of that plant, but mostly focused on the co-operation with local entities, educating and instructing young people. Local young people will be the technicians of that power plant. People make a Nation great, and not just the infrastructures, as has already been said.”

Many key issues discussed, such as the policy framework, financing solutions and new business models. Announced some concrete projects to be developed in partnership next year: the Study on derisking investment in Kenya, the Analysis of the integration of renewables in the national power grid, minigrid systems to give renewable energy access in rural area (only 30% of Kenyans have access to electricity), training program and capacity building, the Study of biomass for cooking and heating use (per day 50,000 trees are cut to produce charcoal for cooking).

In attendance included key officials from Kenya and Italy: Directorate General for Global Issues Ministry of Foreign Affairs Italy and International Cooperation Amb. Sergio Mercuri, Head of delegation of the EU to Kenya Amb. Stefano Dejak, Italian Ambassador to Kenya Amb. Mauro Massoni, Director Renewables Energy for Ministry of Energy and Petroleum Eng. Isaac Kiva and KEPSA Chair of the Energy and Extractives sector board Eng. James Mwangi.

Many representatives of the major Italian companies, consulting firms, and academia, including Enerray ,Terna, D'Appolonia, Enertronica, ERM, Electro Power Systems, Met NewEn, ERM, Poyry, FRIEM, Saet, Politenico di Milano and Politecnico di Torino.

“RES4Africa, said **Roberto Vigotti**, General Secretary of RES4Africa, is a leading platform for public-private dialogue in the Sub-Saharan African renewable energy context and has a bottom up approach able to propose solutions customized to local needs.

When addressing the challenge of sustainable energy strategies in the sub-Saharan region and the role of renewable sources, it is important to understand the real dimension of the problem, and the availability of current resources”, added **Vigotti**, “Africa is rich in resources, but has limited energy access for the population”.

Within this context, the private sector and foreign investors will play a fundamental role in sustaining new investments, helping increasing the competitiveness of the system supporting innovation and energy infrastructures.

With a measure of realistic optimism, the 21st Century could truly become the “African Century” of sustainable energy.