

International Conference for Renewable Energies, Bonn 2004

**First Meeting of the International Steering Committee (ISC)
Bonn, 11-12 June 2003**
Hotel Dorint Venusberg, Bonn



Summary

Introduction

The International Conference for Renewable Energies, Bonn 2004 (henceforth *renewables 2004*) will take place in Bonn 1-4 June 2004. The International Steering Committee (ISC) for *renewables 2004* held its first meeting 11-12 June 2003 at Hotel Dorint Venusberg in Bonn.

Sequences of the meeting

The German Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Minister Jürgen Trittin, welcomed participants on the occasion of a dinner reception on 10 June 2003. The ISC meeting was officially opened in the morning of 12 June 2003 with a speech by the State Secretary for Economic Cooperation and Development, Mr. Erich Stather.

The ISC meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Michael Hofmann, Director General, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and Mr. Rainer Hinrichs-Rahlwes (BMU), Director General, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

The meeting was opened with a roundtable that gave all participants an opportunity to introduce themselves as well as the organisation they represent. The participants were also requested to express in brief their personal expectations concerning issues to be dealt with at *renewables 2004*.

Most members expressed their appreciation for the initiative the German government has taken and thanked the organisers for being nominated to the ISC. Many delegates expressed their strong personal as well as institutional support to the initiative and emphasised that the announcement of *renewables 2004* has already created great expectations within the relevant international community.

Prior to the meeting ISC members had received from the organisers a Thematic Menu that offered an extensive list of possible topics and potential deliverables of *renewables 2004*. The ISC members were requested to discuss this Thematic Menu and, thereby, to help the organisers select the most important issues, add missing issues and to develop a thematic focus for the conference. Mr. Manfred Konukiewicz (BMZ) and Mr. Norbert Gorißen (BMU) introduced the Thematic Menu to the ISC members. The session of the first day was closed with a comprehensive discussion of the Thematic Menu.

The organisers opened the Second Day with a presentation of the conclusions of the first day. The main purpose of this summary was to structure as well as to focus the previous discussions.

In responding to the presentation most ISC members appreciated the way in which the organisers summarised the discussion, in particular the focus on financing issues, capacity building, removing barriers, on policy questions and on monitoring as well as the identification of outcomes for the conference such as targets, a follow-up process and an action plan. Some amendments and additions were suggested.

Subsequently, the Head of the Conference Secretariat, Mr. Franz-Josef Batz, presented the organisation and working of the secretariat. In the discussion the ISC requested the secretariat to come up with a consolidated list of upcoming events that could be important for the preparation of *renewables 2004*, even if they do not have a focus on renewable energies. ISC members could act as multipliers at such

meetings. For this a brief description of the conference would be helpful as promotion material. It was also suggested to link the conference website www.renewables2004.de with such events.

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting by thanking the ISC members for their active participation and contribution acknowledging that the discussion was extremely helpful with a view to achieve a thematic focus.

Thematic issues

Role of the private sector and market-building

There was an underlying consensus that the private sector will have to play a crucial role in the promotion of renewable energies and that there are a number of barriers that have to be removed in order to see the emergence of functioning markets. *renewables 2004* can send out important signals to the business and finance community. New and innovative business and financing models, in particular public-private partnership approaches, were called for repeatedly.

The role that states and governments have to play in establishing an enabling environment was underlined. The fact was highlighted that historically most major industrial transformations were results of clear decisions by governments and of major state interventions. Accordingly, a major paradigm shift in energy policy would be required for a fundamental change in global energy systems. Most speakers regard *renewables 2004* as instrumental in seeking international and widespread consensus on the need for a level playing field for renewable energies. Many delegates regarded as paramount the need for a reduction of subsidies for conventional and fossil energy systems. However, some expressed concern that aiming for a programme to abolish harmful subsidies would be unrealistic and threaten the chances for success of *renewables 2004*. Many statements included proposals how the issue of an enabling policy environment could be turned into a subject of the conference. Among the major aspects mentioned in this regard were legislation, tax incentives, trade barriers, administrative procedures, governmental research and development (R&D) agendas.

The importance to get the finance community from both the private and the public sector involved was stressed. Some members expressed the view that questions of finance should not be left for side events but should be at the heart of the conference. With reference to the sections on finance some members uttered the opinion that there should be a stronger emphasis on opportunities for local finance as well as an evaluation of the need for new and tailored instruments for risk mitigation.

Other delegates missed in the Thematic Menu a reference to the impact that general energy sector reforms, in particular in the power sector, have on the chances for an increased use of renewable energies. The question of pricing reform is vital in this context. There were also many reminders about the centrality of the subsidy question.

“Status”, approach and content of the conference - What makes it unique?

With regard to organisational aspects the convenors were urged by many speakers to make use of the room to manoeuvre and the flexibility that they have as this will not be a UN conference. Hence, the chance to negotiate differentiated agreements should be actively made use of. The idea of defining differentiated targets in a bottom-up approach (rather than in a top-down approach) for groups of countries or institutions found great support. There was a consensus that the conference should not aim at a global target (no “one-size-fits-all”). There was concern that the conference could fail otherwise.

Some suggested the extensive use of case studies and various audio-visual media.

Many members of the ISC felt that the conference should provide a platform for “leaders” in renewable energy, meaning governments and actors that have already shown a strong commitment and have produced tangible results. While some favoured a “best practice” approach, others cautioned that what has worked in one place does not always have to work in another place. This holds similarly true for failures. For this reason a few members suggested alternative models such as “appropriate” or “most relevant practices”.

In addition, delegates asked what is going to make *renewables 2004* different from other conferences. What is going to give it its originality? Or, in other words, what is supposed to be the “face” of the conference?

In the same line, some members expressed concern that the suggested exhaustive list of topics (“Thematic Menu”) is too ambitious. There were some words of warning that the conference should not repeat what is already known, has already been said many times and is regularly addressed in other conferences (e.g. technology issues), and that many of the issues from the Thematic Menu have previously been discussed at WSSD and are already acknowledged in Para. 20 (e) of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Others requested a slightly different approach for the conference in general: to start from the perspective of different energy needs and to see what contribution renewable energies can make to satisfy those needs. Such an approach would be particularly relevant for developing countries. A categorisation along the issues of household needs (non-productive, non-commercial), needs for health and education, energy for productive use, and transport energy needs, was suggested. Those categories could be combined with energy profiles of different countries according to their respective energy market structure (e.g. access to modern energy services), the policy environment, geographical circumstances etc.

Rationale for and benefits of renewable energies

A number of participants highlighted that for generating legitimacy and support for *renewables 2004* it would be necessary to make the case for renewable energies up-front and proactively. Apart from the rationale for renewable energies mentioned in the presentation, some members also proposed to make the economic argument more clearly so that the conference attracts the attention of ministers for economy.

Similarly, ISC members felt the need to put more emphasis on knowledge and communication about the advantages and benefits of and opportunities for renewable energies, as in many countries and among many decision-makers in energy sectors around the world a lack of awareness about renewable energies is evident.

Climate change as well as developmental aspects were central in many statements and both issues were often linked with one another.

Some ISC members drew attention to the issue of energy security that is at the heart of most government’s energy policies. Other benefits mentioned were technology development, peace keeping, positive health and gender effects. There was also a call for a document to show the contribution of renewable energies for development.

The role of technology issues

Some more specific comments were made about the need to give enough room to the issue of modern biomass energy as this topic is often neglected, for example in the discussions of the G8 Task Force on renewable energy. It is important to highlight the opportunities for rural areas in developing countries in this field and to ask what role the North has in facilitating related technologies for the South. In addition, a strengthening of South-South cooperation was asked for by many.

Others reminded the organisers to address the question of how decentralised energy systems can be developed as this is an important issue for renewable energies.

Many ISC members highlighted the fact that *renewables 2004* is a political conference. It was argued that questions concerning technologies should play a minor role in order to focus on the political issues since there already are many conferences and exhibitions dealing with technical issues of the various RE-technologies, such as wind, biomass, solar energy etc. Others felt a need for an international forum

to exchange information on technology as well as research and development in order to bring down costs much faster. The importance of R&D as a topic was also referred to.

Capacity, institutions, information and awareness-building

A number of delegates wished to see aspects of capacity and institution building strengthened in the thematic outline of the conference. Some even felt that it should be treated as a separate issue altogether. A similar case was made for the issue of awareness rising.

Embedding *renewables 2004* in the international context

A number of members positioned *renewables 2004* in a larger international context and various references were made to the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002 (WSSD) in Johannesburg. Many speakers hope that the outcomes of *renewables 2004* would lead to an operationalisation of the WSSD agenda.

Many representatives pointed to the various initiatives and programmes their own governments or organisations have already taken to increase the use of renewable energies. Among those were unilateral targets, membership in international partnerships such as the Johannesburg Coalition for Renewable Energies (JREC), support for other relevant post-WSSD initiatives such as the Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development (GNESD), the Global Village Energy Partnership (GVEP), the European Union Energy Initiative for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development (EUEI), the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEP), the Global Forum for Sustainable Energy (GFSE).

Deliverables

Targets

Members expressed their diverse views about targets. There was wide-spread acknowledgement that targets do not only offer important guidance to policy makers, but that they also send important signals to investors in the finance and business community. At the same time there was some scepticism about a global target and, among a few, also about targets in general. Strong support was articulated for the idea of differentiated targets in terms of regions (developing / industrialised countries) or countries grouped according to energy profiles (electrification, policies, geographical situation, potential of renewables, current use of renewables) as well as with regard to different kinds of targets (energy mix, trade barriers, subsidies, micro finance structures, portfolio for development banks, etc.). Those who want to move forward as pioneers should be given such an opportunity at *renewables 2004*. Members strongly recommended being careful not to give the impression that *renewables 2004* aims at imposing global targets and timetables in a top-down approach.

Questions were raised as to how the preparatory process could be structured in order to come up with adequate differentiated targets, especially given the limited time before the conference. It was felt that the regional preparatory meetings will play an important role in this process and that it can be facilitated through the ISC and its members. Some members thought that the word "target" should be replaced by other wording ("e.g. "policy measures", "incentive mechanisms") as the concept of "targets" might alienate some actors or because it would not make sense in many countries. Others felt that targets are the appropriate concept.

Action plan

A number of ISC members stated that targets should be combined with an action plan if they are to be reached in time. An international action plan could describe a strategy to overcome the current barriers and should, thus, address the above mentioned thematic issues in an operational way.

Some members suggested individual or joint actions to promote RE by governments, organisations/institutions or enterprises

Follow-up-process

There was far reaching agreement that *renewables 2004* should not be a one-off event and that the preparation for the conference as well as the conference itself should establish a follow-up process. Different ISC members suggested various forms and variations of follow up activities. The need for monitoring instruments for the promotion of renewable energies was expressed. There was a short discussion on bringing the question of IRENA (International Renewable Energy Agency) into the conference. However, consensus was found that time and circumstances would not be fit for raising this controversial issue.

Some concrete proposals were made such as the establishment of a politically neutral permanent Secretariat in order to monitor the follow-up process and/or an international group of eminent persons that could be supported by such a Secretariat. A note of caution was expressed that especially in developing countries many initiatives find political support at the beginning but are never implemented. A proposal was made that a Permanent Secretariat could work together with local/national focal points in the form of committees bringing together government and other stakeholders.

Preparatory process and conference structure

The ISC members welcomed the idea of regional preparatory meetings. Moreover, every opportunity should be used before the conference to hear the “regional voice”, so that as many governments as possible feel part of the preparation.

In the discussion about the structure of the conference a number of more general and strategic recommendations came from the ISC.

Participants

It was recommended that the convenors make sure that participation comes from a wide range of sectors taking into account the cross-sectoral reality of energy issues. *renewables 2004* should also try to mobilise representatives from Ministries of Finance and from other related sectors such as water, agriculture or research. In this context there were also suggestions to aim at high-level representation from “big business” (at CEO level) and finance and to bring in political and administrative decision makers from the sub-regional and the municipal level.

The Co-chairs informed the ISC that the conference facility could host around 900 delegates. A rough target for the overall conference would be about 1.500 participants.

Next Meeting of the ISC

The 2nd ISC meeting will be held **15/16 December** 2003 in Berlin.